

Celestine to John of Antioch, Juvenal of Jerusalem, Rufus of Thessalonica, and Flavian of Philippi (CPG 8641)

<i>Reference:</i>	CPG 8641
<i>Incipit:</i>	<i>Optaremus quidem, sicut una</i>
<i>Date:</i>	August 10, 430
<i>Greek Text:</i>	ACO 1.1.1:90-91
<i>Latin Text:</i>	ACO 1.2:21-22
<i>Other Ancient Versions:</i>	
<i>English Translations:</i>	FCC: J. Sauer; Price CE #17

Written just after Celestine held a council in Rome at which a letter from Cyril ([CPG 5310](#)) and one or more letters of Nestorius ([CPG 5665](#), [5667](#)) were read and discussed.¹ To learn more about the broader historical context, click [here](#). Written to the bishops of the East to explain and inform concerning the judgment reached at the council.

The English translation below was produced by J. Sauer for FCC with reference to Richard Price, *The Council of Ephesus of 451*.

Caelestinus episcopus Iohanni Iuuenali Rufo et Flauiano episcopis per Orientem a pari.	Bishop Celestine to John, Juvenal, Rufus, and Flavian, bishops in the East, equally.	Τῷ ἀγαπητῷ ἀδελφῷ Ἰωάννη Κελεστίνος.
1. Optaremus quidem, sicut una est deitatis essentia, ita inter omnes qui ubique sunt homines unam rectae fidei ueritatem teneri; minor tamen gemitus est, si qui se extra gregem dominicum segregantes et per angulos latebrasque latitantes, aliud sibi uel paucis qui secum sentiunt, occulto errore persuadeant.	1. Let us indeed wish, just as the essence of the deity is one, so among all who everywhere are men there ought to be held one truth of the right faith. However, the sorrow is lessened if those who separate themselves outside of the Lord's nation and hide in corners and hideouts persuade themselves or a few who agree with them of hidden error otherwise.	1. Εὐχόμεθα μὲν, ὥσπερ μία ἐστὶ τῆς θεότητος ἡ οὐσία, οὕτω καὶ παρὰ πᾶσι τοῖς ὅπουδήποτε οὖσιν ἀνθρώποις μίαν τῆς ὀρθῆς πίστεως ἀλήθειαν ἔχειν· ἐλάττων δὲ ὅμως ὁ στεναγμὸς ἐστίν, ἐὰν τινὲς ἑαυτοὺς ἐκτὸς τῆς ἀγέλης τῆς δεσποτικῆς ἀποχωρίζοντες καὶ διὰ γωνιῶν καὶ συσκιῶν τόπων λαυθάνοντες ἑαυτοῖς ἢ καὶ ὀλίγοις τισὶ συμβουλευώσιν ὁμοιοῦσιν ἑαυτοῖς ἐν τῇ λαυθανοῦσῃ πλάνῃ.
2. Cum uero aliquis sacrosanctae ecclesiae dei sub nomine praepositus sacerdotis ipsum Christi	2. When in truth someone of the most holy church of God placed in charge under the name	2. ὅτε δὲ ἐν τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ ἱερᾷ ἐκκλησίᾳ ὁ προβεβλημένος ὑπὸ τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ ἱερέως αὐτὸν τὸν

¹ Cf. Wessel, "Nestorius, Mary and Controversy", p. 17.

<p>populum a tramite ueritatis in praeceps deuiæ persuasionis auertat et hoc in amplissima urbe, ad quam propter inhabitantis imperii reuerentiam de uniuerso orbe confluit multitudo, tunc plane est geminanda lamentatio et maior sollicitudo, ne quid lupi rapacitas praeualeat, adhibenda. Minor enim cura est obsidentis inimici quam intra moenia debacchantis, leuiusque sollicitat lupo extra ouilia pererrans quam inter gregem locum pastoris inuadens, quia bellum plus quam ciuile est, cum intra ecclesiam, id est intra ipsum Christi thalamum tela sectae impiae iaciuntur.</p>	<p>of priest turns the populace itself of Christ away from the path of truth towards the great danger of an off-the-path persuasion and here in the largest city, to which a multitude comes together from the entire world because of the respect of the inhabited empire, then assuredly lamentation is to be repeated and greater concern is to be increased, lest the hunger of the wolf prevail upon it. For there is less concern for a besieging enemy than for one raging between the walls, and the wolf is more lightly distressing outside of the wandering sheep than among the flock assaulting the place of the shepherd because war is more than civil when it is within the church, that is, within the wedding-chamber of Christ itself weapons of the impious sect are thrown.</p>	<p>τοῦ Χριστοῦ δῆμον ἀπὸ τῆς ὁδοῦ τῆς ἀληθείας κατὰ κρημνῶν ἀποστρέφει τῇ οὐκ ὀρθῇ συμβουλῇ καὶ τοῦτο ἐν τῇ μεγίστῃ πόλει, εἰς ἣν διὰ τὴν τιμὴν τοῦ ἐνοικοῦντος βασιλείου ἀπὸ παντὸς τοῦ κόσμου συντρέχει τὸ πλῆθος, τότε δηλαδὴ διπλασιαστέος ἐστὶν ὁ θρῆνος καὶ μείζων ἢ φροντίς, ἵνα μήτι ἡ ἀρπαγὴ τοῦ λύκου περιγενομένου κατισχύσῃ. ἐλάττων γὰρ ἐστὶν ἢ φροντίς πολιορκοῦντος τοῦ ἐχθροῦ ἢ ἐντὸς τειχῶν ἐκβακχεύοντος, καὶ κουφότερον παρενοχλεῖ ὁ λύκος ἐκτὸς τῶν ποιμνίων ἀποπλανώμενος ἢ περ ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ἀγέλῃ τόπον ποιμένος ἐπιλαβόμενος, ἐπειδήπερ πλέον τοῦ ἐμφυλίου πολέμου ἐστὶν, ὅταν ἐντὸς τῆς ἐκκλησίας, τουτέστιν ἐντὸς αὐτοῦ τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ θεοῦ δόρατα ἀκοντίζονται τῆς ἀσεβοῦς θρησκείας.</p>
<p>3. Unde uehementer contristata sunt nostra uiscera, quod is qui Constantinopolitanam obtinere uidetur ecclesiam, deuotissimis Christo populis peruersa quaedam contra reuerentiam uirginei partus et contra spem nostrae salutis infundit. Haec ad nos ingerente dolore fidelium peruenerunt, haec libris quos ipse miserat, publicata sunt, et quod maioris probationis est, haec ad nos missis epistulis ipsa auctoris subscriptione munitis ita insinuata sunt, ut dubitari ultra non liceat.</p>	<p>3. Because of this our hearts are extremely saddened because he who is seen to maintain the Constantinopolitan church lays before the people most devoted to Christ certain perversities contrary to the respect of the virgin birth and contrary to the hope of our salvation. These became known to us by the heaped upon pain of the faithful. They were published as books which he himself dispatched, and what is the greatest proof, they were introduced to us as sent letters, secured by the author's own signature, so that it cannot be in further doubt.</p>	<p>3. ὅθεν πάνυ συντετάρακται ἡμῶν τὰ σπλάγχνα, ὅτι οὗτος ὅστις δοκεῖ κατέχειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, τοῖς καθωσιωμένοις τοῦ Χριστοῦ δήμοις διεστραμμένα τινὰ ἐγχείει, ὑπεναντία τῆς τιμῆς καὶ αἰδοῦς τοῦ τοκετοῦ τῆς ἀγίας παρθένου καὶ ὑπεναντία τῆς ἐλπίδος τῆς ἡμετέρας σωτηρίας. ταῦτα εἰς ἡμᾶς ἦλθεν ὑποβαλλούσης τῆς ἀλγηδόνης τῶν πιστῶν, ἃ ἐγνωρίσθη διὰ τῶν βιβλίων ἅπερ αὐτὸς ἔπεμψε, καί, ὅπερ μείζονος ἀποδείξεως ἦν, πεμφθεισῶν ἐπιστολῶν πρὸς ἡμᾶς ὑπογραφῇ αὐτοῦ τοῦ αὐθέντου ὠχυρωμένων, ὡς ἀμφιβληθῆναι παρ' ἐτέρων μὴ ἐξὸν εἶναι.</p>
<p>4. Unde quoniam in talibus causis non est tuta longior coniuentia, quia tantumdem paene criminis est coniuere talibus quanti sceleris est tam sacrilega praedicare, et episcopum Nestorium et si quis alius eum secutus haec</p>	<p>4. Therefore, since in such occasions longer conspiracies are not safe because it is almost just as great an offence to conspire in such occasions as it is a crime to preach so impiously. If both Bishop Nestorius and anyone</p>	<p>4. ὅθεν ἐπειδὴ ὑπὲρ τοιούτων αἰτιῶν οὐκ ἐστὶν ἀσφαλῆς ἢ μακροτέρα παρενθύμησις (τοιούτον γὰρ ἐστὶ σχεδὸν ἔγκλημα παρενθυμῆσθαι τὰ τοιαῦτα ὁποῖόν ἐστι μύσος τοιαῦτα ἱερόσυλα λέγειν), καὶ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον Νεστόριον καὶ εἴ τις ἄλλος αὐτῷ</p>

<p>praedicat, a nostra communione se creuimus, quamdiu scriptura professionis emissa peruersitatem quam coeperat docere, condemnet et hanc de uirgineo partu, id est de humani generis salute fidem asserat se tenere quam secundum apostolicam doctrinam Romana et Alexandrina et catholica uniuersalis ecclesia tenet ueneratur et praedicat. Si quis uero aut ab episcopo Nestorio aut ab aliis qui eum secuntur, ex quo talia praedicare coeperunt, uel excommunicatus uel exutus est antistitis seu clerici dignitate, hunc in nostra communione et durasse et durare manifestum est nec iudicamus remotum, quia non poterat quemquam eius remouere sententia qui se iam praebuerat ipse remouendum.</p>	<p>else following him preaches these things, we have separated them from our communion, until in a published written profession he condemns the perversity which he began to teach and affirms that he holds this faith concerning the virgin birth, that is concerning the salvation of the human race, which, in accordance with apostolic doctrine, the Roman and Alexandrine and universal orthodox church holds, reueres, and preaches. If someone in truth either from Bishop Nestorius or from others who follow him, from whom they began to preach such things, either has been excommunicated or stripped of the dignity of an overseer or clergyman, it is clear that he has remained and does remain in our communion, and we do not judge him removed because he who now himself had shown that he ought to be removed is not able to remove anyone by his judgment.</p>	<p>ἀκολουθήσας τοιαῦτα λέγει, ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμετέρας κοινωρίας ἀποχωρίζομεν, ἕως οὗ δι' ἐγγράφου ὁμολογίας πεμφθείσης τὴν διαστροφὴν ἣν ἤρξατο διδάσκειν, κατακρίνη καὶ ταύτην ἑαυτὸν περὶ τοῦ παρθενικοῦ τόκου, τουτέστι περὶ τῆς σωτηρίας τοῦ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένους τὴν πίστιν ὁμολογήσει κατέχειν, ἦντινα κατὰ τὴν ἀποστολικὴν διδασκαλίαν ἡ Ῥωμαίων καὶ ἡ Ἀλεξανδρέων καὶ ἡ καθολικὴ πανταχοῦ ἐκκλησία κατέχει, προσκυνήσῃ τε καὶ ὁμολογήσῃ. εἴ τις δὲ ἢ ἀπὸ Νεστορίου ἢ ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν αὐτῶ ἐξακολουθησάντων, ἀφ' οὗ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἤρξατο λαλεῖν, ἢ ἀκοινωνήτος ἐγένετο ἢ ἐγυμνώθη τῆς τοῦ ἱερέως ἀξίας ἢ τῆς τοῦ κληρικοῦ, τοῦτον ἐν τῇ ἡμετέραι κοινωρίᾳ καὶ μεμενηκέναι καὶ μένειν εἰς τὸ ἐξῆς ὁμολόγηται καὶ οὐδὲ λέγομεν αὐτὸν ἀποκεκινῆσθαι, ἐπειδήπερ οὐδὲ ἡδύνατό τινα ἢ τούτου ἀπόφασις ἀποκινεῖν, ὅστις ἑαυτὸν παρέσχεν ἡδὴ ἀποκινητέον.</p>
<p>5. Haec, frater carissime, ad sanctitatem tuam scribenda duximus, ut in domino roboratus et familiarem pectori tuo loriam Christi cum scuto catholicae praedicationis indutus greges domini nostri Iesu Christi, qui pro nobis natus et passus est, qui reseratis inferis et morte deuicta pro nobis die tertio resurrexit, a persuasionis pessimae prauitate defendas. Sicut autem et ad sanctum fratrem et coepiscopum nostrum Cyrillum bonum fidei catholicae defensorem scripsimus, hanc de eodem Nestorio sciat sanctitas tua a nobis, immo a Christo deo latam esse sententiam ut aut intra decem dies ex conuentione huius diei numerandos sacrilegas de Christi natiuitate praedicationes suas scripta</p>	<p>5. These, dearest brother, we have brought to be written to your holiness, so that, strengthened in the Lord and putting on the familiar breastplate of Christ on your chest with the shield of orthodox preaching [Eph. 6:14,16], you may defend from the distortion of the worst persuasion the flocks of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was born and suffered for us, who being revealed to the dead and overcoming death for us rose on the third day. However, just as also to the holy brother and fellow bishop Cyril, we have written a good defense of orthodox faith. Let your holiness know that this judgment concerning the same Nestorius has been made known by us, no, rather by Christ</p>	<p>5. Ταῦτα, ἀδελφὲ τιμώτατε, πρὸς τὴν σὴν ἀγιωσύνην ἐγράψαμεν, ἵνα ἐνδυναμωθείς ἐν τῷ δεσπότη καὶ τὸν οἰκεῖον τῷ σῶ στήθει τοῦ Χριστοῦ θώρακα καὶ τὴν ἀσπίδα τῆς καθολικῆς ὁμολογίας ἐνδυσάμενος τὴν ἀγέλην τοῦ ἡμετέρου δεσπότη Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅστις ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν καὶ ἐγεννήθη καὶ ἔπαθεν, ὅστις καὶ ἀνοιγόντων τῶν καταχθονίων καὶ τοῦ θανάτου ἠττηθέντος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἀνέστη, ἀπὸ τῆς πονηραῖς καὶ αἰσχίστης διδασκαλίας ἐλύσῃς. Ὡσπερ δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἀγιώτατον ἀδελφὸν καὶ συνεπίσκοπον ἡμῶν Κύριλλον τὸν ἀκριβῆ τῆς καθολικῆς πίστεως ἔκδικον ἐγράψαμεν, ταύτην περὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ Νεστορίου γινωσκέτω ἢ σὴ ἀγιωσύνη παρ ἡμῶν, μᾶλλον δὲ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ δεσπότη θεοῦ Χριστοῦ</p>

<p>professione condemnet et hanc se profiteatur fidem sequi quam Romana et Alexandrina et universalis seruat ecclesia, aut ab episcoporum coetu remotus intellegat sibi suam obfuisse perniciem. Ut enim haec quae a nobis decreta sunt, exercitius agerentur, per filium nostrum Posidonium Alexandrinae ecclesiae diaconum nostras ad dilectionem tuam uoluimus fidelius epistulas commearere.</p>	<p>God that either within 10 days numbered from the meeting of this day, he shall condemn his sacrilegious written preachings concerning the birth of Christ in a profession and profess that he follows the faith which the Roman, Alexandrine, and universal church protects, or after he is removed from the union of bishops he understands that his disaster has injured him. For in order that these things which have been decreed by us are done in a more controlled way, we have decided that the letters may go more faithfully to your love through our son Posidonius, deacon of the Alexandrine church.</p>	<p>ἐξενηγεμένην εἶναι τὴν ἀπόφασιν ἵνα ἢ ἐντὸς δέκα ἡμερῶν ἀριθμουμένων ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας ὑπομνησθῆ, τὰς ἱεροσύλους αὐτοῦ διδασκαλίας περὶ τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ γεννήσεως ἐγγράφῳ ὁμολογίᾳ καταδικάσῃ καὶ ταύτῃ ἑαυτὸν ὁμολογήσῃ τῇ πίστει ἀκολουθεῖν ἦντινα καὶ ἡ Ῥωμαίων καὶ ἡ Ἀλεξανδρέων καὶ ἡ καθολικὴ φυλάττει ἐκκλησία, ἢ ἀπὸ τῆς συνόδου τῶν ἐπισκόπων ἀποκηθεῖς γινωσκέτω ἑαυτὸν οἰκείῳ βεβλάφθαι ὀλέθρῳ. ἵνα δὲ ταῦτα τὰ παρ' ἡμῶν ἀποφανθέντα σπουδαιότερον ἐξανυσθεῖ, διὰ τοῦ ἡμετέρου υἱοῦ Ποσειδωνίου τοῦ διακόνου τῆς Ἀλεξανδρέων ἐκκλησίας τὰς ἡμετέρας ἐπιστολὰς πρὸς τὴν σὴν διάθεσιν ἠβουλήθημεν πιστότερον διακομισθῆναι.</p>
	<p>May God keep you healthy, dearest brother.</p>	<p>Ὁ θεὸς ὑγιαίνοντά σε διαφυλάξαι, ἀδελφὲ τιμιώτατε.</p>
<p>Data III idus Augusti Theodosio XIII et Valentiniano III duo Augusti consulibus.</p>	<p>Dated the 4th of the ides of August during Theodosius the Thirteenth and Valentinian the Third, both Augusti, consuls.</p>	

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