

0170-0251 – Alexander Cappadocicus – Epistolae

From the Epistles of Alexander

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Who among the mathematicians has made any discovery?

Eudemus¹²¹⁹ relates in his *Astrologies* that Cænopides¹²²⁰ found out the circle of the zodiac and the cycle¹²²¹ of the great year. And Thales¹²²² discovered the eclipse of the sun and its period in the tropics in its constant inequality. And Anaximander¹²²³ discovered that the earth is poised in space,¹²²⁴ and moves round the axis of the universe. And Anaximenes¹²²⁵ discovered that the moon has her light from the sun, and found out also the way in which she suffers eclipse. And the rest of the mathematicians have also made additions to these discoveries. We may instance the facts—that the fixed stars move round the axis passing through the poles, while the planets remove from each other¹²²⁶ round the perpendicular axis of the zodiac; and that the axis of the fixed stars and the planets is the side of a pentedecagon with four-and-twenty parts.

Alexander of Cappadocia.

Translator's Biographical Notice.

[A.D. 170–233–251.] Alexander was at first bishop of a church in Cappadocia, but on his visiting Jerusalem he was appointed to the bishopric of the church there, while the previous bishop Narcissus was alive, in consequence of a vision which was believed to be divine.¹²²⁷ During the Decian persecution he was thrown into prison at Cæsarea, and died there,¹²²⁸ A.D. 251. The only writings of his which we know are those from which the extracts are made.¹²²⁹

1219 A native of Rhodes, a disciple of Aristotle, and editor of his works.

1220 A native of Chios, mentioned by Plato in connection with Anaxagoras, and therefore supposed by some to have been a contemporary of the latter sage.

1221 περίσταςιν, revolution.

1222 Of Miletus, one of the sages, and founder of the Ionic school.

1223 Of Miletus, born 610 B.C., the immediate successor of Thales in the Ionic school of philosophy.

1224 μετέωρος.

1225 Of Miletus, the third in the series of Ionic philosophers.

1226 απεχουσιν ἀλλήλων.

1227 Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, vi. 11. [Narcissus must have been born about A.D. 121. Might have known Polycarp.]

1228 Ibid., vi. 46. [Narcissus lived till A.D. 237, and died a martyr, aged 116.]

1229 [He was a pupil of Pantænus, continued under Clement, and defended Origen against the severity of Demetrius. Two dates which are conjectural are adjusted to these facts. I find it difficult to reconcile them with those *implied* by Eusebius.]



From the Epistles of Alexander.

I. An Epistle to the People of Antioch.¹²³⁰

Alexander, a servant and prisoner of Jesus Christ, sends greeting in the Lord to the blessed church of Antioch. Easy and light has the Lord made my bonds to me during the time of my imprisonment since I have learned that in the providence of God, Asclepiades—who, in regard to the right faith, is most eminently qualified for the office—has undertaken the episcopate of your holy church of Antioch. And this epistle, my brethren and masters, I have sent by the hand of the blessed presbyter Clement,¹²³¹ a man virtuous and well tried, whom ye know already, and will know yet better; who also, coming here by the providence and supervision of the Master, has strengthened and increased the Church of the Lord.

II. From an Epistle to the Antinoites.¹²³²

Narcissus salutes you, who held the episcopate in this district before me, who is now also my colleague and competitor in prayer for you,¹²³³ and who, having now attained to¹²³⁴ his hundred and tenth year, unites with me in exhorting you to be of one mind.¹²³⁵

¹²³⁰ A fragment. In Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.*, book vi. ch. xi.

¹²³¹ It was the opinion of Jerome in his *Catalogus* that the Clement spoken of by Alexander was Clement of Alexandria. This Clement, at any rate, did live up to the time of the Emperor Severus, and sojourned in these parts, as he tells us himself in the first book of his *Stromateis*. And he was also the friend of bishop Alexander, to whom he dedicated his book *On the Ecclesiastical Canon, or Against the Jews*, as Eusebius states in his *Eccles. Hist.*, book vi. ch. xiii. (Migne). [But from the third of these epistles one would certainly draw another inference. How could he, a pupil of Clement, describe and introduce his *master* in such terms as he uses here?]

¹²³² In Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, book vi. ch. xi.

¹²³³ συνεξεταζόμενός μοι διὰ τῶν εὐχῶν. Jerome renders it: *Salutat vos Narcissus, qui ante me hic tenuit episcopalem locum et nunc mecum eundem orationibus regit.*

¹²³⁴ ηνυκῶς.

¹²³⁵ The text gives ὁμοίως ἐμοὶ φρονῆσαι. Several of the codices and also Nicephorus give the better reading, ὁμοίως ἐμοὶ ὁμοφρονῆσαι, which is confirmed by the interpretations of Rufinus and Jerome.

III. From an Epistle to Origen.¹²³⁶

For this, as thou knowest, was the will of God, that the friendship subsisting between us from our forefathers should be maintained unbroken, yea rather, that it should increase in fervency and strength. For we are well acquainted with those blessed fathers who have trodden the course before us, and to whom we too shall soon go: Pantænus, namely, that man verily blessed, my master; and also the holy Clement, who was once my master and my benefactor; and all the rest who may be like them, by whose means also I have come to know thee, my lord and brother, who excellest all.¹²³⁷

IV. From an Epistle to Demetrius, Bishop of Alexandria.¹²³⁸

And he¹²³⁹—i.e., *Demetrius*—has added to his letter that this is a matter that was never heard of before, and has never been done now,—namely, that laymen should take part *in public speaking*,¹²⁴⁰ when there are bishops present. But in this assertion he has departed evidently far from the truth by some means. For, indeed, wherever there are found persons capable of profiting the brethren, such persons are exhorted by the holy bishops to address the people. Such was the case at Laranda, where Evelpis was thus exhorted by Neon; and at Iconium, Paulinus was thus exhorted by Celsus; and at Synada, Theodorus also by Atticus, our blessed brethren. And it is probable that this is done in other places also, although we know not the fact.¹²⁴¹

Note by the American Editor.

¹²³⁶ In Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, ch. xiv.

¹²³⁷ [This contemporary tribute confirms the enthusiastic eulogy of the youthful Gregory. See p. 38, *supra*.]

¹²³⁸ In Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, ch. xix.

¹²³⁹ Demetrius is, for honour's sake, addressed in the third person. Perhaps ἡ σὴ ἀγιότης or some such form preceded.

¹²⁴⁰ ὁμιλεῖν.

¹²⁴¹ [This precise and definite testimony is not to be controverted. It follows the traditions of the Synagogue (Acts xiii. 15), and agrees with the Pauline prescription as to the use of the *charismata* in 1 Cor. xiv. The chiefs of the Synagogue retained the power of giving this liberty, and this passed to the Christian authorities.]

If Alexander died in the Decian persecution, it is noteworthy how far the sub-apostolic age extended. This contemporary of Cyprian was coadjutor to Narcissus, who may have seen those who knew St. John. See vol. i. p. 416, note 1, this series; also vol. i. p. 568, Fragment ii.



Theognostus of Alexandria.

Translator's Biographical Notice.

[A.D. 260. I can add nothing but conjectures to the following:] Of this Theognostus we have no account by either Eusebius or Jerome. Athanasius, however, mentions him more than once with honour. Thus he speaks of him as ἀνὴρ λόγιος, an *eloquent* or learned man.¹²⁴² And again as Θεόγνωστος ὁ θαυμάσιος καὶ σπουδαῖος, the admirable and zealous Theognostus.¹²⁴³ He seems to have belonged to the Catechetical school of Alexandria, and to have flourished there in the latter half of the third century, probably about A.D. 260. That he was a disciple of Origen, or at least a devoted student of his works, is clear from Photius.¹²⁴⁴ He wrote a work in seven books, the title of which is thus given by Photius:¹²⁴⁵ *The Outlines of the blessed Theognostus, the exegete of Alexandria*. Dodwell and others are of opinion that by this term *exegete*,¹²⁴⁶ is meant the presidency of the Catechetical school and the privilege of public teaching; and that the title, *Outlines*,¹²⁴⁷ was taken from Clement, his predecessor in office. According to Photius, the work was on this plan. The first book treated of God the Father, as the maker of the universe; the second, of the necessary existence of the Son; the third, of the Holy Spirit; the fourth, of angels and demons; the fifth and sixth, of the incarnation of God; while the seventh bore the title, *On God's Creation*.¹²⁴⁸ Photius has much to say in condemnation of Theognostus, who, however, has been vindicated by Bull¹²⁴⁹

¹²⁴² *De Decret. Nic. Syn.*, 25, Works, vol. i. part i. p. 230.

¹²⁴³ Epist. 4, to Serapion, sec. 9, vol. i. part ii. p. 702.

¹²⁴⁴ *Bibl.*, cod. 106.

¹²⁴⁵ τοῦ μακαρίου Θεογνώστου Ἀλεξανδρέως καὶ ἐξηγητοῦ ὑποτυπώσεις.

¹²⁴⁶ ἐξηγητοῦ.

¹²⁴⁷ ὑποτυπώσεις.

¹²⁴⁸ *De Dei Creatione*.

¹²⁴⁹ *Defens. fid. Nic.*, sec. ii. chap. 10. [Bull always vindicates where he can do so, on the principle of justice, for which I have contended on p. v. (prefatory) of vol. iv.]