

THE CANONS OF THE
COUNCIL OF
CHALCEDON

451 A. D.

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Canon 1

We have judged it right that the canons of the Holy Fathers made in every synod even until now, should remain in force.

Canon 2

If any Bishop should ordain for money, and put to sale a grace which cannot be sold, and for money ordain a bishop, or chorepiscopus, or presbyters, or deacons, or any other of those who are counted among the clergy; or if through lust of gain he should nominate for money a steward, or advocate, or prosmonarius, or any one whatever who is on the roll of the Church, let him who is convicted of this forfeit his own rank; and let him who is ordained be nothing profited by the purchased ordination or promotion; but let him be removed from the dignity or charge he has obtained for money. And if any one should be found negotiating such shameful and unlawful transactions, let him also, if he is a clergyman, be deposed from his rank, and if he is a layman or monk, let him be anathematized.

Canon 3

It has come to [the knowledge of] the holy Synod that certain of those who are enrolled among the clergy have, through lust of gain, become hirers of other men's possessions, and make contracts pertaining to secular affairs, lightly esteeming the service of God, and slip into the houses of secular persons, whose property they undertake through covetousness to manage. Wherefore the great and holy Synod decrees that henceforth no bishop, clergyman, nor monk shall hire possessions, or engage in business, or occupy himself in worldly engagements, unless he shall be called by the law to the guardianship of minors, from which there is no escape; or unless the bishop of the city shall commit to him the care of ecclesiastical business, or of unprovided orphans or widows and of persons who stand especially in need of the Church's help, through the fear of God. And if any one shall hereafter transgress these decrees, he shall be subjected to ecclesiastical penalties.

Canon 4

Let those who truly and sincerely lead the monastic life be counted worthy of becoming honour; but, forasmuch as certain persons using the pretext of monasticism bring confusion both upon the churches and into political affairs by going about promiscuously in the cities, and at the same time seeking to establish Monasteries for themselves; it is decreed that no one anywhere build or found a monastery or oratory contrary to the will of the bishop of the city; and that the monks in every city and district shall be subject to the bishop, and embrace a quiet course of life, and give themselves only to fasting and prayer, remaining permanently in the places in which they were set apart; and they shall meddle neither in ecclesiastical nor in secular affairs, nor leave their own monasteries to take part in such; unless, indeed, they should at any time through urgent necessity be appointed thereto by the bishop of the city. And no slave shall be received into any monastery to become a monk against the will of his master.

And if any one shall transgress this our judgment, we have decreed that he shall be excommunicated, that the name of God be not blasphemed. But the bishop of the city must make the needful provision for the monasteries.

Canon 5

Concerning bishops or clergymen who go about from city to city, it is decreed that the canons enacted by the Holy Fathers shall still retain their force.

Canon 6

Neither presbyter, deacon, nor any of the ecclesiastical order shall be ordained at large, nor unless the person ordained is particularly appointed to a church in a city or village, or to a martyr, or to a monastery. And if any have been ordained without a charge, the holy Synod decrees, to the reproach of the ordainer, that such an ordination shall be inoperative, and that such shall nowhere be suffered to officiate.

Neminem absolute ordinari, nec presbyterum, nec diaconum, nec quemlibet omnino eorum qui sunt in ordine ecclesiastico, nisi specialiter in ecclesia civitatis, aut vici, aut martyrio vel monasterio is qui ordinandus est, praedicetur. Eos autem qui absolute ordinantur, decrevit sancta synodus irritam habere ejusmodi ordinationem: et nusquam posse operari ad injuriam ejus qui ordinavit.

Canon 7

We have decreed that those who have once been enrolled among the clergy, or have been made monks, shall accept neither a military charge nor any secular dignity; and if they shall presume to do so and not repent in such wise as to turn again to that which they had first chosen for the love of God, they shall be anathematized.

Canon 8

Let the clergy of the poor-houses, monasteries, and martyries remain under the authority of the bishops in every city according to the tradition of the holy Fathers; and let no one arrogantly cast off the rule of his own bishop; and if any shall contravene this canon in any way whatever, and will not be subject to their own bishop, if they be clergy, let them be subjected to canonical censure, and if they be monks or laymen, let them be excommunicated.

Canon 9

If any Clergyman have a matter against another clergyman, he shall not forsake his bishop and run to secular courts; but let him first lay open the matter before his own Bishop, or let the matter be submitted to any person whom each of the parties may, with the Bishop's consent, select. And if any one shall contravene these decrees, let him be subjected to canonical penalties. And if a clergyman have a complaint against his own or any other bishop, let it be decided by the synod of the province. And if a bishop or clergyman should have a difference with the metropolitan of the province, let him have recourse to the Exarch of the Diocese, or to the throne of the Imperial City of Constantinople, and there let it be tried.

Canon 10

It shall not be lawful for a clergyman to be at the same time enrolled in the churches of two cities, that is, in the church in which he was at first ordained, and in another to which, because it is greater, he has removed from lust of empty honour. And those who do so shall be returned to their own church in which they were originally ordained, and there only shall they minister. But if any one has heretofore been removed from one church to another, he shall not intermeddle with the affairs of his former church, nor with the martyries, almshouses, and hostels belonging to it. And if, after the decree of this great and ecumenical Synod, any shall dare to do any of these things now forbidden, the synod decrees that he shall be degraded from his rank.

Canon 11

We have decreed that the poor and those needing assistance shall travel, after examination, with letters merely pacifical from the church, and not with letters commendatory, inasmuch as letters commendatory ought to be given only to persons who are open to suspicion.

Canon 12

It has come to our knowledge that certain persons, contrary to the laws of the Church, having had recourse to secular powers, have by means of imperial rescripts divided one Province into two, so that there are consequently two metropolitans in one province; therefore the holy Synod has decreed that for the future no such thing shall be attempted by a bishop, since he who shall undertake it shall be degraded from his rank. But the cities which have already been honoured by means of imperial letters with the name of metropolis, and the bishops in charge of them, shall take the bare title, all metropolitan rights being preserved to the true Metropolis.

Canon 13

Strange and unknown clergymen without letters commendatory from their own Bishop, are absolutely

prohibited from officiating in another city.

Canon 14

Since in certain provinces it is permitted to the readers and singers to marry, the holy Synod has decreed that it shall not be lawful for any of them to take a wife that is heterodox. But those who have already begotten children of such a marriage, if they have already had their children baptized among the heretics, must bring them into the communion of the Catholic Church; but if they have not had them baptized, they may not hereafter baptize them among heretics, nor give them in marriage to a heretic, or a Jew, or a heathen, unless the person marrying the orthodox child shall promise to come over to the orthodox faith. And if any one shall transgress this decree of the holy synod, let him be subjected to canonical censure.

Canon 15

A woman shall not receive the laying on of hands as a deaconess under forty years of age, and then only after searching examination. And if, after she has had hands laid on her and has continued for a time to minister, she shall despise the grace of God and give herself in marriage, she shall be anathematized and the man united to her.

Canon 16

It is not lawful for a virgin who has dedicated herself to the Lord God, nor for monks, to marry; and if they are found to have done this, let them be excommunicated. But we decree that in every place the bishop shall have the power of indulgence towards them.

Canon 17

Outlying or rural parishes shall in every province remain subject to the bishops who now have jurisdiction over them, particularly if the bishops have peaceably and continuously governed them for the space of thirty years. But if within thirty years there has been, or is, any dispute concerning them, it is lawful for those who hold themselves aggrieved to bring their cause before the synod of the province. And if any one be wronged by his metropolitan, let the matter be decided by the exarch of the diocese or by the throne of Constantinople, as aforesaid. And if any city has been, or shall hereafter be newly erected by imperial authority, let the order of the ecclesiastical parishes follow the political and municipal example.

Canon 18

The crime of conspiracy or banding together is utterly prohibited even by the secular law, and much more ought it to be forbidden in the Church of God. Therefore, if any, whether clergymen or monks, should be detected in conspiring or banding together, or hatching plots against their bishops or fellow-clergy, they shall by all means be deposed from their own rank.

Canon 19

Whereas it has come to our ears that in the provinces the Canonical Synods of Bishops are not held, and that on this account many ecclesiastical matters which need reformation are neglected; therefore, according to the canons of the holy Fathers, the holy Synod decrees that the bishops of every province shall twice in the year assemble together where the bishop of the Metropolis shall approve, and shall then settle whatever matters may have arisen. And bishops, who do not attend, but remain in their own cities, though they are in good health and free from any unavoidable and necessary business, shall receive a brotherly admonition.

Canon 20

It shall not be lawful, as we have already decreed, for clergymen officiating in one church to be appointed to the church of another city, but they shall cleave to that in which they were first thought worthy to minister; those, however, being excepted, who have been driven by necessity from their own country, and have therefore removed to another church. And if, after this decree, any bishop shall receive a clergyman belonging to another bishop, it is decreed that both the received and the receiver shall be excommunicated until such time as the clergyman who has removed shall have returned to his own church.

Canon 21

Clergymen and laymen bringing charges against bishops or clergymen are not to be received loosely and without examination, as accusers, but their own character shall first be investigated.

Canon 22

It is not lawful for clergymen, after the death of their bishop, to seize what belongs to him, as has been forbidden also by the ancient canons; and those who do so shall be in danger of degradation from their own rank.

Canon 23

It has come to the hearing of the holy Synod that certain clergymen and monks, having no authority from their own bishop, and sometimes, indeed, while under sentence of excommunication by him, betake themselves to the imperial Constantinople, and remain there for a long time, raising disturbances and troubling the ecclesiastical state, and turning men's houses upside down. Therefore the holy Synod has determined that such persons be first notified by the Advocate of the most holy Church of Constantinople to depart from the imperial city; and if they shall shamelessly continue in the same practices, that they shall be expelled by the same Advocate even against their will, and return to their own places.

Canon 24

Monasteries, which have once been consecrated with the consent of the bishop, shall remain monasteries for ever, and the property belonging to them shall be preserved, and they shall never again become secular dwellings. And they who shall permit this to be done shall be liable to ecclesiastical penalties.

Canon 25

Forasmuch as certain of the metropolitans, as we have heard, neglect the flocks committed to them, and delay the ordinations of bishops the holy Synod has decided that the ordinations of bishops shall take place within three months, unless an inevitable necessity should some time require the term of delay to be prolonged. And if he shall not do this, he shall be liable to ecclesiastical penalties, and the income of the widowed church shall be kept safe by the steward of the same Church.

Canon 26

Forasmuch as we have heard that in certain churches the bishops managed the church-business without stewards, it has seemed good that every church having a bishop shall have also a steward from among its own clergy, who shall manage the church business under the sanction of his own bishop; that so the administration of the church may not be without a witness; and that thus the goods of the church may not be squandered, nor reproach be brought upon the priesthood; and if he [i.e., the Bishop] will not do this, he shall be subjected to the divine canons.

Canon 27

The holy Synod has decreed that those who forcibly carry off women under pretence of marriage, and the aiders or abettors of such ravishers, shall be degraded if clergymen, and if laymen be

anathematized.

Canon 28

Following in all things the decisions of the holy Fathers, and acknowledging the canon, which has been just read, of the One Hundred and Fifty Bishops beloved-of-God (who assembled in the imperial city of Constantinople, which is New Rome, in the time of the Emperor Theodosius of happy memory), we also do enact and decree the same things concerning the privileges of the most holy Church of Constantinople, which is New Rome. For the Fathers rightly granted privileges to the throne of old Rome, because it was the royal city. And the One Hundred and Fifty most religious Bishops, actuated by the same consideration, gave equal privileges to the most holy throne of New Rome, justly judging that the city which is honoured with the Sovereignty and the Senate, and enjoys equal privileges with the old imperial Rome, should in ecclesiastical matters also be magnified as she is, and rank next after her; so that, in the Pontic, the Asian, and the Thracian dioceses, the metropolitans only and such bishops also of the Dioceses aforesaid as are among the barbarians, should be ordained by the aforesaid most holy throne of the most holy Church of Constantinople; every metropolitan of the aforesaid dioceses, together with the bishops of his province, ordaining his own provincial bishops, as has been declared by the divine canons; but that, as has been above said, the metropolitans of the aforesaid Dioceses should be ordained by the archbishop of Constantinople, after the proper elections have been held according to custom and have been reported to him.

Canon 29

It is sacrilege to degrade a bishop to the rank of a presbyter; but, if they are for just cause removed from episcopal functions, neither ought they to have the position of a Presbyter; and if they have been displaced without any charge, they shall be restored to their episcopal dignity

Canon 30

Since the most religious bishops of Egypt have postponed for the present their subscription to the letter of the most holy Archbishop Leo, not because they oppose the Catholic Faith, but because they declare that it is the custom in the Egyptian diocese to do no such thing without the consent and order of their Archbishop, and ask to be excused until the ordination of the new bishop of the metropolis of Alexandria, it has seemed to us reasonable and kind that this concession should be made to them, they remaining in their official habit in the imperial city until the Archbishop of the Metropolis of Alexandria shall have been ordained.