

Constantine to Athanasius (CPG 2123.20)

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

Constantine wrote this letter to Athanasius after he learned that Arsenius was still alive. Throughout the letter, he continues to wish for peace, but denounces the Melitians for creating the plot of a feigned death in order to implicate Athanasius. He can also no longer give any credence to the Melitians' other charge against Athanasius, that he had broken a sacred chalice.

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 and GLT for FCC.

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Νικητῆς Κωνσταντίνος Μέγιστος Σεβαστὸς τῷ πάπᾳ Ἀθανασίῳ,	Constantine Victor Maximus Augustus, to pope Athanasius.
Τοῖς παρὰ τῆς σῆς συνέσεως ἐντυχών 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 αἰεὶ φυλάττειν καὶ τούτοις μάλιστα χαίρειν τοῖς ὁρθῇ ὁδὸν τοῦ βίου πορευομένοις.	Having read the letters of your wisdom, I felt inclined to write in return to your fortitude, and to exhort that you would endeavor to restore the people of God to feelings of tranquility and mercy. 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 ἀπονεναρκήκασιν καὶ μόνον φθόνῳ καὶ ζάλῃ καὶ θορύβοις τὰ ἄτοπα κινουῦσι τὴν ἀθέμιτον αὐτῶν διάνοιαν ἐπιδεικνύντες, ταῦτα φθέγξομαι. ὁρᾷς γάρ, 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 for those who deserve all our loathing, I mean the most perverse and ungodly Melitians, they have at last crippled themselves by their folly, and are now raising unreasonable commotions by envy, uproar, and tumult. In this way they are showing their own ungodly dispositions, and so I will say this of them. You can see that those who they pretended had been slain with the sword are still among us and enjoying life. Now what could be a stronger accusation against them, and one so manifestly and clearly tending to their condemnation, as that those whom they declared to have been murdered, are yet possessing life, and accordingly will be able to speak for themselves?

<p>προσέκειτο δὲ καὶ τοῖς παρὰ τῶν Μελιτιανῶν ἐκείνων καὶ τοῦτο. διεβεβαίουντο γὰρ ἀθεμίτῳ ὁρμῇ ἐπεισελθόντα σε καὶ ἀρπάσαντα ποτήριον ἐν τῷ ἁγιωτάτῳ ἀποκείμενον τόπῳ κεκλακέναι, οὗ πράγματος ἀληθῶς οὐδὲν μείζον ἢν ἐγκλημα οὔτε τηλικούτον ἀτόπημα, εἰ τοῦτο οὕτως πεπραχθεὶς τε καὶ ἡμαρτῆσθαι συνέβαινεν. 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 σῇ συνέσει ἐπιβουλεύσαι ἐσπούδαζον.</p>	<p>But these same Melitians made a further accusation. 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; there certainly could not be a more serious charge, nor a more grievous offense, had such a crime actually been perpetrated. But what sort of accusation is this? What is the meaning of this change and variation and difference in the circumstances of it, inasmuch that they now transfer this same accusation to another person, a fact which makes it clearer than light itself (so to speak), that they designed to lay a plot against your wisdom?</p>
<p>μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα τίς ἂν ἐκείνοις τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τοῖς τοσαῦτα εἰς βλάβην ἀναπλασασμένοις ἀκολουθήσαι ἐβελήσειεν; 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 πρηνὴς ἀπέλθοι; εἰς ἐκείνην δηλαδὴ εἰς ἣν ἐκεῖνοι μόνοι τὴν ἐλπίδα τῆς σωτηρίας καὶ τῆς ἐπικουρίας ἔχουν οἶονται.</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 ὀλέθρῳ πειράζονται. ταύτην δὲ 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 give themselves 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 προστίθμι, 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 δυναθῆναι, οἵτινες οὕτω πράττουσιν, οὕτως ἀναστρέφουσιν, ὡς ταῦτα ἅπερ παρ' ἡμῶν <δι> εὐθείας λέγεται λόγῳ, τῇ τῆς ἀληθείας εἰρῇσθαι πράξει.</p>	<p>And finally, I will add that I wish this letter to be read frequently by your wisdom in public, that 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 κεκριμέναι 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 εὐρήσονται 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: If they arouse any further commotion of this kind, I will myself in person take cognizance of the matter, and not according to ecclesiastical, but according to civil law, and so I will in future find them out, because they clearly are robbers, so to speak, not only against human kind, but against the divine doctrine itself.</p>

ὁ θεός σε διαφυλάξει, ἀδελφὲ ἀγαπητέ.	May God ever preserve you, beloved brother!
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