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The Early Christian Prayer Circle: Minutes of the Second Council of Nicaea in AD 787

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Title The Early Christian Prayer Circle: Sidebar, Minutes of the Second Council of Nicaea in AD 787

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Abstract Patriarch Tarasius and various bishops and monks condemn the *Acts of John* on which an account of the early Christian prayer circle is recorded.

TARASIVS, THE MOST HOLY PATRIARCH, said: Let us view the document as a whole as contrary to the Gospel.

The Holy Synod said: Aye, sir: and it says that the human nature was only an appearance. . . .

Constantine the most holy bishop of Constantia in Cyprus said: This book is the basis of their unauthorized assemblies.

Tarasius the m. h. Patriarch said: These things are simply ridiculous.

Theodore the most God-beloved Bishop of Catana said: Yes, but this book has been undermining the authority [lit. wrenching the vestments] of the Holy Church of God!

Euthymius the most holy Bishop of Sardis said: Their false sects [*parasynagogai*] had to have this book to back them up [lit. as witnesses].

The Entire Synod declared: All heresy depends on this book.

Tarasius the most honorable Bishop said: Alas, how many heretical books support their false teachings!

Gregory the most holy bishop of Neocaesarea said: But this book is worthy of all vile infection [*miasma*] and a disgrace.

[On a motion by Tarasius] the Holy Synod said: Let it be condemned [*anathema*] from the first letter to the last.

John a most revered monk and vicar to the Eastern Patriarchs said: Behold, blessed Fathers, it is most clearly demonstrated herewith that the leaders of the heresy which criticizes true Christianity are really the companions and fellow travelers of Nebuchadnezzar and the Samaritans, to say nothing of the Jews and Gentiles (Greeks), and also of those cursed atheists the Manichaeans, whose testimony they cite. . . . Let them all be anathemized along with their writings!

The Holy Synod said: Anathema!

. . .

John the Reverend Monk . . . then made a motion: May it please the Most Holy and Oecumenical Synod to vote that no further copies be made of this pestilential book.

The Holy Synod voted: Let no copies of it be made; furthermore we herewith declare it worthy to be consigned to the flames.

[Here Peter, the secretary of the meeting, signs his name to the minutes.]

MINUTES
OF THE
SECOND COUNCIL
OF NICAIA IN
AD 787

it, into “a strange space, a strange world—unlike ours—a world above the world that opens before us when we enter into the round dance of the disciples, led by Christ.”² The passage from the *Acts of John* reads as follows, after a notice on the extreme secrecy in which these things were guarded:

Before he was seized by wicked men and by the wicked serpent of the Jewish authorities (lawgivers, *nomothetoumenoi*), he called us all together and said: “Before I am given over to those men, let us sing a hymn (of praise) to the Father and so go forth ready to face whatever lies ahead.” Then he commanded us to form a circle, taking hold of each other’s hand; And he himself taking up a position in the middle uttered the Amen (formula) and “pay attention to me (*epakouete mou*—follow my instructions).”

Then he began a hymn, saying,

“Praise (glory, *doxa*) to thee, Father,” and we standing in the circle, followed him with the Amen.

“Glory to thee Logos, glory to thee grace (*charis*, love). Amen.

Glory to thee spirit, glory to thee Holy One; praise to thy glory. Amen (or be praised [*doxasou*] with glory. Amen).

We praise thee Father; we thank thee Light in which there is no darkness. Amen.

And while we (all) give thanks, I say (explain):

I wish to be saved and I wish to save. Amen.

I wish to be delivered, and I wish to deliver. Amen.

I wish to bear wounds (*titrōskō*) and I wish to inflict them. Amen.