

Constantine to Athanasius (CPG 2123.20)

<i>Reference:</i>	Mel. 18, CPG 2123.20, FNS 61
<i>Incipit:</i>	Τοῖς παρὰ τῆς σῆς συνέσεως ἐντυχῶν
<i>Date:</i>	ca. 333
<i>Greek Text:</i>	Athanasius, Apol. Sec. 68
<i>Ancient Description:</i>	Sozomen, HE 2.23
<i>English Translation:</i>	NPNF ² vol. 4, p. 135-6, adapted for FCC by SMT

Constantine wrote to Athanasius here after he learned that Arsenius was still alive. Throughout the letter, he continues to wish for peace, but denounces the Melitians for creating a plot to feign a death to implicate Athanasius. He also disbelieves the other charge that Athanasius broke the sacred chalice after the Melitians lost all of their credibility.

The Greek text below is that of Opitz as found in AW 2.4:68. The English translation has been adapted from NPNF² vol. 4, p. 135-6 by SMT for FCC.

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Νικητῆς Κωνσταντῖνος Μέγιστος Σεβαστὸς τῷ πάπᾳ Ἀθανασίῳ,	Constantine, Victor, Maximus, Augustus, to the pope Athanasius.
Τοῖς παρὰ τῆς σῆς συνέσεως ἐντυχῶν γράμμασι ταύτης γνώμης αὐτὸς ἐγενόμην, ὡς ἀντιγράφων τῇ σῇ στερρότῃ προτρέψασθαί σε, ὅπως πρὸς εὐταξίαν καὶ οἶκτον τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ λαὸν ἄγειν σπουδάσῃς. ταῦτα γὰρ μάλιστα προηγούμενα ἐν τῇ ἐμαυτοῦ ψυχῇ κατέχω, ὡς ἀλήθειάν τε ἀσκεῖν καὶ ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ δικαιοσύνην ἀεὶ φυλάττειν καὶ τούτοις μάλιστα χαίρειν τοῖς ὀρθῶν ὁδὸν τοῦ βίου πορευομένοις.	Having read the letters of your wisdom, I felt the inclination to write in return to your fortitude, and to exhort you that you would endeavor to restore the people of God to tranquility and merciful feelings. For in my own mind I hold these things to be of the greatest importance: that we should cultivate truth, and ever keep righteousness in our thoughts, and have pleasure especially in those who walk in the right way of life.
περὶ δὲ ἐκείνων τῶν πάσης ἀρᾶς ἀξίων, τῶν Μελιτιανῶν δηλαδὴ τῶν σκαιοτάτων καὶ ἀθεμίτων, οἵτινες τῇ ἐμπληξίᾳ λοιπὸν ἀπονεαρκήκασιν καὶ μόνον φθόνῳ καὶ ζάλῃ καὶ θορύβοις τὰ ἄτοπα κινουσι τὴν ἀθέμιτον αὐτῶν διάνοιαν ἐπιδεικνύντες, ταῦτα φθέγγομαι. ὁρᾷς γὰρ, ὅπως οἱ ἄνδρες, οὓς ἐκεῖνοι ξίφει ἀνηρῆσθαι ἔφασκον, ἐν μέσοις νῦν εἰσι καὶ τῆς ζωῆς ἀπολαύουσι. πρὸς δὲ ταῦτα τί ἂν γένοιτο πρόκριμα χεῖρον οὕτω φανερώς καὶ σαφῶς ἐπιφερόμενον τῇ ἐκείνων δίκῃ, ἢ τὸ τούτους, οὓς ἀνηρῆσθαι ἔλεγον, ζῆν τε καὶ τοῦ βίου ἀπολαύειν, οἵτινες δηλονότι καὶ ὑπὲρ ἑαυτῶν φθέγγασθαι δυνήσονται;	But as concerning those who are deserving of all loathing, I mean the most perverse and ungodly Melitians, who have at last crippled themselves by their folly, and are now raising unreasonable commotions by envy, uproar, and tumult, thereby making manifest their own ungodly dispositions, I will say this much. You see that those who they pretended had been slain with the sword, are still among us and in the enjoyment of life. Now what could be a stronger presumption against them, and one so manifestly and clearly tending to their condemnation, as that those whom they declared to have been murdered, are yet in the enjoyment of life, and accordingly will be able to speak for themselves?

<p>προσέκειτο δὲ καὶ τοῖς παρὰ τῶν Μελιτιανῶν ἐκείνων καὶ τοῦτο. διεβεβαιοῦντο γὰρ ἀθεμίτῳ ὄρμῃ ἐπεισελθόντα σε καὶ ἀρπάσαντα ποτήριον ἐν τῷ ἁγιωτάτῳ ἀποκείμενον τόπῳ κεκλακέναι, οὗ πράγματος ἀληθῶς οὐδὲν μείζον ἦν ἔγκλημα οὔτε τηλικούτου ἀτόπημα, εἰ τοῦτο οὕτως πεπερᾶχθαι τε καὶ ἡμαρτῆσθαι συνέβαιεν. ἀλλὰ γὰρ τίς ἡ κατηγορία αὕτη; τίς δὲ ἡ μετάβασις καὶ ποικιλία τοῦ πράγματος, ὡς νῦν εἰς ἕτερον πρόσωπον τὴν κατηγορίαν τοῦ ἐγκλήματος τούτου μετάγειν; ὅπερ δηλονότι πρᾶγμα αὐτοῦ τοῦ φωτὸς ὡς εἰπεῖν ἐστὶ τηλαυγέστερον, ὅτι τῇ σῆ συνέσει ἐπιβουλεύσαι ἐσπούδαζον.</p>	<p>But this further accusation was advanced by these same Melitians. They positively affirmed that you, rushing in with lawless violence, had seized upon and broken a cup, which was deposited in the most Holy Place; than which there certainly could not be a more serious charge, nor a more grievous offense, had such a crime actually been perpetrated. But what manner of accusation is this? What is the meaning of this change and variation and difference in the circumstances of it, insomuch that they now transfer this same accusation to another person, a fact which makes it clearer, so to speak, than the light itself, that they designed to lay a plot to your wisdom?</p>
<p>μετὰ δὴ ταῦτα τίς ἂν ἐκείνοις τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τοῖς τοσαῦτα εἰς βλάβην ἀναπλασαμένοις ἀκολουθήσαι ἐθελήσειεν; ὅταν μάλιστα αὐτοὶ ἑαυτοὺς εἰς ὄλεθρον ἄγωσι καὶ συνορῶσιν ὅτι πεπιλασμένων καὶ ψευδῶν πραγμάτων εἰσὶ κατήγοροι; ὡς ἔφην τοίνυν, τίς ἂν ἐκείνοις ἐξακολουθήσειε καὶ εἰς τὴν ὁδὸν τῆς ἀπωλείας πρηνῆς ἀπέλθοι; εἰς ἐκείνην δηλαδὴ εἰς ἣν ἐκεῖνοι μόνοι τὴν ἐλπίδα τῆς σωτηρίας καὶ τῆς ἐπικουρίας ἔχουν οἴονται.</p>	<p>After this, who can be willing to follow them, men that have fabricated such charges to the injury of another, seeing too that they are hurrying themselves on to ruin, and are conscious that they are accusing you of false and feigned crimes? Who then, as I said, will follow after them, and thus go headlong in the way of destruction; in that way in which it seems they alone suppose that they have hope of safety and of help?</p>
<p>εἰ γὰρ βούλοιντο ἐπὶ καθαρὰν ἐλθεῖν συνείδησιν καὶ ὑπομνησθῆναι τῆς ἀρίστης γνώμης καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ὑγιαίνουσαν ἐλθεῖν διάνοιαν, ῥαδίως γινώσκονται οὐδεμίαν αὐτοῖς ὑπάρχειν ἐπικουρίαν παρὰ τῆς προνοίας, ἐπειδὴ περ τοιούτων εἰσὶ ζηλωταὶ καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ οἰκείῳ ὄλεθρῳ πειράζονται. ταύτην δὴ οὐκ οὐ τραχύτητα τινα, ἀλλὰ ἀλήθειαν δικαίως ἂν εἴποιμι.</p>	<p>But if they were willing to walk according to a pure conscience, and to be directed by the best wisdom, and to go in the way of a sound mind, they would easily perceive that no help can come to them from divine providence while they are given up to such doings, and tempt their own destruction. I should not call this a harsh judgment of them, but the simple truth.</p>
<p>τὸ τελευταῖον δὲ καὶ τοῦτο προστίθημι, ὅτι περ βουλόμεθα δημοσίᾳ παρὰ τῆς σῆς συνέσεως πολλάκις ἀναγνωσθῆναι ταῦτα, ὡς ἂν ἐντεῦθεν εἰς τὴν ἀπάντων γνώσιν ἔλθοι καὶ μάλιστα εἰς τὴν ἐκείνων ἀφικέσθαι δυναθῆι, οἵτινες οὕτω πράττουσιν, οὕτως ἀναστρέφουσιν, ὡς ταῦτα ἄπερ παρ' ἡμῶν <δι> εὐθείας λέγεται λόγῳ, τῇ τῆς ἀληθείας εἰρῆσθαι πράξει.</p>	<p>And finally, I will add that I wish this letter to be read frequently by your wisdom in public, and it may thereby come to the knowledge of all men, and especially reach the ears of those who act in this manner and raise disturbances; for the judgment which is expressed by me according to the dictates of equity is confirmed also by real facts.</p>
<p>ἐπεὶ τοίνυν ἐν τούτῳ τῷ πράγματι τηλικούτον ἐστὶν ἀτόπημα, γινωσκέτωσαν οὕτω με κεκρικέναι καὶ ταύτης εἶναι τῆς προαιρέσεως· εἴ τι τοιοῦτον κινῶεν, μηκέτι λοιπὸν κατὰ τοὺς τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἀλλὰ κατὰ τοὺς δημοσίους νόμους αὐτόν με δι' ἑμαυτοῦ τῶν πραγμάτων ἀκροασόμενον καὶ λοιπὸν εὐρήσοντα αὐτοὺς ὅτι μὴ μόνον κατὰ τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου γένους λησταὶ τινες ὄντες, ἀλλὰ γὰρ καὶ κατ' αὐτῆς τῆς θείας διδασκαλίας φαίνονται.</p>	<p>Therefore, seeing that in such conduct there is so great an offense, let them understand that I have thus judged, and that I have come to this determination; that if they excite any further commotion of this kind, I will myself in person take cognizance of the matter, and not according to the ecclesiastical, but according to the civil law, and so I will in future find them out, because they clearly are robbers, so to speak, not only</p>

	against human kind, but against the divine doctrine itself.
ὁ θεός σε διαφυλάξει, ἀδελφὲ ἀγαπητέ.	May God ever preserve you, beloved brother!

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