

NPNF2-14. The Seven Ecumenical Councils

[page 594]The Canons of the Holy and Altogether August Apostles.⁵⁶⁶⁵⁶⁶⁵⁶⁶

Canon I.⁵⁶⁷⁵⁶⁷⁵⁶⁷

Let a bishop be ordained by two or three bishops.

Canon II.

Let a presbyter, deacon, and the rest of the clergy, be ordained by one bishop,

Canon III. (III. and IV.)

If any bishop or presbyter offer any other things at the altar, besides that which the Lord ordained for the sacrifice, as honey, or milk, or strong-made drink instead of wine,⁵⁶⁸⁵⁶⁸⁵⁶⁸ or birds, or any living things, or vegetables, besides that which is ordained, let him be deposed. Excepting only new ears of corn, and grapes at the suitable season. Neither is it allowed to bring anything else to the altar at the time of the holy oblation, excepting oil for the lamps, and incense.

Canon IV. (V.)

Let all other fruits be sent home as first-fruits for the bishops and presbyters, but not offered at the altar. But the bishops and presbyters should of course give a share of these things to the deacons, and the rest of the clergy.

Canon V. (VI.)

Let not a bishop, presbyter, or deacon, put away his wife under pretence of religion; but if he put her away, let him be excommunicated; and if he persists, let him be deposed.

Canon VI. (VII.)

Let not a bishop, presbyter, or deacon, undertake worldly business; otherwise let him be deposed.

Canon VII. (VIII.)

If any bishop, presbyter, or deacon, shall celebrate the holy day of Easter before the vernal equinox, with the Jews, let him be deposed.

Canon VIII (IX.)

If any bishop, presbyter, or deacon, or any one on the sacerdotal list, when the offering is made, does not partake of it, let him declare the cause; and if it be a reasonable one, let him be excused; but if he does not declare it, let him be excommunicated, as being a cause of offence to the people, and occasioning a suspicion against the offerer, as if he had not made the offering properly.

⁵⁶⁶ The Latin caption is "The Ecclesiastical Rules of the Holy Apostles, set forth by Clement, Pontiff of the Roman Church."

⁵⁶⁷ The numbering which I have followed is Hammond's, but, where it differs from that given by Hefele, I have placed Hefele's numbering in parenthesis. With Hefele agree Van Espen and Bruns (in his alternative numbering) and Johnson's marginal numbering. The numbering that Johnson himself follows is that of Cotelierius.

⁵⁶⁸ The text here varies.

Canon IX. (X.)

All the faithful who come in and hear the Scriptures, but do not stay for the prayers and the Holy Communion, are to be excommunicated, as causing disorder in the Church.

Canon X. (XI.)

If any one shall pray, even in a private house, with an excommunicated person, let him also be excommunicated.

Canon XI. (XII.)

If any clergyman shall join in prayer with a deposed clergyman, as if he were a clergyman,⁵⁶⁹⁵⁶⁹⁵⁶⁹ let him also be deposed.

Canon XII. and XIII (XIII.)

If any one of the clergy or laity who is excommunicated, or not to be received, shall go away, and be received in another city without commendatory letters, let both the receiver and the received be excommunicated.

But if he be excommunicated already, let the time of his excommunication be lengthened.

Canon XIV.

A bishop is not to be allowed to leave his own parish, and pass over into another, although he may be pressed by many to do so, unless there be some proper cause constraining him, as if he can confer some greater benefit upon the persons of that place in the word of godliness. And this must be done not of his own accord, but by the judgment of many bishops, and at their earnest exhortation.

Canon XV.

If any presbyter, or deacon, or any other of the list of the clergy, shall leave his own parish, and go into another, and having entirely forsaken his own, shall make his abode in the other parish without the permission of his own bishop, we ordain that he shall no longer perform divine service; more especially if his own bishop having exhorted him to return he has refused to do so, and persists in his disorderly conduct. But let him communicate there as a layman.

[page [595](#)]Canon XVI.

If, however, the bishop, with whom any such persons are staying, shall disregard the command that they are to cease from performing divine offices, and shall receive them as clergymen, let him be excommunicated, as a teacher of disorder.

Canon XVII.

He who has been twice married after baptism, or who has had a concubine, cannot become a bishop, presbyter, or deacon, or any other of the sacerdotal list.

Canon XVIII.

⁵⁶⁹ Hammond seems to have omitted ὡς κληρικῶν, which I have supplied.

He who married a widow, or a divorced woman, or an harlot, or a servant-maid, or an actress, cannot be a bishop, presbyter, or deacon, or any other of the sacerdotal list.

Canon XIX.

He who has married two sisters, or a niece, cannot become a clergyman.

Canon XX.

If a clergyman becomes surety for any one, let him be deposed.

Canon XXI.

An eunuch, if he has been made so by the violence of men or [if his *virilia* have been amputated⁵⁷⁰⁵⁷⁰⁵⁷⁰] in times of persecution, or if he has been born so, if in other respects he is worthy, may be made a bishop.

Canon XXII.

He who has mutilated himself, cannot become a clergyman, for he is a self-murderer, and an enemy to the workmanship of God.

Canon XXIII.

If any man being a clergyman shall mutilate himself, let him be deposed, for he is a self-murderer.

Canon XXIV.

If a layman mutilate himself, let him be excommunicated for three years, as practising against his own life.

Canon XXV. (XXV. and XXVI.)

If a bishop, presbyter, or deacon be found guilty of fornication, perjury, or theft, let him be deposed, but let him not be excommunicated; for the Scripture says, “thou shalt not punish a man twice for the same offence.” In like manner the other clergy shall be subject to the same proceeding.⁵⁷¹⁵⁷¹⁵⁷¹

Canon XXVI. (XXVII.)

Of those who have been admitted to the clergy unmarried, we ordain, that the readers and singers only may, if they will, marry.

Canon XXVII. (XXVIII.)

If a bishop, presbyter, or deacon shall strike any of the faithful who have sinned, or of the unbelievers who have done wrong, with the intention of frightening them, we command that he be deposed. For our Lord has by no means taught us to do so, but, on the contrary, when he was smitten he smote not again, when he was reviled he reviled not again, when he suffered he threatened not.

Canon XXVIII. (XXIX.)

⁵⁷⁰ Hammond has omitted these words.

⁵⁷¹ I have changed Hammond’s rendering of this last phrase, “in like manner with respect to the other clergy.”

If any bishop, presbyter, or deacon, having been justly deposed upon open accusations, shall dare to meddle with any of the divine offices which had been intrusted to him, let him be altogether cut off from the Church.

Canon XXIX. (XXX.)

If any bishop, presbyter, or deacon, shall obtain possession of that dignity by money, let both him and the person who ordained him be deposed, and also altogether cut off from all communion, as Simon Magus was by me Peter.

Canon XXX. (XXXI.)

If any bishop obtain possession of a church by the aid of the temporal powers, let him be deposed and excommunicated, and all who communicate with him.

Canon XXXI. (XXXII.)

If any presbyter, despising his own bishop, shall collect a separate congregation, and erect another altar, not having any grounds for condemning the bishop with regard to religion or justice, let him be deposed for his ambition; for he is a tyrant; in like manner also the rest of the clergy, and as many as join him; and let laymen be excommunicated. Let this, however, be done after a first, second, and third admonition from the bishop.

Canon XXXII. (XXXIII.)

If any presbyter or deacon has been excommunicated by a bishop, he may not be received [page [596](#)] into communion again by any other than by him who excommunicated him, unless it happen that the bishop who excommunicated him be dead.

Canon XXXIII. (XXXIV.)

No foreign bishop, presbyter, or deacon, may be received without commendatory letters; and when they are produced let the persons be examined; and if they be preachers of godliness, let them be received. Otherwise, although you supply them with what they need, you must not receive them into communion, for many things are done surreptitiously.

Canon XXXIV. (XXXV.)

The bishops of every nation must acknowledge him who is first among them and account him as their head, and do nothing of consequence without his consent; but each may do those things only which concern his own parish, and the country places which belong to it. But neither let him (who is the first) do anything without the consent of all; for so there will be unanimity, and God will be glorified through the Lord in the Holy Spirit.⁵⁷²⁵⁷²⁵⁷²

Canon XXXV. (XXXVI.)

Let not a bishop dare to ordain beyond his own limits, in cities and places not subject to him. But if he be convicted of doing so, without the consent of those persons who have authority over such cities and places, let him be deposed, and those also whom he has ordained.

Canon XXXVI. (XXXVII.)

⁵⁷² The text here differs; I follow Beveridge. Hammond reads, "Through the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father through the Lord by the Holy Spirit, even the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

If any person, having been ordained bishop, does not undertake the ministry, and the care of the people committed to him, let him be excommunicated until he does undertake it. In like manner a presbyter or deacon. But if he has gone and has not been received, not of his own will but from the perverseness of the people, let him continue bishop; and let the clergy of the city be excommunicated, because they have not corrected the disobedient people.

Canon XXXVII. (XXXVIII.)

Let there be a meeting of the bishops twice a year, and let them examine amongst themselves the decrees concerning religion and settle the ecclesiastical controversies which may have occurred. One meeting to be held in the fourth week of Pentecost [i.e., the fourth week after Easter], and the other on the 12th day of the month Hyperberetæus [i.e., October].

Canon XXXVIII. (XXXIX.)

Let the bishop have the care of all the goods of the Church, and let him administer them as under the inspection of God. But he must not alienate any of them or give the things which belong to God to his own relations. If they be poor let him relieve them as poor; but let him not, under that pretence, sell the goods of the Church.

Canon XXXIX. (XL.)

Let not the presbyters or deacons do anything without the sanction of the bishop; for he it is who is intrusted with the people of the Lord, and of whom will be required the account of their souls.

Canon XL. (XL. Continued.)

Let the private goods of the bishop, if he have any such, and those of the Lord, be clearly distinguished, that the bishop may have the power of leaving his own goods, when he dies, to whom he will, and how he will, and that the bishop's own property may not be lost under pretence of its being the property of the Church: for it may be that he has a wife, or children, or relations, or servants; and it is just before God and man, that neither should the Church suffer any loss through ignorance of the bishop's own property, nor the bishop or his relations be injured under pretext of the Church: nor that those who belong to him should be involved in contests, and cast reproaches upon his death.

Canon XLI.

We ordain that the bishop have authority over the goods of the Church: for if he is to be intrusted with the precious souls of men, much more are temporal possessions to be intrusted to him. He is therefore to administer them all of his own authority, and supply those who need, through the presbyters and deacons, in the fear of God, and with all reverence. He may also, if need be, take what is required for his own necessary wants, and for the brethren to whom he has to show hospitality, so that he may not be in any want. For the law of God has ordained, that they who wait at the altar should be nourished of the altar. Neither does any soldier bear arms against an enemy at his own cost.

Canon XLII.

If a bishop or presbyter, or deacon, is addicted to dice or drinking, let him either give it over, or be deposed.

Canon XLIII.

If a subdeacon, reader, or singer, commits the same things, let him either give over, or be excommunicated. So also laymen.

Canon XLIV.

Let a bishop, presbyter, or deacon, who takes usury from those who borrow of him, give up doing so, or be deposed.

Canon XLV.

Let a bishop, presbyter, or deacon, who has only prayed with heretics, be excommunicated: but if he has permitted them to perform any clerical office, let him be deposed.

Canon XLVI.

We ordain that a bishop, or presbyter, who has admitted the baptism or sacrifice of heretics, be deposed. For what concord hath Christ with Belial, or what part hath a believer with an infidel?

Canon XLVII.

Let a bishop or presbyter who shall baptize again one who has rightly received baptism, or who shall not baptize one who has been polluted by the ungodly, be deposed, as despising the cross and death of the Lord, and not making a distinction between the true priests and the false.

Canon XLVIII.

If any layman put away his wife and marry another, or one who has been divorced by another man, let him be excommunicated.

Canon XLIX.

If any bishop or presbyter, contrary to the ordinance of the Lord, does not baptize into the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, but into three Unoriginated Beings, or three Sons, or three Comforters, let him be deposed.

Canon L.

If any bishop or presbyter does not perform the one initiation with three immersions, but with giving one immersion only, into the death of the Lord, let him be deposed. For the Lord said not, Baptize into my death, but, "Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Canon LI.

If any bishop, presbyter, or deacon, or any one of the sacerdotal list, abstains from marriage, or flesh, or wine, not by way of religious restraint, but as abhorring them, forgetting that God made all things very good, and that he made man male and female, and blaspheming the work of creation, let him be corrected, or else be deposed, and cast out of the Church. In like manner a layman.

Canon LII.

If any bishop or presbyter,⁵⁷³ does not receive him who turns away from his sin, but rejects him, let him be deposed; for he grieveth Christ who said, “There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.”

Canon LIII.

If any bishop, presbyter, or deacon, does not on festival days partake of flesh and wine, from an abhorrence of them, and not out of religious restraint, let him be deposed, as being seared in his own conscience, and being the cause of offence to many.

Canon LIV.

If any of the clergy be found eating in a tavern, let him be excommunicated, unless he has been constrained by necessity, on a journey, to lodge in an inn.

Canon LV.

If any of the clergy insult the bishop, let him be deposed: for “thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.”

Canon LVI.

If any of the clergy insult a presbyter, or deacon, let him be excommunicated.

Canon LVII.

If any of the clergy mock the lame, or the deaf, or the blind, or him who is infirm in his legs, let him be excommunicated. In like manner any of the laity.

Canon LVIII.

If any bishop or presbyter neglects the clergy or the people, and does not instruct them in the way of godliness, let him be ex[page 598]communicated, and if he persists in his negligence and idleness, let him be deposed.

Canon LIX.

If any bishop, presbyter, or deacon, when any of the clergy is in want, does not supply him with what he needs, let him be excommunicated; but if he persists, let him be deposed, as one who has killed his brother.

Canon LX.

If any one reads publicly in the church the falsely inscribed⁵⁷⁴ books of impious men, as if they were holy Scripture, to the destruction of the people and clergy, let him be deposed.

Canon LXI.

If any accusation be brought against a believer of fornication or adultery, or any forbidden action, and he be convicted, let him not be promoted to the clergy.

Canon LXII.

⁵⁷³ Hammond adds “or deacon.”

⁵⁷⁴ Hammond translates “bearing false inscriptions,” the Greek is ψευδεπίγραφα.

If any of the clergy, through fear of men, whether Jew, heathen, or heretic, shall deny the name of Christ, let him be cast out. If he deny the name of a clergyman, let him be deposed. If he repent, let him be received as a layman.

Canon LXIII.

If any bishop, presbyter, or deacon, or any one of the sacerdotal order, shall eat flesh, with the blood of the life thereof, or anything killed by beasts, or that dies of itself, let him be deposed. For the law has forbidden this. If he be a layman, let him be excommunicated.

Canon LXIV.

If any clergyman or layman shall enter into a synagogue of Jews or heretics to pray, let the former be deposed and let the latter be excommunicated.⁵⁷⁵⁵⁷⁵⁵⁷⁵

Canon LXV.

If any clergyman shall strike anyone in a contest, and kill him with one blow, let him be deposed for his violence. If a layman do so, let him be excommunicated.

Canon LXVI.

If any of the clergy be found fasting on the Lord's day, or on the Sabbath,⁵⁷⁶⁵⁷⁶⁵⁷⁶ excepting the one only, let him be deposed. If a layman, let him be excommunicated.

Canon LXVII.

If anyone shall force and keep a virgin not espoused, let him be excommunicated. And he may not take any other, but must retain her whom he has chosen, though she be a poor person.

Canon LXVIII.

If any bishop, presbyter, or deacon, shall receive from anyone a second ordination, let both the ordained and the ordainer be deposed; unless indeed it be proved that he had his ordination from heretics; for those who have been baptized or ordained by such persons cannot be either of the faithful or of the clergy.

Canon LXIX.

If any bishop, presbyter, or deacon, or reader, or singer, does not fast the holy Quadragesimal fast of Easter, or the fourth day, or the day of Preparation, let him be deposed, unless he be hindered by some bodily infirmity. If he be a layman, let him be excommunicated.

Canon LXX.

If any bishop, presbyter, or deacon, or any one of the list of clergy, keeps fast or festival with the Jews, or receives from them any of the gifts of their feasts, as unleavened bread, any such things, let him be deposed. If he be a layman, let him be excommunicated.

Canon LXXI.

If any Christian brings oil into a temple of the heathen or into a synagogue of the Jews at their feast, or lights lamps, let him be excommunicated.

⁵⁷⁵ Hammond translates differently with the same meaning.

⁵⁷⁶ Hammond substitutes "any Saturday," and omits the word "only."

Canon LXXII.

If any clergyman or layman takes away wax or oil from the holy Church, let him be excommunicated, [and let him restore a fifth part more than he took.]⁵⁷⁷⁵⁷⁷⁵⁷⁷

Canon LXXIII.

Let no one convert to his own use any vessel of gold or silver, or any veil which has been sanctified, for it is contrary to law; and if anyone be detected doing so, let him be excommunicated.

[page ⁵⁹⁹]Canon LXXIV.

If any bishop has been accused of anything by men worthy of credit, he must be summoned by the bishops; and if he appears, and confesses, or is convicted, a suitable punishment must be inflicted upon him. But if when he is summoned he does not attend, let him be summoned a second time, two bishops being sent to him, for that purpose. [If even then he will not attend, let him be summoned a third time, two bishops being again sent to him.⁵⁷⁸⁵⁷⁸⁵⁷⁸] But if even then he shall disregard the summons and not come, let the synod pronounce such sentence against him as appears right, that he may not seem to profit by avoiding judgment.

Canon LXXV.

An heretic is not to be received as witness against a bishop, neither only one believer; for “in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word shall be established.”

Canon LXXVI.

A bishop must not out of favour to a brother or a son, or any other relation, ordain whom he will to the episcopal dignity; for it is not right to make heirs of the bishopric, giving the things of God to human affections. Neither is it fitting to subject the Church of God to heirs. But if anyone shall do so let the ordination be void, and the ordainer himself be punished with excommunication.

Canon LXXVII.

If any one be deprived of an eye, or lame of a leg, but in other respects be worthy of a bishopric, he may be ordained, for the defect of the body does not defile a man, but the pollution of the soul.

Canon LXXVIII.

But if a man be deaf or blind, he may not be made a bishop, not indeed as if he were thus defiled, but that the affairs of the Church may not be hindered.

Canon LXXIX.

If anyone has a devil, let him not be made a clergyman, neither let him pray with the faithful; but if he be freed, let him be received into communion, and if he is worthy he may be ordained.

Canon LXXX.

⁵⁷⁷ This last phrase is omitted by Hammond, but is found in the Latin and in some of the Greek texts.

⁵⁷⁸ According to Hefele, these words are only in the Latin, but they are in the Greek text of Beveridge.

It is not allowed that a man who has come over from an heathen life, and been baptized or who has been converted from an evil course of living, should be immediately made a bishop, for it is not right that he who has not been tried himself should be a teacher of others. Unless indeed this be done upon a special manifestation of Divine grace in his favour.

Canon LXXXI.

We have said that a bishop or presbyter must not give himself to the management of public affairs, but devote himself to ecclesiastical business. Let him then be persuaded to do so, or let him be deposed, for no man can serve two masters, according to the Lord's declaration.

Canon LXXXII.

We do not allow any servants to be promoted to the clergy without the consent of their masters, [to the troubling of their houses.⁵⁷⁹⁵⁷⁹] But if any servant should appear worthy of receiving an order,⁵⁸⁰⁵⁸⁰ as our Onesimus appeared, and his masters agree and liberate him, and send him out of their house, he may be ordained.

Canon LXXXIII.

If a bishop, presbyter, or deacon, shall serve in the army, and wish to retain both the Roman magistracy and the priestly office, let him be deposed; for the things of Cæsar belong to Cæsar, and those of God to God.

Canon LXXXIV.

Whosoever shall insult the King, or a ruler, contrary to what is right, let him suffer punishment. If he be a clergyman, let him be deposed; if a layman, excommunicated.

Canon LXXXV.

Let the following books be counted venerable and sacred by all of you, both clergy and Laity. Of the Old Testament, five books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; of Joshua the Son of Nun, one; of the Judges, one; of Ruth, one; of the Kings, four; of the Chronicles of the book of the days, two; of Ezra, two; of Esther, one; [some texts read "of Judith, one";] of the Maccabees, three; of Job, one; of the Psalter, one; of Solomon, three, viz.: Pro[page 600]verbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs; of the Prophets, twelve; of Isaiah, one; of Jeremiah, one; of Ezekiel, one; of Daniel, one. But besides these you are recommended to teach your young persons the Wisdom of the very learned Sirach. Our own books, that is, those of the New Testament, are: the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; fourteen Epistles of Paul; two Epistles of Peter; three of John; one of James, and one of Jude. Two Epistles of Clemens, and the Constitutions of me Clemens, addressed to you Bishops, in eight books, which are not to be published to all on account of the mystical things in them. And the Acts of us the Apostles.⁵⁸¹⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁹ According to Hefele this is only in the Latin, but it is found in the Greek of Beveridge.

⁵⁸⁰ I have changed Hammond's translation here.

⁵⁸¹ The text of this canon is quite different in the different codices and versions. I have departed from Hammond's version.