

Novel 141.

Edict of Justinian to the people of Constantinople about debauchery contrary to nature.

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Preface. While we are always in need of the mercy and indulgence of God, we are especially so at this time, when we have raised His wrath by reason of our many sins. And He has threatened and shown what punishment we deserve on account of these sins. Still He is benign and has put down His wrath, hoping for our repentance, since He does not wish for our destruction because of our sins, but wishes for our conversion and wants us to live. Hence it is unrighteous to disregard the abundance of kindness, patience and benevolent clemency of God, lest we overwhelm ourselves from day to day with His ire, by reason of our hardened hearts, strangers to repentance. We should, on the contrary, abstain from all dishonorable desires and actions, especially should that be done by those who have befouled themselves by their abominable conduct, rightly hateful to God. We speak of the debauchery of males which many, wickedly, commit, these males having unnatural relations with each other.

c. 1. We know from the holy scriptures what just punishment God inflicted upon the former inhabitants of Sodom on account of such insane, unnatural relation, so that to this day that region burns with an unextinguished fire, whereby He teaches us that we should abominate such conduct. Again we know what the holy apostle says about it, and what the laws of the country state. Hence all should, in fear of God, abstain from such impious and nefarious acts, which are not committed even by the dumb brutes. Person who are not guilty of such crime, must remain guiltless in the future; persons who have already befouled themselves by such passion, must not alone refrain therefrom hereafter, but must also repent and submit themselves to God, report their insane conduct to the patriarch, receive a means of cure and thereupon enjoy the fruits of their repentance according to the scriptures, so that the merciful God may, in the abundance of His compassion, also deem us worthy of His mercy, and that we may all return thanks to Him for the salvation of those who

repented. And we have also directed our magistrates to prosecute the guilty persons, in order to reconcile God, who is justly angry with us. And now directing our minds to the holy days (Easter), we ask the benign God that those who have rolled in the filthy of such impious action, may be brought to such repentance that we shall have no further occasion to prosecute them. And we notify all who are guilty of such sin that unless they desist therefrom, report to the blessed patriarch and look out for their own salvation, placating, during the holy days, the anger of God on account of their impious acts, they will bring harsher punishment upon themselves and will not be worthy of future pardon. And we shall not omit or neglect to seek out and punish those who fail to report themselves during the holy days but continue their impious acts, lest we raise the anger of God against us, if we neglect this matter, and overlook such impious and prohibited conduct which is of such character as to invite the good God to destroy us all. Let this law be published to the citizens of Constantinople.

Given March 15, 559.