

**SELECT EPISTLES OF ST. CYPRIAN
TREATING OF THE EPISCOPATE,
AFTER THE TRANSLATION OF
NATHANIEL MARSHALL**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649087044

Select epistles of St. Cyprian treating of the episcopate, after the translation of Nathaniel Marshall by T. A. Lacey

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

T. A. LACEY

**SELECT EPISTLES OF ST. CYPRIAN
TREATING OF THE EPISCOPATE,
AFTER THE TRANSLATION OF
NATHANIEL MARSHALL**

TRANSLATIONS OF CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

GENERAL EDITORS: W. J. SPARROW-SIMPSON, D.D.
W. K. LOWTHER CLARKE, B.D.

SERIES II
LATIN TEXTS

SELECT EPISTLES OF
ST. CYPRIAN

TRANSLATIONS OF CHRISTIAN
LITERATURE. SERIES II
LATIN TEXTS

BIBL. MAJ.
COLLEGE

SELECT EPISTLES
OF S^T. CYPRIAN
TREATING OF THE EPISCOPATE

AFTER THE TRANSLATION OF
NATHANIEL MARSHALL

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION & NOTES

By T. A. LACEY, M. A.
CANON OF WORCESTER

SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE. London
The Macmillan Company. New York

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
RICHARD CLAY & SONS, LIMITED,
BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.

PREFACE

ONE of the earlier glories of the Oxford Press was the great edition of the works of St. Cyprian, published in the year 1682. They were "recognita et illustrata" by John Fell, Bishop of Oxford. The text is a poor one, based on inferior manuscripts not very carefully compared; the commentary is for the most part borrowed from Rigault; but to this second-rate and second-hand matter is prefixed the great work of Pearson, the *Annales Cyprianici*, which makes the edition monumental. Pearson was the first to arrange the Epistles in a chronological order approximately correct. He made some considerable mistakes; he undervalued the evidence of the *Liber Pontificalis*, and he was too anxious to correct Baronius—not always happily. But later scholars have depended mainly on him, even for the purpose of setting him right.

Fired by the fame of this edition, the Rev. Nathaniel Marshall, LL.B., rector of St. Vedast in the City of London, published in the year 1717 a translation of remarkable ease and freedom, written in the familiar language of Defoe. The style does not in the least resemble that of the original, which no English rendering could well reproduce. St. Cyprian's own literary manner is a curious mixture of dignity and clumsiness. Trained, and perhaps overtrained, in the practice of rhetoric, he is seldom natural, even when deeply moved. His use of the *cursus* secures a constant sonority of phrase, but his periodic construction is intolerably diffuse. His one merit as a writer of Latin prose is the important one that his meaning is seldom obscure, but the sense has to be unravelled. Sir Thomas

Browne could have matched and surpassed his sonority in English, but would certainly have torn his sentences to pieces for reconstruction. Mr. Marshall had no gift of sonority, but he performed the tearing process with a deft hand, and did not often fail in the reconstruction. He allowed himself more liberties than a modern translator would take, but he produced a rendering which is unlike most modern attempts in being eminently readable.

Asked to edit in English a selection of St. Cyprian's Epistles dealing with the nature and functions of the episcopate, I resolved to make use of this translation. Nor have I dared to improve it. I have worked over it with care, noting all the translator's omissions, his sometimes generous additions, and the few cases in which he seems to have missed the true sense. The additions seldom do anything but illuminate the meaning of the original, though he sometimes unnecessarily accentuates the indignation of his author against schismatics—perhaps with an eye on Dissenters in the City of London; the omissions are usually a paring of redundancies. Except for the correction of obvious errors, I have left his spelling untouched, as savouring of the time, but I have ventured for the comfort of readers to lighten his inordinately heavy punctuation. I have further compared Fell's text throughout with Hartel's, noting all important variations.

T. A. LACEY.

INTRODUCTION

§ 1. ORIGINS.

THASCIUS CAECILIUS CYPRIANUS was a Roman of the Province of Africa, born about the beginning of the third century. A professional orator, a successful pleader, he served various magistracies and amassed or inherited a considerable fortune. When advanced in life he became intimately acquainted¹ with a Christian priest named Caecilianus, who had the happiness of bringing him to baptism, died soon afterwards, and committed his wife and children to the care of the new convert. In his tract *Ad Donatum*, which purports to be a monologue addressed to a neighbour in a pleasant rustic retreat, Cyprian describes his long hesitation; like Augustine a century and a half later, he had doubted the possibility of the renunciation required in the profession of Christianity; a new birth, a change of heart and soul, the subversion of the habits of a lifetime, was almost inconceivable; to lay aside his official honours, to descend into a private station, to abandon his lucrative practice of the law, was more than he could face; above all, the loneliness of the prospect terrified him. He does not mention sensual vices to be overcome, and his life had probably been orderly according to the standard of the time, but as Augustine felt himself called upon to renounce even marriage on his conversion, so Cyprian found it necessary to abandon the temperate enjoyment of life to which he was accustomed; well-served dinners and expensive clothing would have to be given up,

¹ Pont., *Vita*, 4, "contubernium."

as well as the public functions which would no longer be open to him as a Christian. This outlook was personal. His own testimony, like that of Tertullian, makes it plain that austere manners were by no means universal among Christians; but it is evident that from the first he himself contemplated no compromise with worldliness; he must accept the Evangelic Counsels in their strict sense, or remain as he was.

He was baptized in the year 246, and his next act proved the sincerity of his hesitation. He sold almost the whole of his possessions and gave the proceeds for the relief of the poor. A further act of renunciation is even more remarkable. In his previous calling he must have become steeped in Latin literature, and he was probably a better Grecian than St. Augustine; but unlike Augustine, unlike the Tertullian whom he called "the master," he seems to have laid aside even the memory of these studies. If it is strange to find Augustine the Roman, the sometime professor of rhetoric, distinguishing the Hebrew scriptures as "our literature" from the Latin classics which he had previously taught,¹ it is even more remarkable that Cyprian abstained entirely as a Christian writer from quoting for the purpose of illustration the books in the study of which his life had been spent. The little tract, *Quod idola dii non sint*, appears to be a record of his own questionings before his baptism; it shows, as St. Jerome remarked, how intimately he knew the mythology of the Greek and Latin poets;² yet even here there is not a single quotation. His fellow-countryman Lactantius, who was far from imitating him in this respect, complained that his writings consequently appealed only to Christians, and were useless for

¹ *Retract.* i. 1.

² Jerome, *Ep.* 84: "Cyprianus quod idola dii non sint qua breuitate, qua historiarum omnium scientia, quorum uerborum et sensuum splendore perstrinxit."