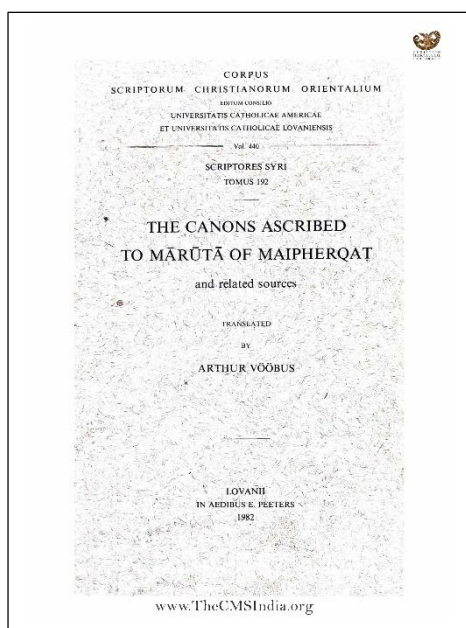


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TOMUS 192

THE CANONS ASCRIBED
TO MĀRŪTĀ OF MAIPHERQAT
and related sources

TRANSLATED

BY

ARTHUR VÖÖBUS

LOVANI
IN AEDIBUS E. PEETERS
1982

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INTRODUCTION

a) THE BACKGROUND OF THE CANONS

The canons, as the most important part among the records edited and translated in this work, illumine a very important phase in the history of the development of the Christian movement within the confines of the Persian empire. This involves a process of rapproachment, of an adjustment of Syrian Christianity in the land of the «kings of kings» to the thought, the life and the pattern of organization in the west, which given the absence of the normal conditions of existence was really overdue.

The convocation of the synod¹ which was opened on February 1st, 410 A.D., in the main church of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, marks the shift to a new phase in the development of the church in Persia. The dark clouds of suppression and persecution, which had in the meantime created serious hardships not only along the communication lines with fellow believers in the west making them extremely dangerous but also doing injury to the development of ecclesiastical life, had receded giving room for a more normal development. Moreover, the friendly relations established between Jazdgard I and the Byzantine Emperor Arcadius created conditions so favorable that not only could the severely afflicted church begin to re-organize its life, but it was able even to do something which had remained unthinkable until then — to invite a representative of western Christianity to assist in the inauguration of an era of renewal, reorganization and reform.

The role of the mediator in this situation fell upon Mārūtā who acted in the capacity of an ambassador for the Byzantine ruler. He was bishop of Maipherqat, located in the Armenian and Syrian border area. He was particularly qualified to take over this role. He was acquainted with the conditions of the Christians in Persia since he had been in the land and had there become fully cognizant of the actual conditions of life². Mārūtā must also have been keenly interested in the fate of fellow-

¹ VOÖBUS, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*, I, p. 272ff.

² He is reported to have been in Persia several times, although we do not know how often. Mari assures us that as early as 399 A.D. Mārūtā had helped to carry out the election of the new patriarch, *De patriarchis nestorianorum commentaria*, p. 30.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- 'ABDIŠO, *Catalogus librorum* = 'ABDIŠO', *Catalogus librorum ecclesiasticorum*, ed. J.S. ASSEMANI, in *Bibliotheca orientalis* III, I. Romae 1725.
- 'ABDIŠO', *Nomocanon* = 'ABDIŠO', *Nomocanon*, ed. A. MAI, in: SVNC X. Romae 1838.
- AbhGWG = Abhandlungen der k. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Göttingen.
- AbhKM = Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes. Leipzig.
- ABĪ UŠAIBĪ'A, 'Uyūn al-anba fī ṣabakāt al-aṭibbā = ABĪ UŠAIBĪ'A, 'Uyūn al-anba fī ṣabakāt al-aṭibbā, I-II, ed. A. MÜLLER. Cairo-Königsberg 1882-84.
- ABRAHAM ECHELLENSIS, *Concilii Nicaeni praefatio* = *Concilii Nicaeni praefatio una cum titulis et argumentis canonum ac constitutionum ejusdem*, ed. ABRAHAM ECHELLENSIS. Parisiis 1645.
- AbrN = *Abr-Nahrain*. Melbourne-Leiden.
- ABŪ'L-BARAKĀT, *Le Livre de la Lampe des Ténèbres* = ABŪ'L-BARAKĀT, *Le Livre de la Lampe des Ténèbres et de l'exposition (lumineuse) du service (de l'Église) par Abū'l-Barakāt, connu sous le nom d'Ibn Kabar*, éd. par L. VILLECOURT, in: PO XX. Paris 1929.
- ABŪ'L-BARAKĀT, *Miṣbaḥ az-ẓilma* = ABŪ'L-BARAKĀT, *Miṣbaḥ az-ẓilma. Der Katalog der christlichen Schriften in arabischer Sprache*, ed. W. RIEDEL, in: NchGWG. Göttingen 1902.
- Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum* = *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum iussu atque mandato Societatis Scientiarum Argentoratensis*, ed. E. SCHWARTZ. Berolini et Lipsiae 1914ff.
- Acta martyrum et sanctorum* = *Acta martyrum et sanctorum*, I-VII, ed. P. BEDJAN. Parisiis 1890-97.
- ALCS = *Ancienne littérature canonique syriaque*. Paris.
- ALTANER-STUIBER, *Patrologie* = ALATANER, B. - STUIBER, A., *Patrologie*. Freiburg.
- Analecta sacra* = *Analecta sacra et classica Spicilegio Solesmensi parata* I-V, ed. J.B. PITRA. Parisiis 1876-88.
- Anecdota syriaca* = *Anecdota syriaca*, I-IV, ed. I.P.N. LAND. Lugduni Batavorum 1862-75.
- Ancient Syriac Documents* = *Ancient Syriac Documents Relative to the Earliest Establishment of Christianity in Edessa and the Neighbouring Countries*, ed. by W. CURETON. London 1864.
- Ang = *Angelicum*. Roma.
- Antilegomena* = *Antilegomena. Die Reste der ausserkanonischen Evangelien und urchristlichen Überlieferungen*, hrsg. von E. PREUSCHEN. Giessen 1901.
- APHRAHAT, *Demonstrationes* = *Aphraatis Sapientis Persae Demonstrationes*, ed. J. PARISOT, in: PS I, 1-2. Parisiis 1894-1907.
- 'APHRĒM, *Contra haereses* = *Des heiligen Ephraems des Syrers Hymnen Contra haereses*, ed. E. BECK, in: CSCO Scr. syri LXXVI. Louvain 1957.
- 'APHRĒM, *Hymni et sermones* = *Ephraemi Syri Hymni et sermones*, I-IV, ed. T.J. LAMY. Mechliniae 1882-1902.

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PART I

PRELIMINARY TEXTS

Again the canons¹ from the Synod² of 318 which Mārūtā, bishop³ of Maipherqaṭ, translated from Greek⁴ into Syriac through the exhortation
5 and at the request of Mār Ishāq, bishop-catholicos⁵ of Seleucia-Ctesiphon.

I

A LETTER TO MĀR ISHĀQ, BISHOP-CATHOLICOS

Your letter filled me with great joy, O our beloved, my God-loving
10 Ishāq, in that I found it full of noble readings, and also (with) an inquiry about the findings of beautiful (things) of profit for the community — (for) these who discern with the mind, who know (how) to see with their eyes, to hear with their ears and to understand with their heart.

From the reading of the letter I have learned what zeal and what care
15 and what diligence you possess in your skillful and intelligent soul so that you are not willing to correct your person alone in order to be (blameless) before the entire community⁶ of the church, but (that) you (also) are distressed about the trouble of the orders and the abolition of the ecclesiastical canons⁷ and (also) about the (fact that) the
20 commandments and laws⁸ of the holy fathers are being trodden down by the rebels under their feet. It is beautiful — your love, comely — your knowledge, and fair, the love of God that is in you, that you are concerned about the substance of the canons⁹, the correction * of all the
25 (accounted) a good servant and faithful steward who manages his possessions. For your wisdom is convincing, O diligent and excellent one of God, my Ishāq, that from the head of the shepherds, stewards and pastors who are with them an account is required about the rational¹¹

* p. 2

¹ Κανών — ² σύνοδος — ³ ἐπίσκοπος — ⁴ ἰωνική — ⁵ καθολικός —

⁶ MssCD + «... to be without reproach, but that you also have pain over the entire community» — ⁷ κανών — ⁸ νόμος — ⁹ κανών — ¹⁰ τάξις — ¹¹ Or: «eloquent» — ¹² The term used here is *ܡܪܝܬܐ*. About this term, see Vööbus, *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition* (Translation), I, p. 41.

ON THE INTERPRETATION OF THE TERMS

Those who are intelligent and discerning do not¹ love only a simple reading which is seen by the eyes and which the lips articulate and express, and they stay away from the understanding of the heart, but the meaning of the expression² they test with their mind. And when they meet a term whether of nature or of the affairs of the world, they see and understand through the secret inquiry of their heart those which are simple terms³, (such) as those which are employed⁴ in usage and extending their terms also to those which do not belong to these — those which are said about a distinct person⁵, those again which are the terms of the things which are expressed about the subject⁶ of said things, and those which are of nature, which testify about the nature, and those which emanating from nature are strange to nature⁷, and those which are on persons and are singularly expressed, and again those which are in (conventional) usage and serve as a support for the (public) use⁸ of the community.

That one, however, who has the diligence and is a lover of reading, also proves everything that he reads and does not overlook even a single term which he meets, whether small or great, (even) not of the Scripture nor of nature; (also) not of custom nor of (public) use and not of things and not of (any) one of these (categories that) we have recited, without looking at what its cause is and what is this (connection) on which its composition arises. Those, however, who in this manner possess the distinction in them do not confuse⁹ the reading of the terms, but keep every name in order¹⁰ in its place. * For they, the terms, are declarers¹¹ of the things¹² (themselves) and the things do not declare the terms, but the terms declare the nature and the things together with the rest of everything.

There are terms for things which necessarily must be interpreted from Greek¹³ into Syriac. The one who reads the terms in Syriac, although he

¹ Mss CD «loves» — ² Lit. «reading» — ³ Lit. «names» — ⁴ Lit. «are read» — ⁵ πρόσωπον — ⁶ Lit. «cause» — ⁷ The meaning of this section is often very obscure — ⁸ Or: «utility» — ⁹ Lit. «take» — ¹⁰ τάξις — ¹¹ The arguments of the author are based on the concept of the φωναὶ σημαντικαὶ of Aristotle — ¹² Or: «facts», «realities» — ¹³ ἰωνικῇ

HISTORY OF MONASTICISM

So then we have to come to the history of monasticism and we shall see from where this order¹ comes from, and has taken its beginning.

5 For the Scripture says that from the beginning the prophets were called seers. And as the order² of the seers gained strength they were called prophets as (they are) today.

So also were the Christians³ from the beginning called Galileans, yet in Antioch they received the name that they shall be called Christians⁴.

10 Why? Because the Messiah according to the Greek⁵ is called Χριστός. And just as because of a garden a man is called a gardener, so (the word) «Christians» was formed according to the name of χριστιανός which is translated into Syriac as *meṣīhāyē*.

However, we have not told these (things) vainly but in order to
15 demonstrate what is the origin⁶ of monasticism and when and from where this order took (its) beginning and where we find the foundation of its discipline. Moreover, we find it in the Old (Testament), namely, when the temporal tent was made, the tribe of Levi was set apart for the priesthood⁷. The tribe was divided into families in order that from them
20 should come the priests, again from the others the Levites together with the rest from others who are in the tribe. And Moses was mystically⁸ the patriarch and Aaron as a bishop and his sons in the likeness of presbyters and the Levites in order⁹ as deacons together with the rest of those who were serving in the order of the brothers in the temporal tent¹⁰. For even
25 at the beginning they were not called clerics¹¹, because perfection had not yet come.

* The order¹² of the monks, however, had another name in the old (covenant). The letters which Philo prepared for James the brother of our Lord¹³ testified to this. Particularly do we learn it from that (letter)
30 which Magna the Alexandrian wrote to Serapion the head of the

* p. 14

¹ τάγμα — ² τάγμα — ³ χριστιανοί — ⁴ Acts xi, 26 — ⁵ ἰωνικῇ —
⁶ Lit. «cause» — ⁷ Deut. x, 8 — ⁸ Or: «in secret» — ⁹ Lit. «regulation», «definition» — ¹⁰ A well known tenet in the traditions of the Antiochian school of exegesis —
¹¹ κληρικός — ¹² τάγμα — ¹³ An unknown apocryphal document

ON PERSECUTIONS

When the blessed apostles went out¹ to proclaim² the good news of our Savior in the world, together with their proclamation³, they did not
5 teach ordinances⁴ and canons⁵ in the churches but their zeal was one — to convert everyone from the error of the religion of idols to the worship of the cross, and that (the converted) would keep themselves from the sacrifice of the strangled (meat) and of blood⁶ and that together with the rest (of such requirements).

10 Afterwards, however, when their tidings had gone out and their words to the end of the universe and the faith of Christ was spread throughout the entire world to the end of the universe and, the faith of Christ was spread throughout the entire world to as many accepted it and were strengthened by it. Those who accepted the tidings in turn also became
15 heralds⁷ and evangelists for others.

(But then) as Satan saw that instead of twelve heralds⁸ they became myriads without number, he hoped to conquer the truth and to destroy the faith of Christ. Then he stirred up the priests of evil and incited the priests of sin. He threw the nations into error so that there would be
20 empty⁹ fellows¹⁰ and judges of vehement wrath set up, like a party of deserters, and he arranged an unmatched war. Gruesome wolves went out to rip up the lambs¹¹, the children of the spiritual birth. Terrible were their scorplings and bitter their judgments. And as many as they were killing, again * (just) as many came (to the faith)¹² and as much as Satan
25 was seeking to destroy the truth, so did the party of the believers double to a great multitude — (for) more than that of the persecutors.

* p. 21

However, this war which this Satan arranged against the believers was

¹ 'Abdišo' included a part of this section in his work. *Nomocanon* VII, 1, p. 197 —
² κηρύσσειν — ³ κήρυγμα — ⁴ τάξεις — ⁵ κανών — ⁶ Acts xv, 29 —
⁷ κήρυξ — ⁸ κήρυξ — ⁹ It has been assumed that this is an Aramaic term, *rēqā*, but the problem is how to explain the change of the first vowel unless one is compelled to use some farfetched explanation like the influence of the Greek ῥάκος, «rascal». It seems to be a Syriac term. It appears in the Old Syriac version. John Chrysostomos tells of the contemporary use of it. Cf. *Homiliae de statu* XIX, PG XLIX, col. 187ff. — ¹⁰ Mss CD + «(and) the workers of the lie, he inflamed the kings in a great wrath» — ¹¹ Cf. Matth. vii, 15 — ¹² Mss CD + «and as many as they were annihilating them, again they became strong»

ON THE HERESIES

Since now Satan saw that he profited in nothing, he then arranged another war¹, more bitter² than the first³. He spewed⁴ out factions and divisions and made contentions and quarrels, and he brewed many evil things through the multitude of heresies⁵ which he brought about over (against) the church. He threw them at the Christians⁶, one after the other. They all became confused and became (divided) one against the other just as the prophet says: «According to the number of your villages were your gods, Judah»⁷, so it happened also to the Church of God — as were the number of the bishops so were the number of the heresies. And the believers decreased and became as a single (ear of) wheat in a large field of wheat. And just as it had happened to the Jews who had abolished the law and forgot the Passover, so did it happen to the Christians⁹ at that time — through the divisions (caused) by various heresies, the Holy Scriptures were gradually changed and (even) the arrangements¹⁰ of their sayings. At different places they purged out even the holy festivals of custom¹¹ and they were not celebrated because every heresy according to their opinion changed the sacred Scriptures and they established others for themselves alone. The heresies were flourishing and the believers were persecuted by them, and thus the Scriptures were not in every place found to be correct as (they are) today because of corruptions and because of the many injuries which happened by many to the Scriptures of holiness by (way of) the heretics. (However), because we write in summary briefly, (for) the issue as to whence were the Scriptures harmed, which is the heresy that abused them and which again has not changed something in the Scriptures, what they are and what they say and how * each one of them confesses — there is no time to tell

* p. 23

¹ An ancient view, that Satan designed heresies in order to destroy the church, appears already in JUSTIN MARTYR, *Apologia* I, 24ff., PG VI, col. 368ff. — ² Ms C + «and harder» — ³ 'Abdišō' introduces here a brief sketch which he has recast, *Nomocanon* I, 3, p. 197 — ⁴ Lit. «threw out» — ⁵ αἵρεσις — ⁶ χριστιανοί — ⁷ Jerem. II, 28. The text is according to Peš — ⁸ νόμος — ⁹ χριστιανοί — ¹⁰ Ms C «the divisions» — ¹¹ It is very characteristic for his Oriental background that the author is concerned in the first place with the integrity of the Scriptures, and after this with the festivals and not with the creeds as one would expect

ON THE AFFAIR OF THE SYNOD OF NICEA

(Now) as to the affair¹ of the synod², how it began and how it was completed and what it did — (that was) demanding great labor from
5 persons³ as well as zeal. After the fathers had sat for three years⁴
in disputation against all the heresies but particularly against the
gruesome Arians, and (after) many debates among themselves and many
inquiries which had to be pursued with each other, they wrote lengthy⁵
10 chapters of disputation against one refutation of every heresy⁶ separately
— fifteen⁷ prophets^{8, 9}.

Because all this teaching is fixed in the Greek¹⁰ language and only a
few chapters were translated into Syriac, I have also labored and
translated in order that it would be added to anything that is necessary
and requisite for the sustenance¹¹ of the community, for it is necessary
15 for every rank¹² which is in the church to be guided in its order¹³.
Therefore also I — since we are not concerned about the justification or
condemnation of a party — but because the canons¹⁴ are in our concern,
I have moved quickly through the history limiting it by reduction.

¹ 'Abbišo' has included a portion of the text in his work, *Nomocanon* I, 3, p. 200 —

² σύνοδος — ³ Mss CD «expenses» — ⁴ This, of course, goes into the teeth of historical sources. According to an ancient tradition the participants departed on June 19 after a session of one month. MANSI II, 668. This date is by no means certain. If the conclusion of the convocation found its crescendo with the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the rule of the emperor, as Eusebius describes a gala reception for the bishops, *De vita Constantini* III, 21, p. 87f., then the convocation may have lasted a month longer. This jubilee started on July 25, 325. — ⁵ Lit. «great», «mighty» —

⁶ αἵρεσις — ⁷ 'ABDIŠO', *Nomocanon*: «forty» — ⁸ The term used here is very obscure. BRAUN, *De Sancta Nicaena Synodo*, p. 53 thinks that it means that the extent of the constitution of the synodical decisions equals the extent of 15 later prophets. This is too farfetched. There seems to be a corruption involved. That this passage was understood differently is reflected by the Arabic recension of these texts used by Abraham Ecchellensis. According to this source the Council of Nicea produced 40 books of disputations and colloquies with the heretics, and 15 books with writings on faith in sermons and related materials. MANSI, *Conciliorum nova collectio* II, col. 1055ff. — ⁹ Mss CD + «besides the canons and their arguments which are 3 prophets». According to the Arabic recension of these texts, besides the volumes already mentioned, the Council of Nicea produced also 3 volumes with canons and constitutions. *Ibid.* II, col. 1055ff. — ¹⁰ ἰωνική — ¹¹ Or: «constitution» — ¹² τάγμα — ¹³ τάξις — ¹⁴ κανόν

ON THE TERMS, RANKS AND ORDERS

Above all it is necessary to make known the names and ranks¹ and orders² and every term that is in Greek³ which needs to be translated into Syriac. We also have interpreted a few of them briefly. 5

The term ὀρθοδόξος we have omitted and we have not interpreted it above (in the same way) as the rest of the terms above were interpreted. Ὀρθοδόξος is a Greek term since straightforwardness in Greek is read ὀρθός and δόξα and they have combined⁴ these terms and established one and it is read ὀρθοδόξος, interpreted in Syriac *trīṣai* and *šūbhā* as 10 one would say that there is no blemish in their confession.

Again also the term «cleric»⁵ is a Greek term because heritage in Greek is κληρονομία, and on this κληρονομία, the term «cleric»⁶ has been composed, that is interpreted in Syriac: «heirs», namely heirs, as one would say of the service of priesthood in the church. Also the tribe of 15 Levi had the priesthood for its inheritance among the children of Israel.

Also «bishop»⁷, too, is a Greek term. In the Hebrew and Syriac nothing is found which can be translated bishop except high priest. But in Greek it is not called high priest but the term is another; for wearisomeness in Greek is read κόπος, and on this term κόπος is 20 composed the term ἐπίσκοπος which is interpreted in Syriac as «bearers of wearisomeness».

* p. 34

* Also «archdeacon»⁸, again, is a Greek word because service in Greek is called διακονία and on it, this term διακονία, is the term archdeacon composed, the head of the service. There are others who are ignorant, 25 calling it the head of the servants, and there are others who call it the head of the orders⁹, but it is not so. These terms fit in the Greek language because servants are called in Greek διάκονος service διακονία and the heads of servants in Greek ἀρχιδιάκονος. Although they resemble to each other a little yet there is a distinction among them. Also the Syrians 30 have the custom of calling one subject by two terms but here, too, the subject is different. For if, as others say, he is the head of the servants,

¹ τάγμα — ² τάξις — ³ ἰωνική — ⁴ Or: «composed» — ⁵ κληρικός —
⁶ κληρικός — ⁷ ἐπίσκοπος — ⁸ ἀρχιδιάκονος — ⁹ τάξις

THE LETTER TO MĀR ISHĀQ

However, those which I have written to you, O diligent of God and my excellent Ishāq, I have not¹ written these because of you, for I know that
5 you are informed in these accurately but it is written because of others that it would be useful for everyone who reads and those which are not allowed shall be prohibited.

Everyone shall know the name of his place, what it is. Every order² and rank³ that is in the church shall discern and know which his position
10 is and what the duty⁴ of his position is and how far his service extends. Everyone shall know exactly for himself the authority of the business of his service, so that one without knowledge will not serve in a rank which is not his. There should be a caution for everyone so that that which the blessed Paul has said, will not be fulfilled upon us: «(Although) they
15 have known God they have not glorified God and made him known»⁵.

So then since we (will soon) begin to write the canons⁶, therefore, we first say that we mention to your excellence that there were canons in the church before the time of the 318, set up by the blessed apostles, partly written by the blessed Luke and partly by James⁷, the brother of our
20 Lord. Concerning this I also would wish to ask (the question), if there would be room for us, as to in what manner James is the brother of our Lord. As the Scripture shows, our Lord was the first born but the writings and also the prophets⁸ testify that all the brothers * of our Lord were older than he and that he was the youngest of all of them. If our
25 Lord is the first born then it is right that he should be older than his brothers. And if they are older than he then there should be another cause between⁹ — but this (question) shall be kept for another time. If

* p. 38

¹ Ms C; Ms B is defective here — ² τᾶγμα — ³ τάξις — ⁴ Lit. «work» —

⁵ Rom. 1, 21; it renders the version of Peš accurately — ⁶ κανόν — ⁷ Here the author seems to have in mind a cycle of canons, namely the Order of the Apostles, ascribed to all the apostles introducing them by their names, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac* (Text), vol. I, p. 31ff. Fortunately, a very ancient witness has been recovered which for the first time helps us to pass through many centuries into a stratum of the text that comes from the eighth century. VÖÖBUS, «Entdeckung der ältesten Urkunde der Apostolischen Kirchenordnung», p. 32ff. — ⁸ The reading of Ms C, Ms B has «nature» — ⁹ Lit. «in the midst»

[THE LETTER TO MĀR ISHĀQ¹]

The bulk², however, is known to the prudent ones — these (things) the general synod has commanded and determined.

But (now) the rest of the other canons³ which remain and were not placed here: we have neglected them, not because they are not urgent or that they are not acceptable, and we have not translated them into Syriac — not that in something we are disciples of the fathers and in something (else) of their adversaries, and in one part householders (of God) and in another strangers — not that anyone of them who are in opposition would think this about us in that that we have written some of them and have discarded some of them. For this reason we apologize before those who read this writing.

For what reason have we not translated all the canons from Greek⁴ into Syriac? For we are the disciples of the fathers in the heart and in the mouth without doubt, and completely the entire corpus of their canons we transmit cheerfully, (however,) those of the rest we have not written because they are not urgent regarding their usefulness in the land of the Persians as we have demonstrated above. And for this reason we have discarded them and have not written them. However, for the countries of the Romans and of Glinon, of Mimido, of Purponion, of Lubion⁵, of the Laodiceans of the Himaye and of Kušaye — for these countries these canons⁶ are useful which we have discarded, because their kings and judges and all * the ranks⁷ and orders⁸ are Christians who are under their rule and subordinated to the canons of the fathers.

Let it not be for the true Christians⁹, the children of baptism and the members of the catholic¹⁰ church to find fault in the fathers and to blame their canons¹¹ and to complain about their correct faith that is in Christ, and (thus) shall they bring upon themselves this catastrophe¹² which (should not be) in the covenant¹³ (community), and shall become companions of those who lack instruction¹⁴, the associates of the

¹ This text has been placed after the 73 canons — ² Lit. «foundation» — ³ κανών — ⁴ Ἰωνες — ⁵ These names are corrupt in all the manuscripts — ⁶ κανών — ⁷ τάγμα — ⁸ τάξις — ⁹ χριστιανοί — ¹⁰ καθολική — ¹¹ κανών — ¹² Lit. «fall» — ¹³ The term used here in *qeyāmā* — ¹⁴ Or: «discipline»

[ABOUT THE APOLOGY OF THE CONFESSION]

The apology of the confession of the true faith of our holy fathers.

Since this apology was spoken twice by the fathers, once in the town of Nicea and another time in Constantinople, this in Nicea truly¹ against the Arians², and that³ against the Macedonians, there are persons who have interpreted it as spoken in Nicea, or there are others who interpret it as (spoken) in the city of the kingdom, and therefore it differs in its renderings in different places. Therefore I have translated the story of Nicea and that of Constantinople⁴ in order that it may be one and in order that that which was spoken by the fathers has been accurately interpreted. It is an apology composed by the fathers.

Every one who analyzes⁵ the contents⁶ (of the creed) finds in it 12 items⁷, each one of them being against the various opinions of every heresy⁸. It is found that it includes all the wickedness of those who before that have left the church (as also) of those who after them (have done this). While the fathers in the fineness of their sagacity composed their apology for their contemporaries as for the wise people, and therefore all those who were sages and the teachers of the true faith of the church have taken no offence nor have become scandalized in anything which the ecumenical fathers have determined and set up. * But since finally there are people who are far from knowledge because of a lack of instruction blame⁹ the words of the confession of the faith of our fathers, I also took care through the exhortation of this man (of God), my (beloved) Ishāq, through his activity being stirred up for this writing. Also I have made an order¹⁰ of the articles¹¹ as we begin and arrange one after the other. The precise meaning shall appear openly in order that the empty opinions of those who are in opposition shall be brought to nought and again that the true believers shall be attested¹² by the teaching¹³ of the fathers.

¹ Lit. «exactly» — ² Ms B: Arminite, D: Arimanite, E: Ariusinite — ³ Ms C + «in Constantinople» — ⁴ It is not clear what is meant by this statement. There is no such story about the Council of Constantinople among these texts — ⁵ Lit. «separates» — ⁶ Lit. «meaning» — ⁷ Or: «divisions», «headings» — ⁸ αἵρεσις — ⁹ ζητέω. Ms E reads here: «who ... abuse» — ¹⁰ Lit. «command» — ¹¹ Lit. «sections», «chapters» — ¹² Lit. «to be acquitted» — ¹³ Mss CE read: «shall not be scandalized by the teaching...»

THE CANONS

I

THE CANONS OF THE SYNOD OF NICEA

5 The canons¹ of this synod², which are twenty.

1. *Regarding those who mutilate and castrate their members*¹.

If anyone because of illness has been operated on by the physicians or if he has been castrated by the barbarians, this one shall stay in the clergy².

10 However, if anyone with sound health has castrated himself on his own accord, this one if he is in the³ clergy⁴, shall cease from his service.

Henceforth no one who is thus shall be brought to the laying on of hands. This is said regarding those who act cunningly⁵ and by their (own) will dare to castrate their members.

15 If, however, there are persons who have been castrated by the barbarians or by their masters and otherwise because of their manner (of life), they are worthy. These the canon⁶ accepts so that they may enter the clergy⁷.

2. *About those who are from heathens and along with (their) baptism*
20 *have come to the laying on of hands of the priesthood.*

Because much has come to pass out of necessity¹ or out of affairs beyond the ecclesiastical canons², so that men of the manners of the heathens who recently have come to the faith³, and as they have been for

¹ κανών — ² σύνοδος.

1 ¹ All the titles have been provided by the translator — ² κληρος — ³ κληρος. The phrase is an accretion — ⁴ τοῦτον καὶ ἐν τῷ κλήρῳ ἐξεταζόμενον — ⁵ The original has only περὶ τῶν ἐπιτηδεύοντων — ⁶ κανών — ⁷ κληρος.

2 ¹ ἀνάγκη — ² κανών — ³ This reading is against the Greek τὸ πνευματικὸν λουτρόν. However, it has been retained in the *Syriscche Kanones*, ed. SCHULTHESS, p. 14ff. recension I. These recensions are quoted further simply as the *Syriscche Kanones* I and II —

[THE SEVENTY THREE CANONS]

Again we write the seventy three canons, which are the following.

1. *On the heresies¹ and on the order² of their reception.*

5 It is the will of the holy general synod that as all are gathered in one will saying: As we have learned from the divine books which say: «Also in blessing shall be covered the lawgiver»³ and «That one who will do and teach shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven»⁴, — we, however, are not lawgivers for the world but exhorters of the entire
10 community that they should guard the law and not be slack in its observances and divine commandments. Therefore have we set up canons in order that by them the law will be kept and established and the confusion and twists which have occurred in the church up to this day, from henceforth, through the mercies of God, shall have correction. If,
15 however, the stubborn people of the Jews, the type⁵ of our people, have many ordinances, laws and commandments, how much more it is right for the adorned bride, the church of the nations, that she should shine and be enlightened in the beauty of the commandments of God, in the vivifying laws which are inflexible.

20 Above everything, however, it is the will of the general synod that the concepts⁶ of Christians shall not be mingled with those of the pagans, because it is right for us to hold distinction between paganism and non-Christians, the household and the outsiders. The concepts shall be not confused and there shall be no haphazard⁷ (treatment) and confusion of
25 defining⁸. For it ought not be that the heresies which up to now are Christian should be regarded together with empty religions of error which have departed from among us; that (is to say) the concept of heresies should be known * as heresies, and the (non-Christian) religions as religions. For it ought (to be the case) that the pagans should be called
30 pagans.

* p. 57

1 ¹ αἵρεσις — 2 ² τάξις — 3 Psalm LXXXIV, 6; the text is according to Peš —
4 Matth. v, 19; the text is according to Peš with very slight deviations — 5 ⁵ τύπος —
6 ⁶ Lit. «names» — 7 ⁷ Or: «indiscriminate» — 8 ⁸ Or: «disputation»; lit. «reading»

SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS

I

THE CREED OF THE SYNOD OF NICEA

We believe¹ in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of all that are 5
visible and that are invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only one² born
from the Father. But he is of the substance³ of the Father. God of God,
Light of Light, true God of true God, born and not made, of the
substance⁴ of the Father, through whom everything has become that is 10
in heaven and ⁵ on ⁶ earth, the one who because of us men and because of
our salvation came down and was indued with a body⁷ and became man.
And he suffered and rose on the third day and ascended to heaven, and
comes to judge the dead and the living⁸.

And in the Spirit of Holiness⁹.

(As to) those, however, who say there is¹⁰ (a time) when he was not, 15

¹ The basic Greek text of the symbol appears in Eusebius in his letter to the congregation of Caesarea, ed. by Montfaucon I, 1, p. 239. Cf. HAHN, *Bibliothek der Symbole*, § 142, p. 160f. *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum*, ed. SCHWARTZ I, I, 7, p. 65 —

² An idiomatic Syriac rendering of μονογενή — ³ Cf. ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας — ⁴ The rendering of ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ — ⁵ The Greek καὶ τὰ is rendered freely —

⁶ The rendering follows the text of Eusebius but not the reading of τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς as it appears in the recension of Athanasius, *Epistola ad Jovianum* 3, col. 817 — ⁷ Cf. σαρκωθέντα — ⁸ Against the Greek ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς which appears in all the recensions which besides the above-mentioned sources appears in ATHANASIUS, *Epistola de decretis Nicaenae synodi*, XXXII, col. 43, BASILIUS, *Epistola CXXV*, 2, col. 124, and SOCRATES, *Historia eccl.* I, 8, p. 16. This is, however, a rendering that goes hand in hand with the Nestorian or Chaldean form. This form of the creed was first published in Syriac by CASPARI, *Ungedruckte Quellen zur Geschichte des Taufsymbols* I, p. 113ff. on the basis of Ms. Orient. 147 der k. Hofbibliothek München which contains a Nestorian Psalter. The same text also in *Liturgia s. Apostolorum Adaei et Maris*. On other manuscripts of the Nestorian Psalter, see BARNES, «The 'Nicene' Creed in the Syriac Psalter», p. 441 ff. Cf. BRIGHTMAN, *Liturgies*, p. 270f. CONNOLLY, «Nestorius's Version of the Nicene Creed», p. 401 ff. — ⁹ An indigenous rendering of τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα or τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον as in Athanasius — ¹⁰ A deviation from the Greek ἢν ποτε ὄτε.

THE NAMES OF THE BISHOPS

Again the names of the bishops who put the hand (under the agreements).

Of Italy 3: Hosius, bishop of the town of Cordoba¹ of Italy; I believe 5
and agree as it is written above; Viton and Vincentius, presbyters of
Rome, for our pope we subscribe as we believe so and agree as (written)
above.

Of Egypt 11: Alexander of Alexandria; Alpocraton² of Alphon- 10
cratum³; Adamantios⁴ of Canon; Arbition⁵ of Pharbethu; Philippios
of Panephusus; Potamon of Heracleopolis; Secundos of Ptolemais;
Dorotheos of Pelusion; Gajos of Thmuis; Antiochos of Memphis;
Tiberios of Tauthatis.

Of Thebais 3: Atthas of Schedia; Tyrannos of Antinoe; Olusianos of 15
Lycon.

Of Upper Lybia⁶ 5: Daces of Berenice; Zophyros of Barce;
Serapion of Antipyrgos; Secundos of Teuchira (Teuchilibya); Titos of
Paraetionium.

Of Palestine 19: Macarios of Jerusalem; Joseph⁷ of Schamrin;
Marinos of Sebastena⁸; Gaianos of Sebaste; Eusebios of Caesarea; 20
* p. 118 Sabinos of Gadara; Longinos * of Ascalon; Petros of Nicopolis;
Macrinos⁹ of Jamnia; Maximos of Eleutheropolis¹⁰; Paulos¹¹ of
Maximianopolis¹²; Januaros of Jericho; Heliodoros of Zabulon¹³;

¹ Mss BDE corrupt (C blank); this accurate rendering is taken from a very ancient Syriac manuscript with a corpus of conciliar acts. Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14, 528 was written probably in 501 A.D. This manuscript which comes from Nitria contains a list of the bishops who subscribed the acts. Cf. WRIGHT, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts* II, p. 1030ff. This source is further quoted as Nitria. Its text was edited by PITRA, *Analecta sacra* IV, p. 234ff. Other editions are by COWPER, *Analecta Nicaena*, p. 15ff., and by GELZER-HILGENFELD-CUNTZ, *Patrum Nicaenorum nomina*, p. 96ff. — ² Ms C — ³ Ms C, Mss BED corrupt — ⁴ Nitria N, Mss BED corrupt (C is blank) — ⁵ Nitria and N — ⁶ Nitria and N — ⁷ Ms C; Nitria N, Greek, Latin and other witnesses read Germanos — ⁸ The known lists read here Μαρίνος Σεβαστηνός; however, a new list reads Μαρίνος Σεβαστινός. Cf. HONIGMANN, «Une liste inédite des pères de Nicée», plate I — ⁹ Nitria and N against Mss BCDE — ¹⁰ Ms C — ¹¹ Ms. C — ¹² Correctly only in Ms C — ¹³ Correctly only in Ms C

(THE PROSTAGMA)

When¹ the king² received the letter which the blessed Alexander wrote and sent through his presbyter, and learned from it the whole truth and heard then that the Armenites³ killed the blessed one, he was very grieved and he mourned him until death. Then the king was enflamed by divine zeal and wrote a *prōstagma*⁴ and sent (it) to all countries in the world, to those subject to him and to those not subject. His *prōstagma* is thus: «The *prōstagma* which the victorious king Constantinus wrote and sent to all bishops subject or not subject, TrisAugustus⁵, Pantocrator⁶, Constantinus the king⁷ to all the whole church which is under the heaven together with the servants⁸ in Christ our true king. Peace.

You all have been excited with a diligence that is without negligence, to come to the assembly in the land of Bithynia at the great town of Nicea because of the disputation⁹ over that (which) is in the true faith, those who agree with each other and those who do not agree shall not be hindered from coming. And no one shall lead his companion by force nor hinder him so that he will not come to the assembly and make a defense of the confession of his faith at the synod¹⁰ before all bishops (so that) * there shall be concord and one bond and unity without difference. And the entire church shall stand firm in one faith without doubt in one (single) body, complete, of united and perfect will. No one shall despise and trespass the command of our kingdom¹¹ and of the priesthood.

We give time for the ascending for the journey on the way of one year and two months, and in the *Tešri*¹² *hrāi*¹³ all the bishops shall be found

¹ Ms C has a lacuna — ² 'Abdišō' has included the *prōstagma*, *Nomocanon* 1, 3, p. 198f. — ³ I.e. the followers of Arius — ⁴ *πρόσταγμα* — ⁵ The reading seems to be a corruption; 'Abdišō' reads: «Augustus» — ⁶ 'Abdišō': «autocrator» — ⁷ Ms B on margin written by another hand — ⁸ Or: «the subjected»; 'Abdišō' offers a fuller text which adds: «and not subjected» — ⁹ Or: «inquiry» — ¹⁰ *σύνδοχος* — ¹¹ Or: «our majesty» — ¹² *Tešri hrāi* is November — ¹³ 'Abdišō' reads here *Tešri qadmāyā*, i.e. October

[THE DISCOURSE ABOUT THE HERESIES]

The beginning of the discourse about the heresies¹.

After the fathers had completed an inquiry against each and every
 5 heresy and established a party of the faithful in victory, and all the
 heresies had received disgrace and were put to shame, the horn of the
 church, of the priesthood and the kingdom was elevated. Then all the
 fathers took council equally that it is not right for the Bride of the King,
 the betrothed of Christ, which is the believing church, to be abandoned
 10 without some (means) of correction for the wretchedness which the
 heretics had done in it. At the beginning of their speeches they said thus:
 Now therefore the types² and figures, which the Old (Testament) has
 shown, have today come to (their) fulfillment. Therefore in the grace
 and compassion of our good and kind God, our Lord Jesus Christ who
 15 is the living Son of God, and the temple which Solomon built in the
 mystery of the church, (also) the mysteries which were depicted in him as
 types have today been completely fulfilled. The oxen which carry the sea
 are priests who through the labor and wearisomeness of their instruction
 are likened to laborious oxen through which yields come to men. The
 20 sea, again, is compared in the mystery to baptism which goes on through
 the labor of the priests. And also Jakin and Boas, both columns, which
 are priesthood and kingdom, are planted in the holy catholic³ church.
 Like a sun, it shines in the true teaching of our Savior and the lifegiving
 Jesus Christ. And we also are not worthy (yet) in the compassion that
 25 (radiates) from us are made worthy for one assembly, that is for the sake
 of the holy church that is over * the entire universe. And in his grace he * p. 140
 has called us⁴ to the true faith which is without schism, and has
 established for us one will, an habitation without division, one unity full
 of peace that is without separation.

30 It is to our due today — as we walk in the vestiges of our lords and
 fathers, the blessed prophets, saintly apostles and true teachers who were
 before us — that we agree to two Testaments⁵, the Old and New
 (Testament) and agree with the holy apostles through the blessed

¹ αἵρεσις — ² τύπος — ³ καθολική — ⁴ Ms C + «and in his compassion
 he has brought us» — ⁵ διαθήκη.

THE APOLOGY OF THE CONFESSION
OF THE TRUE FAITH OF OUR HOLY FATHERS

The articles, however, are these.

5 The first article: on the confession.

The second: concerning that the Creator is one and the Lord of all.

The third: the divine and human name are (used) at the same time.

The fourth: that the Son is equal to the Father in nature.

10 The fifth: these inquire on his birth and teach about the eternity and incomprehensibility of his divine birth.

The sixth: on his coming into our race and on his human birth.

The seventh: they teach about the passion of his death and his resurrection.

15 The eighth: about his ascension and about the magnificence that came to the origin of our (human) nature through the union with God, the Word.

The ninth: about the second coming and about his judgement over all.

The tenth: about the Spirit of Holiness, that he is consubstantial with the Father and the Son.

20 The eleventh: about the church and about baptism.

The twelfth: about the discrimination of deeds and about (things) to come.

Article I

25 At the beginning of their creed the fathers have said: «We believe in one God, the Father and Almighty.» The fathers felt it right to place this article above all at the top of their confession. When one investigates this with the inner eye of the mind, he finds in it three thoughts.

* In that: «we believe in one God» they link all adoration and * p. 143
30 confession with the one nature of one unattainable being¹. And He has delivered over this (confession) in one Godhead to the one church in order that it may not be dragged into the worship of idols which are called god in a vain manner.

¹ ἡ οὐσία «essence», «substance» = οὐσία

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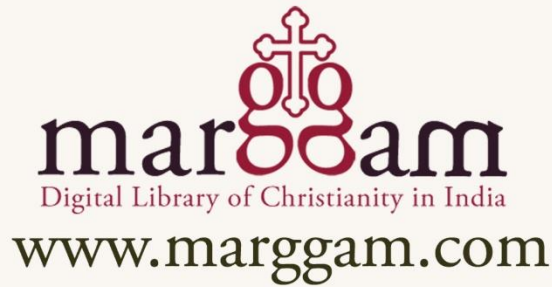
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 - Resources for Researchers.
 - Directory of Christian Songs.
 - Music Iconography.
 - Christian Art.
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Christian Musicological Society of India, Josef Ross, 1st Floor, Peter's Enclave, Opp. Kairali Apts, Panampilly Nagar, Kochi, Kerala, India-682036, Phone: +91 9496244981, +91 9446514981, Email - info@thecmsindia.org