

OPEN CHRONICLES · VOLUME 5

*Τοῦ ἁγιοτάτου Πατριάρχου Ἀντιοχείας
Κυρίου Ἰωάννου Λόγος εἰς τὸν βασιλέα
κύριον Ἀλέξιον τὸν Κομνηνόν*

SPEECH I TO EMPEROR ALEXIOS KOMNENOS

John the Oxite (John, patriarch of Antioch)

SOURCE-FAITHFUL TRANSLATION

Translated from the Greek with AI assistance, edited by Paul McMurry

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*Τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου Πατριάρχου Ἀντιοχείας Κυρίου Ἰωάννου
Λόγος εἰς τὸν βασιλέα κύριον Ἀλέξιον τὸν Κομνηνόν*

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Source

Base text: Alexandre Lavriotes, printed Greek of Speech 1 in Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀλήθεια (1900), pages 354–358 and 362–363, from the now-lost Great Lavra manuscript (as reported). Comparison witness: Paul Gautier, “Diatribes de Jean l’Oxite contre Alexis I Comnène,” Revue des études byzantines 28 (1970), Greek pages 19–49 (through Ἀμήν). Source-faithful reading translation from a documented working eclectic Greek (Lavriotes default on substance); not a critical edition of the Greek and not a stenographic transcript of a 1091 oral performance.

- Gautier 1970 — Persée / REB (as available)

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Translated from the Greek witnesses listed above with AI assistance; edited and verified by Paul McMurry. Lavriotes 1900 is the base documentary print; Gautier 1970 is the critical comparator. This is a source-faithful reading translation, not a critical edition of the Greek.

Produced without using any modern English translation of this speech as a source text. Gautier’s French facing translation was opened only after each unit draft for sense-check and quotation identification; no English wording was taken from the French.

Limitations

Speech 1 only; Speech 2 is excluded. Seven substantive departures from Lavriotes are documented in the publication notes. Not a critical edition of the Greek. The lost Great Lavra manuscript is not held. This release has not undergone external scholarly peer review.

Suggested citation

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Contents

Speech 1 only. Continuous English; unit markers from the working pipeline are not printed.

About this edition

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Scope

This volume publishes **Speech 1** only: the first address of John, patriarch of Antioch (John the Oxite), to Emperor Alexios I Komnenos, conventionally dated about 1091. **Speech 2 is not included.**

Source-faithful translation

The source-faithful English rests on Alexandre Lavriotes's 1900 print in *Εκκλησιαστική Αλήθεια* (Speech 1 pages 354–358 and 362–363), the only surviving printed edition prepared from direct inspection of the now-lost Great Lavra manuscript, collated throughout against Paul Gautier's 1970 Greek re-edition (*Revue des études byzantines* 28, Greek pp. 19–49 through Ἀμήν).

English was made from a documented working eclectic Greek: Lavriotes default on substance; Gautier for accents, ordinary punctuation, and plain typography when meaning is unaffected; Gautier (or Gautier/Petit) on substance only where logged. Seven substantive departures from Lavriotes are listed in the publication notes.

This is a **source-faithful reading translation**, not a critical edition of the Greek, and not a stenographic transcript of a 1091 oral performance. Prefer this edition for citation of exact wording.

Reader's edition

The reader's edition is a **lightened** continuous address adapted from the Open Chronicles source-faithful English of Speech 1. Syntax and paragraphing are opened for modern reading; the substance of the address is retained. No

dialogue or events have been invented. **Prefer the source-faithful translation for citation of exact wording.**

Credit

Translated from the Greek with AI assistance, edited by Paul McMurry.
Reader's edition: adapted for modern readers with AI assistance, edited by Paul McMurry.

AI assistance was used in transcription, collation, translation drafting, and editorial review; Paul McMurry is responsible for the published English text.

The speech

Discourse of the most holy patriarch of Antioch, kyr John, to the emperor kyr Alexios Komnenos

Title. Discourse of the most holy Patriarch of Antioch, lord John, to the emperor lord Alexios the Komnenos.

Thanks be to God, O greatest emperor — for it is good both to begin from God and, straight from the opening, to set down the thanksgivings — that he has brought you back to us even now from the campaign. He snatched you out of the midst of the dogs that encircled you. He has given the shepherd and champion back again to his own flock, for a common consolation, for a lightening of the anguish that surrounds all, so that we may not fall away altogether from the better hopes.

These things your return has granted us. These things you, living and kept safe, grant as a favor to the commonwealth.

Do not then think, emperor, that a small share of danger would have been added to our evils if any of the unwanted and abominable things had befallen you. Do not think that the measure of our disaster would still increase for us by the cubit, as the saying goes. Think rather that all things would have been overturned at once and would have vanished. For we would in every way have

suffered what a house is also likely to suffer — and an unsound house at that — when the prop that holds it up has been taken away. Or if you prefer: a ship in the midst of winter and heavy seas that no longer has its steersman.

For these reasons, then, it is right to be much grateful to the Greater One — or rather, for all of us to be wholly grateful — and indeed we are. From my own case I am persuaded that the others feel the same, since fellowship in affairs is also fellowship of disposition.

As for what I still wish to say, I know that these things are such that, if left unspoken, they can bring danger — and a double danger, perhaps, for me. But if they should after all be spoken, they do have something that stings as well; yet they will benefit both the one who speaks and the soul that receives them. For just as honey pains the wounded parts of the body, so reproof given with just frankness often also pains a soul.

It would be better, if it so falls out, that by causing a little pain with words I should — so far as it falls to me — bring about the benefit in deeds, than that, by fleeing the roughness of speech, I should wait for the ultimate and common danger.

And on other grounds too the matter would deserve the greatest reproaches for both of us, if formerly, while I was still among private persons, I set down in writing what seemed to me advantageous, and you listened with pleasure, but now I should neither speak nor persuade. And this while I hold office as high priest of God and have been set as a watchman for the house of the Israel according to God; while I see no longer a bow being drawn, nor a sword being polished, nor coals being kindled, but fire devouring, arrows of every kind being loosed, the sword being poured out, and the knife being emptied behind our fugitives; and while I behold, as in a mirror, in the creation that has already suffered, the evils that will overtake us.

And who will deliver me from the threat, if I do not warn both subjects and rulers and speak so as to turn them from their ways, that they may live? “For if you do not warn,” God says to me through a prophetic voice, “nor speak, the

lawless man will die in his lawlessness, and I will require his blood from your hand.”

Do you see how fearful the threat is, how full of dread?

“Hear, then, O emperor — both you and those near you who sit before your face; rather, if it is at all possible, let a common and public assembly of hearers be formed for the discourse. We have all sinned and acted lawlessly by departing from the commandments of the Lord, and we have corrupted the divine covenant, says the Lord Almighty; and for this reason I have given you, he says, despised and enfeebled among all the nations, because you did not keep my ways, but accepted persons in the law,” and all that he, through all the prophets together, reproaches and threatens against those who offend.

But for the present we must leave the affairs of the others alone, since it is both impossible to know them and impracticable to go through each in turn. The discourse must proceed to you, the head of the fullness of the commonwealth. As far as ability allows, it must show what your affairs have been like, straight from birth up to the present, and the whole ordering of Providence concerning you. And why I wish to speak of this now, you will know very soon as you hear. You yourself will gather good fruit from the discourse, God willing — and so will all who do not go through it carelessly.

I hold, O emperor, that God sees our generation turned aside from the just path and carried at full rush toward the pit of wickedness. He tries to call our generation back and, as it were, to check it with disciplines and scourges. Yet our generation, though disciplined in many ways for its many sins — by other means, and indeed by wars and by the calamities that come from those wars (I will not lengthen my speech by naming each calamity in turn) — remains unconverted and holds unyieldingly to what is worse. What is harder still is this: our generation did not even judge those sufferings a payment for its sins. Instead the many thought that the inhabited world was now being flooded by streams of calamities through some automatic working, perhaps, or by lot.

I myself have heard some say that these calamities were bound to come about just as they do, and that that is also why they are happening. Others hold that

God cares only for the salvation of our souls, and leaves the affairs of the world to go as chance may have it.

Such, then, are the false and unsound opinions of some people. The President of all things refutes those opinions with countless testimonies from Scripture and with the events that come about each day. So he has ordered matters all-wisely, and guides into awareness those who are dim-sighted before so bright a truth.

For he has taken one man. At one time he raised this man above all and magnified him exceedingly in all things and through all things — for as long, clearly, as that man himself also supplied the occasions for it while he was well treated. At another time God humbles him again and hands him over to many dangers and afflictions. Through this one man God shows most clearly to all — both to us and to the people under the sun — that the God of the Christians, when justice is practiced, gives strength to his people and blesses them, to speak in the manner of the psalm, in peace. But those who wish to trample his laws are made cowardly thereafter and easy to overcome — not by the strength of those who make war on them, but by the stripping of God's protection.

And since among more conspicuous men both the successes and the misfortunes are also more conspicuous, for this reason God appears to display both upon a man who is altogether brilliant and extraordinarily distinguished — I mean both the marks of favor and the marks of permission. It is so that this man, as if standing on some lookout of the brilliance that raises him high from every side, may be conspicuous to all in both kinds of times, and that nothing of what is ordered concerning him may escape notice. This man is no other than you yourself, O emperor. Consider, then: the discourse will remind you of your own affairs.

For you sprang from a family that holds first rank. And when you had scarcely been enrolled among the young men, you both began upon deeds and did nothing lowly. Rather, your beginning of acting — and of the favor from above and of the successes — was made plain.

Indeed, first of all, that Frankish dog who had raged against the Romans and had long ravaged the East extensively — God delivers this one bound into the hands of the emperor through you, and that while the enemies were overrunning and plundering, so to speak, the whole country, having kept your going out and your coming in free from harm for you. So it was that, straight from the starting-line, as they say, all both marveled at you and took great hopes concerning you for what would follow.

Then you overthrew another tyrant who had risen up against the state — and this one had gathered a force countless in number from both Romans and barbarians toward the setting sun, and from that point seemed some kind of invincible and unconquerable man. And next after this, you also overthrew another, who fell not very short of the second in numbers of men, but in experience and in manly excellence in war was far more valiant.

And if you yourself had been leading a force equal to those men, or one falling short by only a little, it would have seemed to some — not rightly, yet it would have seemed — that the outcomes of the wars had come about according to what is likely and what befalls men. But as things are (for the discourse is addressed to those who know), the wonders done concerning that Gideon are also worked as wonders in your case — the man by whose hand God delivered the Midianite army, the invincible one and superior in number, and that when he had drawn up for battle with the three hundred who had been allotted — none of them having escaped, not even their leaders. This very thing was also seen taking place here, so that you were made brilliant with trophies from abundance, and so that not even a hope might remain thereafter for those who had been defeated of recovering the defeat, perhaps.

So be it. Were the successes, then, only as far as these things? And in these had God's munificence concerning you been circumscribed? And was He arrayed only against those from among us who had risen against us?

And who does not know that, of all the others as well, much that was strong and formidable was present for you? Indeed those very Scythians who are now

oppressing you, O emperor — or rather those through whom our situation was brought to the extremity of danger — even only hearing your name, trembled.

O of how much brilliance, of how much renown and honor, of how much goodwill from all I enjoyed! For even of the imperial office itself another then held the name, but the deed and the power you yourself wore about you, and you lay in the mouths of all, reaping the just glory from the things that were being done.

But such and so great were you before the imperial office, straining forward and prospering — and already even reigning, save for the envied rag.

But then, once you had also set foot upon the first rule itself, all things opposite happen to you on every occasion: wars and upheavals and countless disasters, and reverse misfortunes counterbalancing the former successes; armies delivered over to the enemies like sheep and cut down; cities captured; pourings of Christian blood everywhere on land and sea; and worst of all, the terrible things have now reached even us and this holy city — which once was the eye of the inhabited world and was serving as the ornament of the whole empire, but now endures the very threat against Zion, and is being plowed like a field, and not a small part of it, or rather not even this remaining secure — so that for the present I may say nothing more about her.

And if, entrusting the affairs to others, you yourself had been spending your time secluded inside the palace, living in luxury and indulging pleasure, someone might have blamed the things that were happening on negligence and a betrayal of what is fitting. But as things are, even gathering forces on every occasion — some foreign, others also from the subjects — and yourself present and fighting alongside and exhausting springs of money and doing and laboring through everything, so much the more and the more carefully in proportion as with greater power and authority than before, nowhere, in no way do you enjoy the former favor from God.

Whence these things, and what the cause is, must therefore be considered and sought. Has God forgotten? Does He no longer see what concerns us, or seeing does He not have pity, or having pity does He fail in strength for the aid, as if

stripped of His former power? And of whom is the dominion inaccessible, and the power eternal? Who is the one who always through all things fills all with his beneficent power?

Can a woman forget her child, or fail to have pity on the offspring of her womb? But if even a woman should forget these, yet I will not forget, says the Lord.

Whence then, whence so many misfortunes for both you and the subjects, and no respite from evils — but already what concerns us has reached even the very summit of the disasters, so that our affairs now stand for us on the edge of a razor?

I will therefore speak even the cause of these things, cutting short the many. And do not be at all grieved as you hear, O emperor, nor suspect any ill will from the words; for it is not of longings. You have wronged me in nothing; you have grieved me in nothing, neither great nor small; but as far as it lay with you, you have even greatly benefited me. But I care for you, God is witness, and I am in anguish over the common salvation.

First, O emperor, an unlawful foundation of the imperial office has been laid for you, and the accession rites too have become such as they have become — for why must I measure out the unspeakable things?

Then when not long afterward a war had been raised against you, it was necessary to take the matter as a movement of God and as a revisiting of what had then been done, and for this reason to weep before Him and repent in all humility and contrition of heart, and to try with all power to recover the city that had suffered, and so to entrust what concerns yourself to God who gives salvation to emperors, and with Him to array yourself against the enemies; but you were doing everything the opposite.

For as if God had not even seen the things that had happened, or as if, having remitted that whole debt and wishing to save, He were strong for this among many but not also among few — thus you trusted the outcome of the war to multitudes of men, of horses, of arms, of money, to counsels and crafts through human calculations, myriads upon myriads both planned and executed, and the

land squeezed dry by the tax-collections, and not a few other things then innovated.

But since through the necessities of the war nothing more was accomplished than only to be reaped down — if any flower of Roman strength still remained — and for an untold amount of wealth and of arms and of the rest of the equipment to become the barbarians'; yet that accursed Frank who both planned and carried out much injustice against Christians was pursued by justice from above, which cast sudden death upon the head of the lawless one and at once dissolved the force around him; and there came about for us then a salvation greater than wonder, and not less even than hope, so that even so we might understand and be disciplined to put our trust in no one, but in God alone, and to hang the cables of both our life and our hope from His hand.

But we did not again cease thinking and working things equal to the former, but rather even advancing further in these things.

For when after these things it was necessary even against the Scythians to wall off the attacks upon the land, and already it was necessary also to take thought for the islands because of the barbarians about the East — there what discourse will stage as tragedy the Iliads of evils, as many as Christians used to endure, or rather still endure always, increasing day by day under the pretext of military expenditures?

Who could recount islands and continents both being gold-taxed, and the novel things both of the levies and of the tax-collectors, both affairs and names: the thrice-collectors, the tithe-collectors, those concerned with the assessments, the land-sellers, then again their accountants, the imperial hucksters of the grain and of the other produce of the earth, and still besides these the reed-wielding agents, the nail-scraping tax-gatherers, the rulers who do the things of public executioners, the judges who rob on land everywhere and on sea, and the rest — so that my soul may not be thrown into further confusion as I reckon up each thing?

And already the terrible thing was laying hold also of the churches of God, grazing everything like fire; or rather they were being plundered even much

more, the more some of them seemed to prosper — as of the pious emperors at successive times both guarding for them what they possessed, and with gifts from themselves also further securing the increase.

So one could see documents of imperial munificence insulted or even annulled — and these sworn, and these made toward God — and sacred land stripped, and treasures of God taken away and made common, and everything both among living things and among lifeless things being driven and carried off, and the mediators themselves of God and men, the stewards of the great mysteries — I mean the high priests — subjected to all kinds of afflictions.

I heard then concerning some of these men that they were even flogged — O earth and sun — and this under a pious emperor, and were cast into prison not for Christ as others once were — for that would have been a great thing for them — but for gold, the heaviest burden.

And having just mentioned treasures, I see another swarm of pitiful recitals rising up against me — I mean when I take into mind both divine vessels and holy images, from which for a long time the smelting-furnaces give you the coins.

But the whole dice-game about these things must be left in silence; but if wholly, because I speak frankly, I do wrong, I am ready to endure anything whatever — only you be saved. What worse than all these things could I see or even suffer?

So then churches were being stripped both of the rest and indeed some even of clergy and of their bishops themselves.

And of those in fields and villages and cities — both the other cities and the city once most prosperous and queen — those in prosperity almost all were being led away into the lot of the needy, their substance draining from them either all at once or little by little; but the poor and those living by their hands and the farming tribe and all who are about trades and workshops, pressed by foreign contributions beyond their own power, some were dying even before their time — for indeed very strong famines also followed as one would expect upon the things that were happening — and others, migrating from their ancestral land,

were dwelling as wanderers and fugitives on foreign soil, bereft of everything, counting greatly blessed those who had departed from among men.

And necessity persuaded not a few to run as deserters even into the hands of the Christian-slaying barbarians, judging the slavery among them and the cohabitation more tolerable than life with us.

As for the enemies themselves, what more could they have prayed for against us? For our affairs, as was natural, were being crushed and growing weak, while for them their strength and their boldness against us increased.

But it was not possible for God either to endure, or, seeing the things being done, to approve of them. Accordingly he did not endure either, but wrath followed close upon their heels, and justice was not delaying.

Chios was taken — alas! — Mytilene was carried off; Cyprus and Crete, the heads of the islands, were departing; herds of Scythians were grazing the greater part of the West; but of the East not even a short remnant had been left.

But even when all these had gone, the remaining people, wretched, were being ground down still more by the exactions, and other resources of money upon other resources were being invented, and a limit of these neither has come into being nor is there yet.

And these things, for my part — passing over the many summarily because of the multitude, and at the same time confounded by tears and checked in my voice — but how your soul stands as you hear, you yourself would know.

And with affairs thus and because of these things badly off, and as it were dying, it was necessary absolutely, late at least, for us to come to our senses and, leaving our own counsels and things to be done, to learn differently and pursue what is beneficial, and to take refuge with God with all our power — him who alone is able to save in straits.

But we did not even so understand; but the country remained suffering again the most terrible things of all, both from those besieging and no less from those seeming to save.

The emperor, however, having resolved to campaign against one portion of the enemies — these Scythians, I mean — many times set out against them, but never returned without having lost the greater part of the army or even all of them together.

And again not even so does anyone, having investigated the causes of the disaster, think it worthy to learn and to seek out the cure.

But the boundaries of the Romans' dominion became, toward the rising sun, the acropolis of Byzantium, and toward the west the Golden Gate; but we, the many things that we did many times and thereby came round into this danger — these same things again as if beneficial and salvific both thinking and doing we persist in.

Very well. And since to reprove alone is no great thing (for it is very easy even for anyone who wishes), but to give useful counsel for the present circumstances is a work of goodwill and of a discourse that has sense — come then, the thing of the proverb must be done, and I who struck with the reproofs will heal again with the remedies from words.

First, O emperor, one must not despair of salvation, nor give up in the face of the present circumstances, even if we have offended God countless times, even if our affairs are in the last of evils; for propitiation is easy, and deliverance from the dangers, if only we ourselves are willing.

The great among prophets and king David enjoins both on you and on us what must indeed be done, so weakened as we are and to such a degree: "Seek the Lord," he cries, "and be strengthened."

What is easier than to seek the Lord and, seeking, to find him? He is not hard of approach or hard to meet with; there is no need of a journey, nor of any business for the finding. Near you is the word, in your mouth and in your heart — that is, the word of confession and of supplication.

Come, stand with all of us in the temple of the Lord; let the entreaty become common and public, in contrition of heart and in a spirit of humiliation.

You have many pledges of the mercies of God: the paradoxical divine signs from all time, and especially in the critical times; the wonders that had often been worked for you before in relation to him.

Remember David crying out: “I was humbled, and the Lord saved me.”

Remember that contrition of Hezekiah, through which an angel of God in a single night struck and laid low one hundred and eighty-five thousand of the Assyrians, under whom Jerusalem was undergoing the terrible siege, so that then the oracle that had been foretold came about for both the king and the city: that “in the evening weeping will lodge, and toward the morning rejoicing.”

Remember also how many before these and after them — judges, kings, private persons, nations, cities — having fled for refuge to God either in common or also each by himself in necessities, and having propitiated him, were saved beyond expectation from insurmountable dangers.

But you will say that you too keep night-vigils often, wailing and kneeling, and God does not listen. I say it myself too — or rather God himself says to us: “When you stretch out your hands toward me, I will turn my eyes away from you, and if you multiply the prayer, I will not listen to you”; then also the cause: “for your hands are full of blood.”

Does he therefore introduce despair through these things? By no means; but through what follows he somehow teaches how we shall enjoy favor from him, saying: “Wash yourselves, become clean, remove the wickednesses from your souls before my eyes,” and whatever he adds next to these — for my discourse is not toward the uninitiated in the divine words, and especially your most excellent full brother, who concerning the investigation of the Scriptures is both most diligent and most versed.

Setting all the rest, then, as of secondary account, and abstaining from the unlawful exactions and deeds through which the divine wrath against us was kindled, and having already corrected some things and also promised others to God: break forth with us all a common supplicatory voice, pouring tears, pouring out your hearts, sighing from the depths and wailing and saying: “Spare

your people, Lord; even if we have sinned and acted lawlessly beyond number, do not forever hand over your inheritance to those who thirst for its complete destruction; give us help from affliction. For behold, we have come to know that every human hope and device is vain; and having left all things behind, we have fled to you for refuge.”

Saying these things and whatever is like them, and beseeching, let us by all means bend the philanthropic Master to mercy, and we shall obtain salvation that is easy and free of toil.

Do you not hear how great things the Mother of God has worked as wonders at various times and dangers concerning this very queen city when it was surrounded by enemies — help having often followed the entreaty on the same day, and the defense against the enemies?

Do you not hear that in the days of the emperor Michael, the son of Theophilos, Tauroscythians, having approached with a heavy fleet and taken hold in a circle, held the whole as if inside nets; and when the emperor with the high priest and all the throng of the city had taken possession of the sanctuary in Blachernai and had propitiated the divine in common, then the holy rag of the Mother of God is dipped toward the edge of the sea (it is customary to call this a maphorion), and immediately an astonishing and paradoxical wonder occurs?

For from a settled noon and calm the sea, suddenly disturbed, sinks the ships of all the barbarians with them, very few having been left over — as many, clearly, as sufficed to announce the novel disaster to those at home.

And what need have I of more and older examples? You know the late Constantine, whose surname was Doukas — for not long before your imperial office he left both the rule and his life; this man, when the Hunnic race campaigned against us, what weapons did he use? What allies did he gather, sending embassies to nations and exhausting treasuries of money and scraping the poor to the nail under pretext of the war and arming Huns against Huns, as you arm Scythians against Scythians and others most hostile to us against those most intimate to them?

Have not those many myriads become the work of the emperor's faith, when he propitiated the divine with many tears and with earnest prayer?

But now, I say, with the imperial treasuries being emptied and what is brought in from outside utterly diminished, the resources for the revenues have of necessity been devised from every side; and whether justly or unjustly, the crisis does not allow one to examine. For an imperial office to stand at all without feeding a military force — and that in the present circumstances — is impossible: these things are a pretext and irony.

For when you put forward such things, there are especially things answering back against you — both many other things and also indeed encompassings of properties and the cities within the city and excesses of buildings and the many palaces and the treasuries upon each, as is natural, and the imperial office that has been divided and for this reason not even standing.

For in truth, O emperor, your kinship has stood for the greatest harm both to the imperial office and to us all. For each, wishing to live and prosper in imperial fashion, holding private gain of more account than the common interest, has procured for you scarcity of money, and being forced into overreaching, and offending God, and for the commonwealth all kinds of damages and afflictions; and for the enemies, that the easiest things prevail, we having been crushed and being altogether without effort.

But these things on account of the pretext which you allege for exacting money inescapably from every side. But if even in truth there was lack of money and the imperial office was not able to feed a military force of sufficient strength for security, faith alone was needed with justice, and all things would have become possible and hard to provide; for the one who has promised is altogether free of falsehood.

But again I will say: one must not despair even so of the divine favor. Only, having left aside the other things from which you have nowhere and in no way been benefited, put your hope in the Lord and do every goodness that befits the emperor and as much as the time now demands — but “do not put hope in injustice, and do not desire plunder.”

Every unjust tax-collection and lawless deed and ill-advised counsel must be let go far away. Some things must be corrected at once according to the counsel already given; and concerning the rest, make a promise to Christ God that you yourself also for the future will continue doing what is lawful for an emperor and will keep much exactness about the elections to office, entrusting the arbitrations of lawsuits and the governorships of cities and the other administrations both of internal affairs and of external ones to the most excellent men and not to the basest, to the most just and not to the most lawless.

Say also yourself: “Lord, everything that has been done unjustly by me — all money or properties, both sacred and private, that have been taken from rich or poor on unreasonable pretexts — I will restore to those from whom they were taken, even if not to the fourfold, yet at least to what counterbalances for them the damages and comforts the afflictions, according to what is possible in me and what is providable from you.”

Promise these very things which even apart from necessity it is obligatory for an emperor to keep: both to judge a just judgment, to do mercy and compassion, not to oppress widow and orphan and poor man, to do all things with counsel among the picked men of the soldiers and of those under the ecclesiastical [orders] and of the other men, putting the deliberations into the midst and especially whenever one must deliberate about any of the most necessary matters, and not to trust yourself alone, being one and turned about in the midst of myriads of affairs; for it is impossible to find what is needed in all things, and it is written that salvation is in much counsel.

Add also these things to the promises — for it is no small matter — that you will care most carefully and most exactly also for the ecclesiastical affairs; for if one must speak the truth, these are no less diseased than the secular ones.

And not you alone, O emperor, who direct the power, but we also, all without exception, both have lived with and live with many lawlessnesses — and yet the causes of these too are charged to you before both God and those of men who judge rightly; and many of us sin without a command. For the one who keeps quiet at the things badly done, when it is possible to prevent them, is no less

responsible than those who do them; and especially because, even by not proceeding against them, he provides easy and ready imitation to those who wish it.

And that we all together act lawlessly needs not even a word for proof; for the affairs themselves are incontestable witnesses. For the things for which the leaders of Israel of old were reproached through prophetic voices — these things also among us one can see being committed, or even much worse. “Our rulers are like roaring lions, our judges like wolves of Arabia”; we who profess to live as monastics and crucify the flesh with the passions and the desires live rather for these than for God. We priests profane the holy things and set aside the law and trample the divine canons freely; and there is none who prevents or will blame, but we approve of one another’s wickednesses, and that man is bad among us who would not be of one mind about these things.

Of all these things, O emperor — for to enjoin the same things often is for me a duty, but for you beneficial things — hurry at once to readjust toward the better whatever is possible for you, and the greater part is possible; and of the rest, promise the correction if time is granted, persuading soldiers also to be content with their own pay, and not wronging those whom you lead as helpers against the wrongdoers. For it is not — it is not — for soldiers to prosper who are defiled by plunder and greed, both raising their hands for battle and treating God as an enemy before the adversaries.

Bearing such whole burnt offerings, such sacrifices for the sins both of your own and of the whole people, enter into the holy place before the Lord — not in the night, but rather in the day. And let us all enter also and propitiate; and there is need of much prayer and of humility, and of this double: the one that crushes the inner man, and the one that appears outwardly, such as was that of that emperor who in days of war, having put on black-dyed sandals and having run into the great sanctuary of God, and having wept and prayed, drew the divine favor upon himself; and how many exploits against the Persians from that time you yourself also of course hear, not even the long time having been able to hand these things over to forgetfulness.

These things must be done, O emperor, and I again establish myself as guarantor; I also now declare — even if not prophesying from some god-inspired possession, but from infancy conversing with the sacred writings and having the experience from affairs that follows upon the meaning of these. And now also, being high priest of God and having the credibility to guarantee such things, I say then that these things having thus come about from both you and the rest of us, there will be some better change in every way for the affairs, and times of refreshment will come again from the face of the Lord; but with us remaining in the things in which we are and holding unchangeably, let it be known to you, emperor, that I neither advise you still to campaign, nor to do or wish any other thing for yourself and for us; for vanity of vanities everything will be for you of the things previously labored — that is, as also the things hereafter that will be labored.

But it is necessary for all to sit awaiting the sword of God, which is as good as already coming even upon us; or shall we put trust in these very intercessions now being done by the many, whom those who wish to gratify you in all things gather, removing most from the workshops and the handcrafts, compelling wretched and miserable people — who perhaps do not even have plenty of the day's food — to buy torches, and they persuade them to go around the marketplaces and hold litanies, and indeed also a stretching-out — some not praying on behalf but cursing, and weeping and groaning, but because of the bitter poverty and the more pitiable tax-collectors, who after the litany will perhaps immediately stand over them, having exacted the imposed levy inescapably. Away with such intercessions, O emperor; they cannot strengthen, but even on the contrary they can kindle the wrath against us still more.

I know I have said many things painful also to many; but the cause is necessity. Since indeed it was not at all my wish to say such things — God knows — just as it was not to have occasions for such words either. For you yourself also have summoned us today through the same necessity entirely, to learn each one's opinion about the present circumstances.

But Christ — for it is good henceforth to make use of prayer — the father of mercies and ruler of peace, who works in all both the willing of the good things and the working, himself having given you understanding and having brought you into agreement to walk into the things — the path which the discourse set forth — and as many things as this discourse left aside: may he grant you to know and to do all things. And may he hear both you and us in this day of the affliction, and may he grant to you the imperial office, and to us a peaceful and stable life, having shattered all and having cast down the enemies to the end; and of the other life also may he not deem us unworthy — that life now continuously hidden and later to be manifested to him, our Lord. To whom be the glory and the power now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Publication notes — John the Oxite, Speech 1

Scope

Speech 1 only (through **Amen**). Speech 2 (Lavriotes pp. 364–365) is out of scope for this release.

Witnesses

RANK	SOURCE	ROLE
1	Lavriotes 1900, <i>Ἑκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀλήθεια</i> , pp. 354–358 + 362–363	Base documentary Greek
2	Gautier 1970, <i>REB</i> 28, Greek pp. 19–49	Critical comparator
3	Working eclectic Greek	Text from which English was made

Gautier’s French was used only as a post-draft sense-check; it is not a wording source. No modern English translation of this speech was consulted.

Substantive departures from Lavriotes (seven)

These places leave Lavriotes for a Gautier or Gautier/Petit form in the working Greek and English:

#	L PAGE	WORKING FORM	LAVRIOTES FORM	UNIT
1	354	ἔχει μὲν τι καὶ δάκνον, ὠφελήσει τὸν τε εἰπόντα	<i>om. L</i>	JOX-S1-002
2	355	συστήτω	συστήτω	JOX-S1-003
3	356	ἄφνω	ἄρνω	JOX-S1-008
4	358	ὅτι	αὐτί	JOX-S1-011
5	357	κακῶν	παπῶν	JOX-S1-009
6	358	μὴν ἡμάρτομεν	μὴ ἡμάρτομεν	JOX-S1-012
7	363	πολέμου μελεμβαφῆ	 βαφῆ	JOX-S1-014

Departures 5–7 follow editor residual-resolution **B** (2026-08-01). Other tabulated differences remain KEEP L (Lavriotes documentary form retained).

Reader's edition residual-B senses

The lightened body retains:

- “Iliads of **evils**”
- “even if we **have sinned...**”
- “**days of war**” and “**black-dyed sandals**”

The speech does not name the emperor of the sandal exemplum; no modern identification is inserted in the body.

What this edition does not claim

- A word-for-word transcript of a 1091 oral performance
- A diplomatic letter-for-letter transcript of the lost Lavra manuscript
- That the English was “translated from Gautier” as base witness
- Completeness of Speech 2 or of John’s other works

Citation

Prefer the source-faithful translation for exact wording. Suggested citations are in each edition’s colophon.

Method note — John the Oxite, Speech 1 (faithful English)

Freeze date: 2026-08-01 **Scope:** Speech 1 only (first address / diatribe to Alexios I Komnenos, conventionally c. 1091). Speech 2 is out of scope.

What this translation is

This translation is based upon Alexandre Lavriotes’ 1900 publication, the only surviving printed edition prepared from direct inspection of the now-lost Great Lavra manuscript, collated throughout against Paul Gautier’s 1970 critical re-edition. Gautier’s conjectural or substantive departures from Lavriotes are documented individually.

Neither the medieval manuscript nor Lavriotes’ printed text constitutes a verifiable stenographic transcript of an oral performance. This edition presents the surviving textual tradition of the address attributed to John the Oxite.

Witnesses

RANK	SOURCE	ROLE IN THIS EDITION
1	Lavriotes 1900, <i>Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀλήθεια</i> 31–32, Speech 1 pages 354–358 and 362–363	Base documentary Greek (substantive wording default)
2	Gautier 1970, “Diatribes de Jean l’Oxite contre Alexis I Comnène,” <i>Revue des études byzantines</i> 28, Greek pp. 19–49 (through Ἀμήν)	Critical comparator (accents, ordinary punctuation, plain typography; conjectures only when logged)
3	Working eclectic Greek	`greek/working_eclectic/speech1.md` — text from which English was made
—	Gautier’s French (same article, facing pages)	Post-draft sense-check and quotation identification only; never a wording source for English
—	Any modern English of this speech	Not consulted at any stage

The lost Great Lavra codex is not held. Gautier did not see the manuscript; his Greek re-edits Lavriotes (with Petit copies noted in his apparatus).

How the English was made

1. Lavriotes Speech 1 pages were transcribed and independently audited against page images.
2. Gautier’s Greek for the same span was extracted for collation.
3. A working eclectic Greek was built: **Lavriotes default** on substance; Gautier for accents / ordinary punctuation / plain typography when meaning is unaffected; Gautier (or G/P) on substance only when logged.
4. The speech was divided into fifteen units (**JOX-S1-001 ... 015**). Each unit was drafted from the working Greek only, production-QA’d, French sense-checked without adopting French wording, and independently audited.
5. A whole-speech global pass and continuous English read closed Stage 6. Editor residual-resolution (2026-08-01) settled three high flags (see § Departures).
6. This freeze assembles verified English bodies in unit order into ‘speech1_english.md’.

Scripture and liturgical wording are translated from **John’s Greek**, not from a modern Bible house text.

Substantive departures from Lavriotes (working Greek / English)

These **seven** places leave Lavriotes for a Gautier or Gautier/Petit form. Each is logged in ‘collation/speech1_collation.md’ and ‘greek/working_eclectic/speech1.md’.

#	L PAGE	WORKING FORM	LAVRIOTES FORM	ENGLISH UNIT	RATIONALE (SHORT)
1	354	ἔχει μὲν τι καὶ δάκνον, ὠφελήσει τόν τε εἰπόντα	om. L	JOX-S1-002	L defective; restored from G/P
2	355	συστῆτω	συττήτω	JOX-S1-003	Impossible L form (typography)
3	356	ἄφνω	ἄρνω	JOX-S1-008	Impossible L form (ρ for φ)
4	358	ὅτι	αὐτι	JOX-S1-011	Impossible L form before psalm quote
5	357	κακῶν	παπῶν	JOX-S1-009	Editor residual-resolution 2026-08-01 (sense: “Iliads of evils”)
6	358	μὴν ἡμάρτομεν	μὴ ἡμάρτομεν	JOX-S1-012	Editor residual-resolution 2026-08-01 (penitential “we have sinned”)

#	L PAGE	WORKING FORM	LAVRIOTES FORM	ENGLISH UNIT	RATIONALE (SHORT)
7	363	πολέμου μελεμβαφή	 βαφή	JOX-S1-014	Editor residual-resolution 2026-08-01 (G/P fill of L lacuna: “days of war,” “black-dyed sandals”)

All other tabulated B-layer differences remain **KEEP L** (documentary Lavriotes kept in working text and English).

What this edition does not claim

- A word-for-word transcript of a 1091 oral performance
- A diplomatic letter-for-letter transcript of the lost Lavra manuscript
- That the English was “translated from Gautier” as base witness
- Completeness of Speech 2 or of John’s other works

French quarantine (disclosed)

Gautier’s French was opened **only after** each unit’s English draft existed, for sense-check and possible quotation identification. No English wording was taken from the French. Dependence checks are filed under `audits/comparator\_french/`.

Artefacts of this freeze

FILE	ROLE
`compiled/faithful_edition/speech1_english.md`	Continuous verified English (units in order)
`compiled/faithful_edition/METHOD_NOTE.md`	This note
`compiled/faithful_edition/README.md`	Short reader orientation
`FREEZE_RECORD.md` (project root)	Freeze inventory and policy snapshot
`compiled/faithful_edition/SHA256SUMS_freeze.csv`	Hashes of frozen edition files

Unit-level verified sources remain under `translation/verified/JOX-S1-00N.md` (authoritative for notes and Greek decision tables). After freeze, the English text is immutable except via documented erratum.