

# Inscription of Abercius

Quasten gives this translation in *Patrology*, v. 1, p. 172.

1. The citizens of an eminent city, I made this (tomb)
2. In my lifetime, that I might have here a resting-place for my body.
3. Abercius by name, I am a disciple of the chaste shepherd,
4. Who feedeth His flocks of sheep on mountains and plains,
5. Who hath great eyes that look on all sides.
6. He taught me . . . faithful writings.
7. He sent me to Rome, to behold a kingdom
8. And to see a queen with golden robe and golden shoes.
9. There I saw a people bearing the splended seal.
10. And I saw the plain of Syria and all the cities, even Nisibis,
11. Having crossed the Euphrates. And everywhere I had associates
12. Having Paul as a companion, everywhere faith led the way
13. And set before me food the fish from the spring
14. Mighty and pure, whom a spotless Virgin caught,
15. And gave this to friends to eat, always
16. Having sweet wine and giving the mixed cup with bread.
17. These words, I, Abercius, standing by, ordered to be inscribed.
18. In truth, I was in the course of my seventy-second year.
19. Let him who understands and believes this pray for Abercius.
20. But no man shall place another tomb upon mine.
21. If one do so, he shall pay to the treasury of the Romans two thousand pieces of gold,
22. And to my beloved fatherland Hieropolis, one thousand pieces of gold.

Lightfoot gives this edition of the Greek text in the life of Abercius by Symeon Metaphrastes in *The Apostolic Fathers*, pt. II, vol. I, pp. 493-494. Lightfoot makes the note: "Various readings of the MSS are given in *Spicil. Solesm.* III. p. 532 sq (1855), *Anal. Solesm.* II. p. 169 sq (1884). I have selected those readings which accord with our other sources of information—the fragment of the actual tomb of Abercius, and the inscription on the tomb of Alexander."

ἐκλεκτῆς πόλεως πολίτης τοῦτ' ἐποίησα ζῶν ἴν' ἔχω καιρῷ σώματος ἐνθάδε θέσιν. οὐνομα Ἀβέρκιος ὁ ὢν μαθητῆς ποιμένος ἀγνοῦ, ὃς βόσκει προβάτων ἀγέλας ὄρεσι πεδίοις τέ, ὀφθαλμοὺς ὃς ἔχει μεγάλους πάντη καθορῶντας. οὗτος γάρ με ἐδίδαξε γράμματα πιστά· εἰς ῥώμην ὃς ἔπεμψεν ἐμὲ βασιλείαν ἀθρῆσαι, καὶ βασίλισσαν ἰδεῖν χρυσόστολον χρυσοπέδιλον· λαὸν δ' εἶδον ἐκεῖ λαμπρὰν σφραγίδα ἔχοντα. καὶ συρίης πεδον εἶδον καὶ ἄστεα πάντα Νίσιβιν, Εὐφράτην διαβάς, πάντα δ' ἔσχον συνομηγύρους, παῦλον ἔσωθεν· πίστις πάντη δὲ προῆγε, καὶ παρέθηκε τροφήν ἰχθὺν ἀπὸ πηγῆς παμμεγέθη καθαρὸν, ὃν ἐδράξατο παρθένος ἀγνή, καὶ τοῦτον ἐπέδωκε φίλοις ἐσθίειν διὰ παντός, οἶνον χρηστὸν ἔχουσα, κέρασμα δίδουσα μετ' ἄρτου. ταῦτα παρεστῶς εἶπον Ἀβέρκιος ὧδε γραφῆναι, ἑβδομήκοστον ἔτος καὶ δευτέρον ἦγον ἀληθῶς. ταῦθ' ὁ νοῶν εὕξατο ὑπὲρ ἀβερκίου πᾶς ὁ συνφδός. οὐ μέντοι τύμβῳ τις ἐμῷ ἕτερον ἐπάνω θήσει. εἰ δ' οὖν, Ρ ωμαίων ταμείῳ θήσει δισχίλια χρυσᾶ καὶ χρηστῆ πατρίδι Ἱεροπόλει χίλια χρυσᾶ.

Here is the same text in Beta Code transliteration.

E)KLEKTH=S PO/LEWS POLI/THS TOU=T' E)POI/HSA ZW=N I(/N' E)/XW KAIRW=|  
SW/MATOS E)NQA/DE QE/SIN. OU)/NOMA \*A)BE/RKIOS O( W(=N MAQHTH\S POIME/NOS  
A(GNOU=, O(\S BO/SKEI PROBA/TWN A)GE/LAS O)/RESI PEDI/OIS TE/, O)FQALMOU\S O(\S

E)/XEI MEGA/LOUS PA/NTH| KAQORW=NTAS. OU(=TOS GA/R ME E)DI/DACE GRA/MMATA PISTA/: EI)S R(W/MHN O(\S E)/PEMYEN E)ME\ BASILEI/AN A)QRH=SAI, KAI\ BASI/LISSAN I)DEI=N XRUSO/STOLON XRUSOPE/DILON: LAO\N D' EI)=DON E)KEI= LAMPRA\N SFRAGI=DA E)/XONTA. KAI\ SURI/HS PED/ON EI)=DON KAI\ A)/STEA PA/NTA \*NI/SIBIN, \*EU)FRA/THN DIABA/S, PA/NTA D' E)/SXON SUNOMHGU/ROUS, PAU=LON E)/SWQEN: PI/STIS PA/NTH DE\ PROH=GE, KAI\ PARE/QHKE TROFH\N I)XQU\N A)PO\ PHGH=S PAMMEGE/QH KAQARO\N, O(\N E)DRA/CATO PARQE/NOS A(GNH/, KAI\ TOU=TON E)PE/DWKE FI/LOIS E)SQI/EIN DIA\ PANTO/S, OI)=NON XRHSTO\N E)/XOUSA, KE/RASMA DI/DOU=SA MET' A)/RTOU. TAU=TA PARESTW\S EI)=PON \*A)BE/RKIOS W(=DE GRAFH=NAI, E(BDOMH/KOSTON E)/TOS KAI\ DEU/TERON H)=GON A)LHQW=S. TAU=Q' O( NOW=N EU)/CAITO U(PE\R A)BERKI/OU PA=S O( SUNW|DO/S. OU) ME/NTOI TU/MBW| TIS E)MW=| E(/TERON E)PA/NW QH/SEI. EI) D' OU)=N, \*R(WMAI/WN TAMEI/W| QH/SEI DISXI/LIA XRUSA= KAI\ XRHSTH=| PATRI/DI \*I(EROPO/LEI XI/LIA XRUSA=.

Lightfoot gives the following English translation of the inscription (*The Apostolic Fathers*, pt. II, vol. I, pp. 496-497).

The citizen of a notable city I made this (tomb) in my life-time; that in due season I might have here a resting-place for my body. Abercius by name, I am a disciple of the pure Shepherd, who feedeth His flocks of sheep on mountains and plains, who hath great eyes looking on all sides; for He taught me faithful writings. He also sent me to royal Rome to behold it and to see the golden-robed, golden-slipped Queen. And there I saw a people bearing the splendid seal. And I saw the plain of Syria and all the cities, even Nisibis, crossing over the Euphrates. And everywhere I had associates. In company with Paul I followed, while everywhere faith led the way, and set before me for food the fish from the fountain, mighty and stainless (whom a pure virgin grasped), and gave this to friends to eat always, having good wine and giving the mixed cup with bread. These words I Abercius, standing by, ordered to be inscribed. In sooth I was in the course of my seventy-second year. Let every friend who observeth this, pray for me. But no man shall place another tomb above mine. If otherwise, he then shall pay two thousand pieces of gold to the treasury of the Romans, and a thousand pieces of gold of my good fatherland Hierapolis.

Lightfoot reconstructs the Greek of the inscription as follows (*The Apostolic Fathers*, pt. II, vol. I, p. 496).

ἐκλεκτῆς πόλεως ὁ πολίτης τοῦτ' ἐποίησα  
ζῶν ἴν' ἔχω καιρῶ σώματος ἐνθα θέσιν.  
οὔνομ' Ἀ βέρκιος εἰμι μαθητῆς ποιμένος ἀγνοῦ,  
ὃς βόσκει προβάτων ἀγέλας ὄρεσιν πεδίοις τέ,  
ὀφθαλμοὺς ὃς ἔχει μεγάλους πάντη καθορῶντας.  
οὔτος γάρ με ἐδίδαξε...γράμματα πιστά·  
εἰς Ῥώμην ὃς ἔπεμψεν ἐμὲν βασιλεῖαν ἀθρῆσαι  
καὶ βασίλισσαν ἰδεῖν χρυσόστολον χρυσοπέδιλον.  
λαὸν δ' εἶδον ἐκεῖ λαμπρὰν σφραγεῖσαν ἔχοντα·  
καὶ συρίης πεδον εἶδα καὶ ἄστεα πάντα, Νίσιβιν,  
Εὐφράτην διαβάς· πάντη δ' ἔσχον συνομίλους·  
παῦλον ἔχων ἐπό[μην]· πίστις πάντη δὲ προῆγε,  
καὶ παρέθηκε τροφήν πάντη ἰχθὺν ἀπὸ πηγῆς  
παμμεγέθῃ, καθαρὸν, ὃν ἐδράξατο παρθένος ἀγνή·  
καὶ τοῦτον ἐπέδωκε φίλοις ἔσθειν διὰ παντός,  
οἶνον χρηστὸν ἔχουσα, κέρασμα δίδουσα μετ' ἄρτου.  
ταῦτα παρεστῶς εἶπον Ἀ βέρκιος ὧδε γραφῆναί·

ἑβδομήκοστον ἔτος καὶ δεύτερον ἦγον ἀληθῶς.  
ταῦθ' ὁ νοῶν εὗξαιτο ὑπὲρ μοῦ πᾶς ὁ συνφδός.  
οὐ μέντοι τύμβῳ τις ἐμῷ ἕτερον ἐπιθήσει·  
εἰ δ' οὖν, Ρ ωμαίων ταμείῳ θήσει δισχίλια χρυσᾶ,  
καὶ χρηστῆ πατρίδι Ι εροπόλει χίλια χρυσᾶ.

Here is the same text in Beta Code transliteration.

E)KLEKTH=S PO/LEWS O( POLI/THS TOU=T' E)POI/HSA  
ZW=N I(/N' E)/XW KAIRW=| SW/MATOS E)NQA QE/SIN.  
OU)/NOM' \*A)BE/RKIOS EI)MI MAQHTH\S POIME/NOS A(GNOU=,  
O(\S BO/SKEI PROBA/TWN A)GE/LAS O)/RESIN PEDI/OIS TE/  
O)FQALMOU\S O(\S E)/XEI MEGA/LOUS PA/NTH KAQORW=NTAS.  
OU(=TOS GA/R ME E)DI/DACE...GRA/MMATA PISTA/:  
EI)S \*(RW/MHN O(\S E)/PEMYEN E)ME\N BASILHAN A)QRH=SAI  
KAI\ BASI/LISSAN I)DEI=N XRUSO/STOLON XRUSOPE/DILON.  
LAO\N D' EI)=DON E)KEI= LAMPRA\N SFRAGEI=SAN E)/XONTA:  
KAI\ SURI/HS PED/ON EI)=DA KAI\ A)/STEA PA/NTA, \*NI/SIBIN,  
\*EU)FRA/THN DIABA/S: PA/NTH D' E)/SXON SUNOMI/LOUS:  
PAU=LON E)/XWN E(PO/[MHN]: PI/STIS PA/NTH DE\ PROH=GE,  
KAI\ PARE/QHKE TROFH\N PA/NTH I)XQU\N A)PO\ PHGH=S  
PAMMEGE/QH=|, KAQARO/N, O(\N E)DRA/CATO PARQE/NOS A(GNH/  
KAI\ TOU=TON E)PE/DWKE FI/LOIS E)/SQEIN DIA\ PANTO/S,  
OI)=NON XRHSTO\N E)/XOUSA, KE/RASMA DI/DOU=SA MET' A)/RTOU.  
TAU=TA PARESTW\S EI)=PON \*A)BE/RKIOS W(=DE GRAFH=NAI/  
E(BDOMH/KOSTON E)/TOS KAI\ DEU/TERON H)=GON A)LHQW=S.  
TAU=Q' O( NOW=N EU)/CAITO U(PE\R MOU= PA=S O( SUNW|DO/S.  
OU) ME/NTOI TU/MBW| TIS E)MW=| E(/TERON E)PIQH/SEI:  
EI) D' OU)=N, \*R(WMAI/WN TAMEI/W| QH/SEI DISXI/LIA XRUSA=,  
KAI\ XRHSTH=| PATRI/DI \*I(EROPO/LEI XI/LIA XRUSA=.