

LETTER TO THE SENATE AND
PEOPLE OF ATHENS

INTRODUCTION

OF the manifestoes addressed by Julian to Rome, Sparta, Corinth, and Athens, defending his acceptance of the title of Emperor and his open rupture with Constantius, the last alone survives. It was written in Illyricum in 361, when Julian was on the march against Constantius, and is the chief authority for the events that led to his elevation to the Imperial rank. Julian writes to the Athenians of the fourth Christian century as though they still possessed the influence and standards of their forefathers. He was well known at Athens, where he had studied before his elevation to the Caesarship and he was anxious to clear himself in the eyes of the citizens. For the first time he ventures to speak the truth about Constantius and to describe the latter's ruthless treatment of his family. His account of the revolution at Paris is supplemented by Ammianus 20, Zosimus 3. 9, and the *Epitaph on Julian* by Libanius.

Πολλῶν εἰργασμένων τοῖς προγόνοις ὑμῶν, ἐφ' οἷς οὐκ ἐκείνοις μόνον τότε ἐξῆν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑμῖν νῦν ἔξεστι φιλοτιμείσθαι, καὶ πολλῶν ἐγηγερμένων τροπαίων ὑπὲρ τε ἀπάσης τῆς Ἑλλάδος κοινῇ καὶ κατ' ἰδίαν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς τῆς πόλεως, ἐν οἷς ἠγωνίσασατο μόνη πρὸς τε τοὺς ἄλλους Ἕλληνας καὶ πρὸς τὸν βάρβαρον, οὐδέν ἐστι τηλικούτου ἔργου οὐδὲ ἀνδραγαθία τοσαύτη, πρὸς ἣν οὐκ B
ἔνεστι καὶ ταῖς ἄλλαις ἀμιλληθῆναι πόλεσι. τὰ μὲν γὰρ μεθ' ὑμῶν καὶ αὐταί, τὰ δὲ κατ' ἰδίαν εἰργάσαντο. καὶ ἵνα μὴ μεμνημένος ἔπειτα ἀντιπαραβάλλων ἢ προτιμῶν ἐτέρας ἐτέραν ἐν οἷς διαμφισβητοῦσι νομισθεῖν ἢ πρὸς τὸ λυσιτελοῦν, ὥσπερ οἱ ῥήτορες, ἐνδεέστερον ἐπαινεῖν τὰς ἐλαττουμένας, τοῦτο ἐθέλω φράσαι μόνον ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, ᾧ C
μηδὲν ἀντίπαλον ἔχομεν ἐξευρεῖν παρὰ τοῖς ἄλλοις Ἕλλησιν, ἐκ τῆς παλαιᾶς φήμης εἰς ἡμᾶς παραδεδομένον. ἀρχόντων μὲν Λακεδαιμονίων οὐ βία τὴν ἀρχήν, ἀλλὰ δόξῃ δικαιοσύνης παρείλεσθε,

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MANY were the achievements of your forefathers of which you are still justly proud, even as they were of old; many were the trophies for victories raised by them, now for all Greece in common, now separately for Athens herself, in those days when she contended single-handed against all the rest of Greece as well as against the barbarian: but there was no achievement and no display of courage on your part so prodigious that other cities cannot in their turn rival it. For they too wrought some such deeds in alliance with you, and some on their own account. And that I may not by recalling these and then balancing them be thought either to pay more honour to one state than to another in the matters in which they are your rivals, or to praise less than they deserve those who proved inferior, in order to gain an advantage, after the manner of rhetoricians, I desire to bring forward on your behalf only this fact to which I can discover nothing that can be set against it on the part of the other Greek states, and which has been assigned to you by ancient tradition. When the Lacedaemonians were in power you took that power away from them not by violence but by your reputation for justice; and

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καὶ τὸν Ἀριστείδην τὸν δίκαιον οἱ παρ' ὑμῖν
 ἐθρέψαντο νόμοι. καίτοι γε ταῦτα οὕτως ὄντα
 λαμπρὰ τεκμήρια διὰ λαμπροτέρων οἶμαι τῶν 269
 ἔργων ὅμως ἐπιστώσασθε. τὸ μὲν γὰρ δόξαι
 δίκαιον ἴσως ἂν τῷ καὶ ψευδῶς συμβαίῃ, καὶ
 τυχὸν οὐ παράδοξον ἐν πολλοῖς φαύλοις ἕνα
 γενέσθαι σπουδαῖον. ἢ γὰρ οὐχὶ καὶ παρὰ
 Μήδοις ὑμνεῖται τις Δηϊόκης Ἀβαρίς τε ἐν
 Ὑπερβορείοις καὶ Ἀνάχαρσις ἐν Σκύθαις; ὑπὲρ
 ὧν τοῦτο ἦν θαυμαστόν, ὅτι παρὰ τοῖς ἀδικω-
 τάτοις γεγενοῦτες ἔθνεσι τὴν δίκην ὅμως ἐτίμησαν,
 τὸ μὲν ἀληθῶς, ὁ δὲ τῆς χρείας χάριν πλαττό- B
 μενος. δῆμον δὲ ὅλον καὶ πόλιν ἐραστὰς ἔργων
 καὶ λόγων δικαίων ἔξω τῆς παρ' ὑμῖν οὐ ῥάδιον
 εὔρειν. βούλομαι δὲ ὑμᾶς ἐνὸς τῶν παρ' ὑμῖν
 πολλῶν γε ὄντων ἔργων ὑπομνήσαι. Θεμιστο-
 κλέους γὰρ μετὰ τὰ Μηδικὰ γνώμην εἰσηγεῖσθαι
 διανοουμένου λάθρα καταφλέξαι τὰ νεώρια τῶν C
 Ἑλλήνων, εἶτα μὴ τολμῶντος εἰς τὸν δῆμον
 λέγειν, ἐνὶ δὲ ὁμολογοῦντος πιστεύσειν τὸ ἀπόρρη-
 του, ὄνπερ ἂν ὁ δῆμος χειροτονήσας προέληται,
 προυβάλετο μὲν ὁ δῆμος τὸν Ἀριστείδην· ὁ δὲ
 ἀκούσας τῆς γνώμης ἔκρυψε μὲν τὸ ῥήθην,
 ἐξήνεγκε δὲ εἰς τὸν δῆμον, ὥς οὔτε λυσιτελέστερον
 οὔτε ἀδικώτερον εἶη τι τοῦ βουλευματος· καὶ

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it was your laws that nurtured Aristides the Just. Moreover, brilliant as were these proofs of your virtue, you confirmed them by still more brilliant actions. For to be reputed just might perhaps happen to any individual even though it were not true; and perhaps it would not be surprising that among many worthless citizens there should be found one virtuous man. For even among the Medes is not a certain Deioces¹ celebrated, and Abaris² too among the Hyperboreans, and Anacharsis³ among the Scythians? And in their case the surprising thing was that, born as they were among nations who knew nothing of justice, they nevertheless prized justice, two of them sincerely, though the third only pretended to do so out of self-interest. But it would be hard to find a whole people and city enamoured of just deeds and just words except your own. And I wish to remind you of one out of very many such deeds done in your city. After the Persian war Themistocles⁴ was planning to introduce a resolution to set fire secretly to the naval arsenals of the Greeks, and then did not dare to propose it to the assembly; but he agreed to confide the secret to any one man whom the people should elect by vote; and the people chose Aristides to represent them. But he when he heard the scheme did not reveal what he had been told, but reported to the people that there could be nothing more profitable or more dishonest than that advice.

¹ The first King of Media; reigned 709-656 B.C.

² A priest of Apollo whose story and date are uncertain.

³ A Scythian prince who visited Athens at the end of the sixth century B.C.; cf. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5. 32; Lucian, *Anacharsis*.

⁴ The story is told in Plutarch, *Themistocles*.

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