

0199-0217 – SS Zephyrinus – Decretalia ad Episcopos Per Aegyptum Constitutos

The Second Epistle

To the Bishops of the Province of Egypt

this file has been downloaded from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf08.html>

star shines upon them, and gladness arises, most holy brethren. Given on the 20th September, in the consulship of the most illustrious Saturninus and Gallicanus.²⁷⁰⁴

The Second Epistle.

To the Bishops of the Province of Egypt.

Zephyrinus, archbishop of the city of Rome, to the most beloved brethren who serve the Lord in Egypt.

So great trust have we received from the Lord, the Founder of this holy seat and of the apostolic church, and from the blessed Peter, chief of the apostles, that we may labour with unwearied affection²⁷⁰⁵ for the universal Church which has been redeemed by the blood of Christ, and aid all who serve the Lord, and give help to all who live piously by apostolic authority. All who will live²⁷⁰⁶ piously in Christ must needs endure reproaches from the impious and aliens, and be despised as fools and madmen, that they may be made better and purer who lose the good things of time that they may gain those of eternity. But the contempt and ridicule of those who afflict and scorn them will be cast back upon themselves, when their abundance shall change to want, and their pride to confusion.

I.

On the Spoliation or Expulsion of certain Bishops.

It has been reported at the seat of the apostles by your delegates,²⁷⁰⁷ that certain of our brethren, bishops to wit, are being expelled from their churches and seats, and deprived of their goods, and summoned, thus destitute and spoiled, to trial; a thing which is void of all reason, since the constitutions of the apostles and their successors, and the statutes of emperors, and the regulations

²⁷⁰⁴ Or, Gallus. But Saturninus and Gallus were consuls in the year 198, while Victor was yet alive.

²⁷⁰⁵ Or, diligence. [See note 2, p. 612.]

²⁷⁰⁶ 2 Tim. ii. 24.

²⁷⁰⁷ By these *apocrisarii* are meant the deputies of the bishops, and their *locum tenentes*, as it were, who manage the affairs of the Church, hear the cases of individuals, and refer them to the bishops. They are therefore called *apocrisarii*, i.e., responders, from ἀποκρίνομαι, to respond. Mention is made of them in Justinian Novell., *Quomodo oporteat Episcopos*, chap. xii. Albericus understands by them the legates of the Pope. [Note 3.]



of laws, prohibit it, and the authority of the seat of the apostles forbids it to be done. It has been ordained, indeed, in the ancient statutes, that bishops who have been ejected and spoiled of their property should recover their churches, and, in the first place, have all their property restored to them; and then, in the second place, that if any one may desire to accuse them justly, he should do so at the like risk; that the judges should be discreet, the bishops right-minded and harmonious in the Church, where they should be witnesses for every one who seemed to be oppressed; and that they should not answer till all that belonged to them was restored to them, and to their churches by law without detriment. Nor is it strange, brethren, if they persecute you, when they persecuted even to death your Head, Christ our Lord. Yet even persecutions are to be endured patiently, that ye may be known to be His disciples, for whom also ye suffer. Whence, too, he says Himself, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake.”²⁷⁰⁸ Sustained by these testimonies, we ought not greatly to fear the reproach of men, nor be overcome by their up-braidings, since the Lord gives us this command by Isaiah the prophet, saying, “Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, my people, in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings;”²⁷⁰⁹ considering what is written in the Psalm, “Shall not God search this out? for He knoweth the secrets of the heart,²⁷¹⁰ and the thoughts of such men, that they are vanity,”²⁷¹¹ “They spoke vanity every one with his neighbour: with deceitful lips in their heart, and with an evil heart they spoke. But the Lord shall cut off all deceitful lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things; who have said, Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?”²⁷¹² For if they kept these things in memory, they would by no means break forth into so great wickedness. For they do not this by laudable and paternal instruction (*probabili et paterna doctrina*), but that they may wreak their vengeful feeling against the servants of God. For it is written, “The way of a fool is right in his eyes;”²⁷¹³ and, “There are ways which seem right unto a man, but the end thereof leads to death.”²⁷¹⁴ Now we who suffer these things ought to leave them to the judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works;²⁷¹⁵ who also has thundered through His servants, saying, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay.”²⁷¹⁶ Assist ye, therefore, one another in good faith, and by deed and with a hearty will; nor let any one remove his hand from the help of a brother, since “by this,”

²⁷⁰⁸ Matt. v. 10.
²⁷⁰⁹ Isa. li. 7.
²⁷¹⁰ Ps. xliv. 21.
²⁷¹¹ Ps. xciv. 11.
²⁷¹² Ps. xii. 2–4.
²⁷¹³ Prov. xii. 15.
²⁷¹⁴ Prov. xiv. 12.
²⁷¹⁵ Matt. xvi. 27.
²⁷¹⁶ Rom. xii. 19.

saith the Lord, “shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”²⁷¹⁷ Whence, too, He speaks by the prophet, saying, “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”²⁷¹⁸ In a spiritual dwelling, I interpret it, and in a concord which is in God, and in the unity of the faith which distinguishes this pleasant dwelling according to truth, which indeed was more beautifully illustrated in Aaron and the priests²⁷¹⁹ clothed with honour, as ointment upon the head, nurturing the highest understanding and leading even to the end of wisdom. For in this dwelling the Lord has promised blessing and eternal life. Apprehending, therefore, the importance of this utterance of the prophet, we have spoken this present brotherly word for love’s sake, and by no means seeking, or meaning to seek, our own things. For it is not good to repay detraction with detraction, or *according to the common proverb* to cast out a beam with a beam (*excutere palum palo*). Be it far from us. Such manners are not ours. May the Godhead indeed forbid it. By the just judgment of God, power is given sometimes to sinners to persecute His saints, in order that they who are aided and borne on by the Spirit of God may become more glorious through the discipline of sufferings. But to those very persons who persecute, and reproach, and injure them, there will doubtless be woe. Woe, woe to those who injure the servants of God; for injury done to them concerns Him whose service they discharge, and whose function they execute. But we pray that a door of enclosure be placed upon their mouths, as we desire that no one perish or be defiled by their lips, and that they think or publish with their mouth no hurtful word. Whence also the Lord speaks by the prophet, “I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.”²⁷²⁰ May the Lord Almighty, and His only-begotten Son and our Saviour Jesus Christ, give you this incitement, that with all means in your power you aid all the brethren under whatsoever tribulations they labour, and esteem, as is meet, their sufferings your own. Afford them the utmost assistance by word and deed, that ye may be found His true disciples, who enjoined all to love the brethren as themselves.

II.

On the Ordination of Presbyters and Deacons.

²⁷¹⁷ John xiii. 35.

²⁷¹⁸ Ps. cxxxiii. 1.

²⁷¹⁹ The ms. reads, “and those wearing the priestly dignity.”

²⁷²⁰ Ps. xxxix. 1.



Ordinations of presbyters and Levites, moreover, solemnly perform on a suitable occasion, and in the presence of many witnesses; and to this duty advance tried and learned men, that ye may be greatly gladdened by their fellowship and help. Place the confidence of your hearts without ceasing on the goodness of God, and declare these and the other divine words to succeeding generations: "For this is our God for ever and ever, and He will guide us to eternity."²⁷²¹ Given on the 7th November, in the consulship of the most illustrious Saturninus and Gallicanus.²⁷²²

Notes by the American Editor.

1. The translator's reference to Canon 73 is a mistake, and quite misleading. See vol. vii. Canon 74, p. 504.

2. It is worth while to recall who and what Zephyrinus was. See vol. v. p. 156, Elucidation V.; also same volume of this series, p. 157, Elucidation VI. This unhappy prelate was a heretic; and his decrees and opinions are worthless, as Hippolytus shows. Hence this letter, even were it genuine, would be of no value whatever. Consult also vol. v. p. 156, in Elucidation IV.; also same volume, Elucidation III.

3. On p. 610, Ep. 2, sec. 1, observe the reference to the "statutes of Emperors," where the wily forger forgot himself, as if the Cæsars of this date had legislated for the Christian Church. On the spirit of the ancient Canons, refuting all these Decretals, compare the Canons of Nicæa, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 15; of Constantinople, 2 and 3; of Ephesus, 8; and of Chalcedon, 9 and 28. To these Canons, against the claims of the Paparchy, the Church of England appealed at her Restoration.



The Epistles of Pope Callistus.²⁷²³

²⁷²¹ Ps. xlviii. 14.

²⁷²² Or, Gallus. [See note 5, p. 610.]

²⁷²³ Callistus succeeded Zephyrinus in the bishopric of Rome, and discharged the duties of that office for five years. This is all the information which Eusebius (in his *Chronicon* and *Hist. Eccl.*, vi. 21) gives us in regard to Callistus. Later writers make many other statements. [See note, p. 618.]

The letters attributed to him form part of the False Decretals of the pseudo-Isidorus, mentioned in the notice of Zephyrinus.