

Adulterer-Usurper Bishops

Has anyone ever heard of an adulterer-usurper bishop? What is an adulterer-usurper [in Greek, *mihepivátis*] bishop? First of all, *The Rudder* has many holy canons that deal with such bishops.

An adulterer-usurper bishop is a bishop who tries to take over another diocese in addition to his own. Or, he seeks to take over a diocese that is bigger and/or more important than his own original diocese.

Why do the holy canons forbid this?

Because once a bishop becomes a ruling bishop of a certain diocese, he is, literally, *wedded* to it forever. It's a marriage with no divorce; it's "for better or for worse", as the saying goes. That's why, when bishops [including, of course, metropolitans, archbishops or patriarchs] die, their dioceses are called "widowed" dioceses. Also, if such a bishop tries to take over another diocese, he becomes an "adulterer" [because he's married already]!

Adulterer-usurper bishops are the *bane* of so-called World-Orthodoxy — but also, alas, of many old calendarist jurisdictions in Greece and elsewhere. The basic problem is human ambition, or greed, or both. As the Church writings say again and again, such bishops love *chrysón* [gold] more than *Christón* [Christ]. Believe it or not, sometimes such bishops will try to get a bigger or more important diocese by campaigning openly for it, as though it were a political office!

The Greek people have a saying: "Authority shows the man." That is to say, when a person receives a position of authority *that's* when you'll see what kind of person he *really* is. This happens with bishops too, some of whom, alas, are quite ambitious.

Surprisingly, these men can often be detected. In the Lives of the Saints and in the holy canons, they are very often described as "tyrannical" [or, as we say in America, "control freaks"] and greedy. In the secular world, with the CEO's of big corporations, for example, this type of person is almost the norm. But in the Church of God, they are disasters. As the Church Fathers tell us time and again, these men are not true shepherds.

It was mentioned earlier that this type of bishop is one of the banes of "World Orthodoxy". "World Orthodoxy" bishops are not Orthodox, of course, so you would expect to see this type of CEO bishop among them. In a way, though, adulterer-usurper bishops are worse than non-Orthodox bishops. Non-Orthodox bishops are, after all, outside of the Church, but adulterer-usurper bishops are often *inside* the Church. They are like foxes *inside* the chicken-coop!

May God preserve us from such bishops. As the holy canons teach us again and again, we must be on our guard and reject such "shepherds" and not accept them, or commemorate them. Their actions, say the holy canons, make them liable to deposition [i.e., defrockment]. "Stand fast and hold the traditions ye have received" [II Thess. 2:15]! Be on your watch!

Some Canons About “Adulterer-Usurper” Bishops

CANON 15 of the First Ecumenical Council (A.D. 325)

ON account of the great disturbance and discords that occur, it is decreed that the custom prevailing in certain places contrary to the Canon, must wholly be done away; so that neither bishop, presbyter, nor deacon shall pass from city to city. And if any one, after this decree of the holy and great Synod, shall attempt any such thing, or continue in any such course, his proceedings shall be utterly void, and he shall be restored to the Church for which he was ordained bishop or presbyter.

ANCIENT EPITOME OF CANON 15.

Neither bishop, presbyter, nor deacon shall pass from city to city. But they shall be sent back, should they attempt to do so, to the Churches in which they were ordained.

CANON 21 of Antioch (A.D. 341)

A BISHOP may not be translated from one parish to another, either intruding himself of his own suggestion, or under compulsion by the people, or by constraint of the bishops; but he shall remain in the Church to which he was allotted by God from the beginning, and shall not be translated from it, according to the decree formerly passed on the subject.

ANCIENT EPITOME OF CANON 21.

A bishop even if compelled by the people, and compelled by the bishops, must not be translated to another diocese.

CANON 1 of Sardica (A.D. 347)

HOSIUS, bishop of the city of Corduba, said: A prevalent evil, or rather most mischievous corruption must be done away with from its very foundations. Let no bishop be allowed to remove from a small city to a different one: as there is an obvious reason for this fault, accounting for such attempts; since no bishop could ever yet be found who endeavoured to be translated from a larger city to a smaller one. It is therefore evident that such persons are inflamed with excessive covetousness and are only serving ambition in order to have the repute of possessing greater authority. Is it then the pleasure of all that so grave an abuse be punished with great severity? For I think that men of this sort should not be admitted even to lay communion. All the bishops said: It is the pleasure of all.

ANCIENT EPITOME OF CANON 1.

NO bishop is to be found passing from a smaller to a greater city. If anyone should move from an humble to a more important see, he shall be excommunicated through his whole life as proud and grasping.

CANON 2 of Sardica (A.D. 347)

BISHOP HOSIUS said: But if any such person should be found so mad or audacious as to think to advance by way of excuse an affirmation that he had brought letters from the people [laity], it is plain that some few persons, corrupted by bribes and rewards, could have got up an uproar in the church, demanding, forsooth, the said man for bishop. I think then that practices and devices of such sort absolutely must be punished, so that a man of this kind be deemed unworthy even of lay communion in extremis. Do ye therefore make answer whether this sentence is approved by you. They [the bishops] answered: We approve.

ANCIENT EPITOME OF CANON 2.

If anyone shall pass from one city to another, and shall raise up seditions, tickling the people and be assisted by them in raising a disturbance, he shall not be allowed communion even when dying.

CANON 48 of Carthage (Nicene Series)

Of re-baptisms, re-ordinations, and translations of bishops.
BUT we suggest that we decree what was set forth by the wisdom of the plenary synod at Capua, that no re-baptizing, nor re-ordinations should take place, and that bishops should not be translated. For Cresconius, bishop of Villa Regis, left his own people and invaded the Church of Tubinia and having been admonished down to this very day, to leave, according to the decree, the diocese he had invaded, he treated the admonition with disdain. We have heard that the sentence pronounced against him has been confirmed; but we seek, according to our decree, that ye deign to grant that being driven thereto by necessity, it be free to us to address the rector of the province against him, according to the statutes of the most glorious princes, so that whoever is not willing to acquiesce in the mild admonition of your holiness and to amend his lawlessness, shall be immediately cast out by judicial authority. Aurelius the bishop said: By the observance of the constituted form, let him not be judged to be a member of the synod, if he has been asked by you, dear brethren, to depart and has refused: for out of his own contempt and contumacy he has fallen to the power of the secular magistrate. Honoratus and Urban the bishops said: This pleases us all, does it not? And all the bishops answered: It is just, it pleases us.

ANCIENT EPITOME OF CANON 48.

Let there be no re-baptisms, nor re-ordinations nor translations of bishops. Therefore let Cresconius be forbidden by judicial authority, for he has left his own people, and has taken possession of the diocese of Ceneum, although ecclesiastically admonished that he was not to change.