Defence Before Constantius

Athanasius of Alexandria (c. AD 296–373)

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1. Introduction.

Knowing that you have been a Christian for many years , most religious Augustus, and that you are godly by descent, I cheerfully undertake to answer for myself at this time;-for I will use the language of the blessed Paul, and make him my advocate before you, considering that he was a preacher of the truth, and that you are an attentive hearer of his words. With respect to those ecclesiastical matters, which have been made the ground of a conspiracy against me, it is sufficient to refer your Piety to the testimony of the many Bishops who have written in my behalf ; enough too is the recantation of Ursacius and Valens to prove to all men, that none of the charges which they set up against me had any truth in them. For what evidence can others produce so strong, as what they declared in writing? 'We lied, we invented these things; all the accusations against Athanasius are full of falsehood.' To this clear proof may be added, if you will vouchsafe to hear it, this circumstance that the accusers brought no evidence against Macarius the presbyter while we were present; but in our absence , when they were by themselves, they managed the matter as they pleased. Now, the Divine Law first of all, and next our own Laws , have expressly declared, that such proceedings are of no force whatsoever. From these things your piety, as a lover of God and of the truth, will, I am sure, perceive that we are free from all suspicion, and will pronounce our opponents to be false accusers.

2. The First Charge, of Setting Constans Against Constantius.

But as to the slanderous charge which has been preferred against me before your Grace, respecting correspondence with the most pious Augustus, your brother Constans , of blessed and everlasting memory (for my enemies report this of me, and have ventured to assert it in writing), the former events are sufficient to prove this also to be untrue. Had it been alleged by another set of persons, the matter would indeed have been a fit subject of enquiry, but it would have required strong evidence, and open proof in presence of both parties: but when the same persons who invented the former charge, are the authors also of this, is it not reasonable to conclude from the issue of the one, the falsehood of the other? For this cause they again conferred together in private, thinking to be able to deceive your Piety before I was aware. But in this they failed: you would not listen to them as they desired, but patiently gave me an opportunity to make my defence. And, in that you were not immediately moved to demand vengeance, you acted only as was righteous in a Prince, whose duty it is to wait

for the defence of the injured party. Which if you will vouchsafe to hear, I am confident that in this matter also you will condemn those reckless men, who have no fear of that God, who has commanded us not to speak falsely before the king .

3. He Never Saw Constans Alone.

But in truth I am ashamed even to have to defend myself against charges such as these, which I do not suppose that even the accuser himself would venture to make mention of in my presence. For he knows full well that he speaks untruly, and that I was never so mad, so reft of my senses, as even to be open to the suspicion of having conceived any such thing. So that had I been questioned by any other on this subject, I would not even have answered, lest, while I was making my defence, my hearers should for a time have suspended their judgment concerning me. But to your Piety I answer with a loud and clear voice, and stretching forth my hand, as I have learned from the Apostle, 'I call God for a record upon my soul ,' and as it is written in the histories of the Kings (let me be allowed to say the same), 'The Lord is witness, and His Anointed is witness ,' I have never spoken evil of your Piety before your brother Constans, the most religious Augustus of blessed memory. I did not exasperate him against you, as these have falsely accused me.

But whenever in my interviews with him he has mentioned your Grace (and he did mention you at the time that Thalassus came to Pitybion, and I was staying at Aquileia), the Lord is witness, how I spoke of your Piety in terms which I would that God would reveal unto your soul, that you might condemn the falsehood of these my calumniators. Bear with me, most gracious Augustus, and freely grant me your indulgence while I speak of this matter. Your most Christian brother was not a man of so light a temper, nor was I a person of such a character, that we should communicate together on a subject like this, or that I should slander a brother to a brother, or speak evil of an emperor before an emperor. I am not so mad, Sire, nor have I forgotten that divine utterance which says, 'Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter .' If then those things, which are spoken in secret against you that are kings, are not hidden it is not incredible that I should have spoken against you in the presence of a king, and of so many bystanders?

For I never saw your brother by myself, nor did he ever converse with me in private, but I was always introduced in company with the Bishop of the city where I happened to be, and with others that chanced to be there. We entered the presence together, and together we retired. Fortunatian , Bishop of Aquileia, can testify this, the father Hosius is able to say the same, as also are Crispinus, Bishop of Padua, Lucillus of a Verona, Dionysius of Lëis, and Vincentius of Campania. And although Maximinus of Treveri, and Protasius of Milan, are dead, yet Eugenius, who was Master of the Palace , can bear witness for me; for he stood before the veil , and heard what we requested of the Emperor, and what he vouchsafed to reply to us.

4. The Movements of Athanasius Refute This Charge.

This certainly is sufficient for proof, yet suffer me nevertheless to lay before you an account

of my travels, which will further lead you to condemn the unfounded calumnies of my opponents. When I left Alexandria , I did not go to your brother's head-quarters, or to any other persons, but only to Rome; and having laid my case before the Church (for this was my only concern), I spent my time in the public worship. I did not write to your brother, except when Eusebius and his fellows had written to him to accuse me, and I was compelled while yet at Alexandria to defend myself; and again when I sent to him volumes containing the holy Scriptures, which he had ordered me to prepare for him. It behoves me, while I defend my conduct, to tell the truth to your Piety. When however three years had passed away, he wrote to me in the fourth year , commanding me to meet him (he was then at Milan); and upon enquiring the cause (for I was ignorant of it, the Lord is my witness), I learnt that certain Bishops had gone up and requested him to write to your Piety, desiring that a Council might be called. Believe me, Sire, this is the truth of the matter; I lie not. Accordingly I went down to Milan, and met with great kindness from him; for he condescended to see me, and to say that he had despatched letters to you, requesting that a Council might be called.

And while I remained in that city, he sent for me again into Gaul (for the father Hosius was going thither), that we might travel from thence to Sardica. And after the Council, he wrote to me while I continued at Naissus , and I went up, and abode afterwards at Aquileia; where the letters of your Piety found me. And again, being invited thence by your departed brother, I returned into Gaul, and so came at length to your Piety.

5. No Possible Time or Place for the Alleged Offence.

Now what place and time does my accuser specify, at which I made use of these expressions according to his slanderous imputation? In whose presence was I so mad as to give utterance to the words which he has falsely charged me with speaking? Who is there ready to support the charge, and to testify to the fact? What his own eyes have seen that ought he to speak , as holy Scripture enjoins. But no; he will find no witnesses of that which never took place. But I take your Piety to witness, together with the Truth, that I lie not. I request you, for I know you to be a person of excellent memory, to call to mind the conversation I had with you, when you condescended to see me, first at Viminacium , a second time at Caesarea in Cappadocia, and a third time at Antioch. Did I speak evil before you even of Eusebius and his fellows who had persecuted me? Did I cast imputations upon any of those that have done me wrong? If then I imputed nothing to any of those against whom I had a fight to speak, how could I be so possessed with madness as to slander an Emperor before an Emperor, and to set a brother at variance with a brother?

I beseech you, either cause me to appear before you that the thing may be proved, or else condemn these calumnies, and follow the example of David, who says, 'Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I destroy .' As much as in them lies, they have slain me; for 'the mouth that belieth, slayeth the soul .' But your long-suffering has prevailed against them, and given me confidence to defend myself, that they may suffer condemnation, as contentious and slanderous persons. Concerning your most religious brother, of blessed

memory, this may suffice: for you will be able, according to the wisdom which God has given you, to gather much from the little I have said, and to recognise the fictitious charge.

6. The Second Charge, of Corresponding with Magnentius.

With regard to the second calumny, that I have written letters to the tyrant (his name I am unwilling to pronounce), I beseech you investigate and try the matter, in whatever way you please, and by whomsoever you may approve of. The extravagance of the charge so confounds me, that I am in utter uncertainty how to act. Believe me, most religious Prince, many times did I weigh the matter in my mind, but was unable to believe that any one could be so mad as to utter such a falsehood. But when this charge was published abroad by the Arians, as well as the former, and they boasted that they had delivered to you a copy of the letter, I was the more amazed, and I used to pass sleepless nights contending against the charge, as if in the presence of my accusers; and suddenly breaking forth into a loud cry, I would immediately fall to my prayers, desiring with groans and tears that I might obtain a favourable hearing from you. And now that by the grace of the Lord, I have obtained such a hearing, I am again at a loss how I shall begin my defence; for as often as I make an attempt to speak, I am prevented by my horror at the deed. In the case of your departed brother, the slanderers had indeed a plausible pretence for what they alleged; because I had been admitted to see him, and he had condescended to write to your brotherly affection concerning me;

and he had often sent for me to come to him, and had honoured me when I came. But for the traitor Magnentius, 'the Lord is witness, and His Anointed is witness ,' I know him not, nor was ever acquainted with him. What correspondence then could there be between persons so entirely unacquainted with each other? What reason was there to induce me to write to such a man? How could I have commenced my letter, had I written to him? Could I have said, 'You have done well to murder the man who honoured me, whose kindness I shall never forget?' Or, 'I approve of your conduct in destroying our Christian friends, and most faithful brethren?' or, 'I approve of your proceedings in butchering those who so kindly entertained me at Rome; for instance, your departed Aunt Eutropia , whose disposition answered to her name, that worthy man, Abuterius, the most faithful Spirantius, and many other excellent persons?'

7. This Charge Utterly Incredible and Absurd.

Is it not mere madness in my accuser even to suspect me of such a thing? What, I ask again, could induce me to place confidence in this man? What trait did I perceive in his character on which I could rely? He had murdered his own master; he had proved faithless to his friends; he had violated his oath; he had blasphemed God, by consulting poisoners and sorcerers contrary to his Law. And with what conscience could I send greeting to such a man, whose madness and cruelty had afflicted not me only, but all the world around me? To be sure, I was very greatly indebted to him for his conduct, that when your departed brother had filled our churches with sacred offerings, he murdered him. For the wretch was not moved by the sight of these his gifts, nor did he stand in awe of the divine grace

which had been given to him in baptism: but like au accursed and devilish spirit, he raged against him, till your blessed brother suffered martyrdom at his hands; while he, henceforth a criminal like Cain, was driven from place to place, 'groaning and trembling ,' to the end that he might follow the example of Judas in his death, by becoming his own executioner, and so bring upon himself a double weight of punishment in the judgment to come.

8. Disproof of It.

With such a man the slanderer thought that I had been on terms of friendship, or rather he did not think so, but like an enemy invented an incredible fiction: for he knows full well that he has lied. I would that, whoever he is, he were present here, that I might put the question to him on the word of Truth itself (for whatever we speak as in the presence of God, we Christians consider as an oath); I say, that I might ask him this question, which of us rejoiced most in the well-being of the departed Constans? who prayed for him most earnestly? The facts of the foregoing charge prove this; indeed it is plain to every one how the case stands. But although he himself knows full well, that no one who was so disposed towards the departed Constans, and who truly loved him, could be a friend to his enemy, I fear that being possessed with other feelings towards him than I was, he has falsely attributed to me those sentiments of hatred which were entertained by himself.

9. Athanasius Could Not Write to One Who Did Not Even Know Him.

For myself, I am so surprised at the enormity of the thing, that I am quite uncertain what I ought to say in my defence. I can only declare, that I condemn myself to die ten thousand deaths, if even the least suspicion attaches to me in this matter. And to you, Sire, as a lover of the truth, I confidently make my appeal. I beseech you, as I said before, investigate this affair, and especially with the testimony of those who were once sent by him as ambassadors to you. These are the Bishops Sarvatius and Maximus and the rest, with Clementius and Valens. Enquire of them, I beseech you, whether they brought letters to me. If they did, this would give me occasion to write to him. But if he did not write to me, if he did not even know me, how could I write to one with whom I had no acquaintance? Ask them whether, when I saw Clementius and his fellows, and spoke of your brother of blessed memory, I did not, in the language of Scripture, wet my garments with tears , when I remembered his kindness of disposition and his Christian spirit. Learn of them how anxious I was, on hearing of the cruelty of the beast, and finding that Valens and his company had come by way of Libya, lest he should attempt a passage also, and like a robber murder those who held in love and memory the departed Prince, among whom I account myself second to none.

10. His Loyalty Towards Constantius and His Brother.

How with this apprehension of such a design on their part, was there not an additional probability of my praying for your Grace? Should I feel affection for his murderer, and entertain dislike towards you his brother who avenged his death? Should I remember his crime, and forget that kindness of yours which you vouchsafed to assure me by letter should remain the same towards me after your brother's death of happy memory, as it had been during his lifetime? How could I have borne to look upon the murderer? Must I not have thought that

the blessed Prince beheld me, when I prayed for your safety? For brothers are by nature mirrors of each other. Wherefore as seeing you in him, I never should have slandered you before him; and as seeing him in you, never should I have written to his enemy, instead of praying for your safety. Of this my witnesses are, first of aIl, the Lord who has heard and has given to you entire the kingdom of your forefathers: and next those persons who were present at the time, Felicissimus, who was Duke of Egypt, Rufinus, and Stephanus, the former of whom was Receiver-general, the latter, Master there; Count Asterius, and Palladius Master of the palace, Antiochus and Evagrius Official Agents . I had only to say, 'Let us pray for the safety of the most religious Emperor, Constantius Augustus,' and all the people immediately cried out with one voice, 'O Christ send help to Constantius;' and they continued praying thus for some time .

11. Challenge to the Accusers as to the Alleged Letter.

Now I have already called upon God, and His Word, the Only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, to witness for me, that I have never written to that man, nor received letters from him. And as to my accuser, give me leave to ask him a few short questions concerning this charge also. How did he come to the knowledge of this matter? Will he say that he has got copies of the letter? for this is what the Arians laboured to prove. Now in the first place, even if he can shew writing resembling mine, the thing is not yet certain; for there are forgers, who have often imitated the hand even of you who are Emperors. And the resemblance will not prove the genuineness of the letter, unless my customary amanuensis shall testify in its favour. I would then again ask my accusers, Who provided you with these copies? and whence were they obtained? I had my writers , and he his servants, who received his letters from the bearers, and gave them into his hand. My assistants are forthcoming; vouchsafe to summon the others (for they are most probably still living), and enquire concerning these letters. Search into the matter, as though Truth were the partner of your throne. She is the defence of Kings, and especially of Christian Kings; with her you will reign most securely, for holy Scripture says, 'Mercy and truth preserve the king, and they will encircle his throne in righteousness .' And the wise Zorobabel gained a victory over the others by setting forth the power of Truth, and all the people cried out, 'Great is the truth, and mighty above all things .'

12. Truth the Defence of Thrones.

Had I been accused before any other, I should have appealed to your Piety; as once the Apostle appealed unto Caesar, and put an end to the designs of his enemies against him. But since they have had the boldness to lay their charge before you, to whom shall I appeal from you? to the Father of Him who says, 'I am the Truth ,' that He may incline your heart into clemency:- O Lord Almighty, and King of eternity, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who by Thy Word hast given this Kingdom to Thy servant Constantius; do Thou shine into his heart, that he, knowing the falsehood that is set against me, may both favourably receive this my defence; and may make known unto all men, that his ears are firmly set to hearken unto the Truth, according as it is written, 'Righteous lips alone are acceptable unto the

King .' For Thou hast caused it to be said by Solomon, that thus the throne of the kingdom shall be established.

Wherefore at least enquire into this matter, and let the accusers understand that your desire is to learn the truth; and see, whether they will not shew their falsehood by their very looks; for the countenance is a test of the conscience as it is written, 'A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken .' Thus they who had conspired against Joseph were convicted by their own consciences; and the craft of Laban towards Jacob was shewn in his countenance . And thus you see the suspicious alarm of these persons, for they fly and hide themselves; but on our part frankness in making our defence. And the question between us is not one regarding worldly wealth, but concerning the honour of the Church. He that has been struck by a stone, applies to a physician; but sharper than a stone are the strokes of calumny; for as Solomon has said, 'A false witness is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow ,' and its wounds Truth alone is able to cure; and if Truth be set at nought, they grow worse and worse.

13. This Charge Rests on Forgery.

It is this that has thrown the Churches everywhere into such confusion; for pretences have been devised, and Bishops of great authority, and of advanced age , have been banished for holding communion with me. And if matters had stopped here, our prospect would be favourable through your gracious interposition. But that the evil may not extend itself, let Truth prevail before you; and leave not every Church under suspicion, as though Christian men, nay even Bishops, could be guilty of plotting and writing in this manner. Or if you are unwilling to investigate the matter, it is but right that we who offer our defence, should be believed, rather than our calumniators. They, like enemies, are occupied in wickedness; we, as earnestly contending for our cause, present to you our proofs. And truly I wonder how it comes to pass, that while we address you with fear and reverence, they are possessed of such an impudent spirit, that they dare even to lie before the Emperor. But I pray you, for the Truth's sake, and as it is written , 'search diligently' in my presence, on what grounds they affirm these things, and whence these letters were obtained. But neither will any of my servants be proved guilty, nor will any of his people be able to tell whence they came; for they are forgeries. And perhaps one had better not enquire further. They do not wish it, lest the writer of the letters should be certain of detection. For the calumniators alone, and none besides, know who he is.

14. The Third Charge, of Using an Undedicated Church.

But forasmuch as they have informed against me in the matter of the great Church , that a communion was holden there before it was completed, I will answer to your Piety on this charge also; for the parties who are hostile towards me constrain me to do so. I confess this did so happen; for, as in what I have hitherto said, I have spoken no lie, I will not now deny this. But the facts are far otherwise than they have represented them. Suffer me to declare to you, most religious Augustus, that we kept no day of dedication (it would certainly have been unlawful to do so, before receiving orders from you), nor were we led to

act as we did through premeditation. No Bishop or other Clergyman was invited to join in our proceedings; for much was yet wanting to complete the building. Nay the congregation was not held on a previous notice, which might give them a reason for informing against us. Every one knows how it happened; hear me, however, with your accustomed equity and patience. It was the feast of Easter , and the multitude assembled together was exceeding great, such as Christian kings would desire to see in all their cities. Now when the Churches were found to be too few to contain them, there was no little stir among the people, who desired that they might be allowed to meet together in the great Church, where they could all offer up their prayers for your safety. And this they did; for although I exhorted them to wait awhile, and to hold service in the other Churches, with whatever inconvenience to themselves, they would not listen to me; but were ready to go out of the city, and meet in desert places in the open air, thinking it better to endure the fatigue of the journey, than to keep the feast in such a state of discomfort.

15. Want of Room the Cause, Precedent the Justification.

Believe me, Sire, and let Truth be my witness in this also, when I declare that in the congregations held during the season of Lent, in consequence of the narrow limits of the places, and the vast multitude of people assembled, a great number of children, not a few of the younger and very many of the older women, besides several young men, suffered so much from the pressure of the crowd, that they were obliged to be carried home; though by the Providence of God, no one is dead. All however murmured, and demanded the use of the great Church. And if the pressure was so great during the days which preceded the feast, what would have been the case during the feast itself? Of course matters would have been far worse. It did not therefore become me to change the people's joy into grief, their cheerfulness into sorrow, and to make the festival a season of lamentation.

And that the more, because I had a precedent in the conduct of our Fathers. For the blessed Alexander, when the other places were too small, and he was engaged in the erection of what was then considered a very large one, the Church of Theonas , held his congregations there on account of the number of the people, while at the same time he proceeded with the building. I have seen the same thing done at Treveri and at Aquileia, in both which places, while the building was proceeding, they assembled there during the feasts, on account of the number of the people and they never found any one to accuse them in this manner. Nay, your brother of blessed memory was present, when a communion was held under these circumstances at Aquileia. I also followed this course. There was no dedication, but only a service of prayer. You, at least I am sure, as a lover of God will approve of the people's zeal, and will pardon me for being unwilling to hinder the prayers of so great a multitude.

16. Better to Pray Together Than Separately.

But here again I would ask my accuser, where was it right that the people should pray? in the deserts, or in a place which was in course of building for the purpose of prayer? Where was it becoming and pious that the people should answer, Amen ? in the deserts, or in what was already called the Lord's house? Where would you, most religious Prince, have

wished your people to stretch forth their hands, and to pray for you? Where Greeks, as they passed by, might stop and listen, or in a place named after yourself, which all men have long called the Lord's house, even since the foundations of it were laid? I am sure that you prefer your own place; for you smile, and that tells me so. 'But,' says the accuser, 'it ought to have been in the Churches. They were all, as I said before, too small and confined to admit the multitude. Then again, in which way was it most becoming that their prayers should be made? Should they meet together in parts and separate companies, with danger from the crowded state of the congregation? or, when there was now a place that would contain them all, should they assemble in it, and speak as with one and the same voice in perfect harmony? This was the better course, for this shewed the unanimity of the multitude: in this way God will readily hear prayer.

For if, according to the promise of our Saviour Himself , where two shall agree together as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them, how shall it be when so great an assembly of people with one voice utter their Amen to God? Who indeed was there that did not marvel at the sight? Who but pronounced you happy when they saw so great a multitude met together in one place? How did the people themselves rejoice to see each other, having been accustomed heretofore to assemble in separate places! The circumstance was a source of pleasure to all; of vexation to the calumniator alone.

17. Better to Pray in a Building Than in the Desert.

Now then, I would also meet the other and only remaining objection of my accuser. He says, the building was not completed, and prayer ought not to have been made there. But the Lord said, 'But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and shut the door .' What then will the accuser answer? or rather what will all prudent and true Christians say? Let your Majesty ask the opinion of such: for it is written of the other, 'The foolish person will speak foolishness ;' but of these, 'Ask counsel of all that are wise .' When the Churches were too small, and the people so numerous as they were, and desirous to go forth into the deserts, what ought I to have done? The desert has no doors, and all who choose may pass through it, but the Lord's house is enclosed with walls and doors, and marks the difference between the pious and the profane. Will not every wise person then, as well as your Piety, Sire, give the preference to the latter place? For they know that here prayer is lawfully offered, while a suspicion of irregularity attaches to it there. Unless indeed no place proper for it existed, and the worshippers dwelt only in the desert, as was the case with Israel; although after the tabernacle was built, they also had thenceforth a place set apart for prayer.

O Christ, Lord and true King of kings, Only-begotten Son of God, Word and Wisdom of the Father, I am accused because the people prayed Thy gracious favour, and through Thee besought Thy Father, who is God over all, to save Thy servant, the most religious Constantius. But thanks be to Thy goodness, that it is for this that I am blamed, and for the keeping of Thy laws. Heavier had been the blame, and more true had been the charge, had we passed by the place which the Emperor was building, and gone forth into the desert to pray. How would the accuser then have vented his folly ! With what apparent reason would he have

said, 'He despised the place which you are building; he does not approve of your undertaking; he passed it by in derision; he pointed to the desert to supply the want of room; he prevented the people when they wished to offer up their prayers.' This is what he wished to say, and sought an occasion of saying it; and finding none he is vexed, and so forthwith invents a charge against me. Had he been able to say this, he would have confounded me with shame; as now he injures me, copying the accuser's ways, and watching for an occasion against those that pray. Thus has he perverted to a wicked purpose his knowledge of Daniel's history. But he has been deceived;

for he ignorantly imagined, that Babylonian practices were in fashion with you, and knew not that you are a friend of the blessed Daniel, and worship the same God, and do not forbid, but wish all men to pray, knowing that the prayer of all is, that you may continue to reign in perpetual peace and safety.

18. Prayers First Do Not Interfere with Dedication Afterwards.

This is what I have to complain of on the part of my accuser. But may you, most religious Augustus, live through the course of many years to come, and celebrate the dedication of the Church. Surely the prayers which have been offered for your safety by all men, are no hindrance to this celebration. Let these unlearned persons cease such misrepresentations, but let them learn from the example of the Fathers; and let them read the Scriptures. Or rather let them learn of you, who are so well instructed in such histories, how that Joshua the son of Josedek the priest, and his brethren, and Zorobabel the wise, the son of Salathiel, and Ezra the priest and scribe of the law, when the temple was in course of building after the captivity, the feast of tabernacles being at hand (which was a great feast and time of assembly and prayer in Israel), gathered the people together with one accord in the great court within the first gate, which is toward the East, and prepared the altar to God, and there offered their gifts, and kept the feast. And so afterwards they brought hither their sacrifices, on the sabbaths and the new moons, and the people offered up their prayers. And yet the Scripture says expressly, that when these things were done, the temple of God was not yet built; but rather while they thus prayed, the building of the house was advancing.

So that neither were their prayers deferred in expectation of the dedication, nor was the dedication prevented by the assemblies held for the sake of prayer. But the people thus continued to pray; and when the house was entirely finished, they celebrated the dedication, and brought their gifts for that purpose, and all kept the feast for the completion of the work. And thus also have the blessed Alexander, and the other Fathers done. They continued to assemble their people, and when they had completed the work they gave thanks unto the Lord, and celebrated the dedication. This also it befits you to do, O Prince, most careful in your inquiries. The place is ready, having been already sanctified by the prayers which have been offered in it, and requires only the presence of your Piety. This only is wanting to its perfect beauty. Do you then supply this deficiency, and there make your prayers unto the Lord, for whom you have built this house. That you may do so is the prayer of all men.

19. Fourth Charge, of Having Disobeyed an Imperial Order.

And now, if it please you, let us consider the remaining accusation, and permit me to answer it likewise. They have dared to charge me with resisting your commands, and refusing to leave my Church. Truly I wonder they are not weary of uttering their calumnies; I however am not yet weary of answering them, I rather rejoice to do so; for the more abundant my defence is, the more entirely must they be condemned. I did not resist the commands of your Piety, God forbid; I am not a man that would resist even the Quaestor of the city, much less so great a Prince. On this matter I need not many words, for the whole city will bear witness for me. Nevertheless, permit me again to relate the circumstances from the beginning; for when you hear them, I am sure you will be astonished at the presumption of my enemies. Montanus, the officer of the Palace , came and brought me a letter, which purported to be an answer to one from me, requesting that I might go into Italy, for the purpose of obtaining a supply of the deficiencies which I thought existed in the condition of our Churches. Now I desire to thank your Piety, which condescended to assent to my request, on the supposition that I had written to you, and has made provision for me to undertake the journey, and to accomplish it without trouble.

But here again I am astonished at those who have spoken falsehood in your ears, that they were not afraid, seeing that lying belongs to the Devil, and that liars are alien from Him who says, 'I am the Truth .' For I never wrote to you, nor will my accuser be able to find any such letter; and though I ought to have written every day, if I might thereby behold your gracious countenance, yet it would neither have been pious to desert the Churches, nor right to be troublesome to your Piety, especially since you are willing to grant our requests in behalf of the Church, although we are not present to make them. Now may it please you to order me to read what Montanus commanded me to do. This is as follows .***

20. History of His Disobeying It.

Now I ask again, whence have my accusers obtained this letter also? I would learn of them who it was that put it into their hands? Do you cause them to answer. By this you may perceive that they have forged this, as they spread abroad also the former letter, which they published against me, with reference to the ill-named Magnentius. And being convicted in this instance also, on what pretence next will they bring me to make my defence? Their only concern is, to throw everything into disorder and confusion; and for this end I perceive they exercise their zeal. Perhaps they think that by frequent repetition of their charges, they will at last exasperate you against me. But you ought to turn away from such persons, and to hate them; for such as themselves are, such also they imagine those to be who listen to them; and they think that their calumnies will prevail even before you. The accusation of Doeg prevailed of old against the priests of God: but it was the unrighteous Saul, who hearkened unto him. And Jezebel was able to injure the most religious Naboth by her false accusations; but then it was the wicked and apostate Ahab who hearkened unto her. But the most holy David, whose example it becomes you to follow, as all pray that you may, favours not such men, but was wont to turn away from them and avoid them, as raging dogs. He says, 'Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I destroy .' For he kept the commandment which

says, 'Thou shall not receive a false report .' And false are the reports of these men in your sight. You, like Solomon, have required of the Lord (and you ought to believe yourself to have obtained your desire), that it would seem good unto Him to remove far from you vain and lying words .

21. Forasmuch then as the letter owed its origin to a false story, and contained no order that I should come to you, I concluded that it was not the wish of your Piety that I should come. For in that you gave me no absolute command, but merely wrote as in answer to a letter from me, requesting that I might be permitted to set in order the things which seemed to be wanting, it was manifest to me (although no one told me this) that the letter which I had received did not express the sentiments of your Clemency. All knew, and I also stated in writing, as Montanus is aware, that I did not refuse to come, but only that I thought it unbecoming to take advantage of the supposition that I had written to you to request this favour, fearing also lest the false accusers should find in this a pretence for saying that I made myself troublesome to your Piety. Nevertheless, I made preparations, as Montanus also knows, in order that, should you condescend to write to me, I might immediately leave home, and readily answer your commands; for I was not so mad as to resist such an order from you. When then in fact your Piety did not write to me, how could I resist a command which I never received? or how can they say that I refused to obey, when no orders were given me? Is not this again the mere fabrication of enemies, pretending that which never took place? I fear that even now, while I am engaged in this defence of myself, they may allege against me that I am doing that which I have never obtained your permission to do. So easily is my conduct made matter of accusation by them, and so ready are they to vent their calumnies in despite of that Scripture, which says, 'Love not to slander another, lest thou be cut off .'

22. Arrivals of Diogenes and of Syrianus.

After a period of six and twenty months, when Montanus had gone away, there came Diogenes the Notary ; but he brought me no letter, nor did we see each other, nor did he charge me with any commands as from you. Moreover when the General Syrianus entered Alexandria , seeing that certain reports were spread abroad by the Arians, who declared that matters would now be as they wished, I enquired whether he had brought any letters on the subject of these statements of theirs. I confess that I asked for letters containing your commands. And when he said that he had brought none, I requested that Syrianus himself, or Maximus the Prefect of Egypt, would write to me concerning this matter. Which request I made, because your Grace has written to me, desiring that I would not suffer myself to be alarmed by any one, nor attend to those who wished to frighten me, but that I would continue to reside in the Churches without fear. It was Palladius, the Master of the Palace, and Asterius, formerly Duke of Armenia, who brought me this letter. Permit me to read a copy of it. It is as follows:

23. A Copy Of the Letter as Follows:

Constantius Victor Augustus to Athanasius . It is not unknown to your Prudence, how con-

stantly I prayed that success might attend my late brother Constans in all his undertakings, and your wisdom will easily judge how greatly I was afflicted, when I learnt that he had been cut off by the treachery of villains. Now forasmuch as certain persons are endeavouring at this time to alarm you, by setting before your eyes that lamentable tragedy, I have thought good to address to your Reverence this present letter, to exhort you, that, as becomes a Bishop, you would teach the people to conform to the established religion, and, according to your custom, give yourself up to prayer together with them. For this is agreeable to our wishes; and our desire is, that you should at every season be a Bishop in your own place. And in another hand:-May divine Providence preserve you, beloved Father, many years.

24. Why Athanasius Did Not Obey the Imperial Order.

On the subject of this letter, my opponents conferred with the magistrates. And was it not reasonable that I, having received it, should demand their letters, and refuse to give heed to mere pretences? And were they not acting in direct contradiction to the tenor of your instructions to me, while they failed to shew me the commands of your Piety? I therefore, seeing they produced no letters from you, considered it improbable that a mere verbal communication should be made to them, especially as the letter of your Grace had charged me not to give ear to such persons. I acted rightly then, most religious Augustus, that as I had returned to my country under the authority of your letters, so I should only leave it by your command; and might not render myself liable hereafter to a charge of having deserted the Church, but as receiving your order might have a reason for my retiring. This was demanded for me by all my people, who went to Syrianus together with the Presbyters, and the greatest part, to say the least, of the city with them. Maximus, the Prefect of Egypt, was also there: and their request was that either he would send me a declaration of your wishes in writing, or would forbear to disturb the Churches, while the people themselves were sending a deputation to you respecting the matter. When they persisted in their demand, Syrianus at last perceived the reasonableness of it, and consented, protesting by your safety (Hilary was present and witnessed this) that he would put an end to the disturbance, and refer the case to your Piety. The guards of the Duke, as well as those of the Prefect of Egypt, know that this is true; the Prytanis of the city also remembers the words; so that you will perceive that neither I, nor any one else, resisted your commands.

25. The Irruption of Syrianus.

All demanded that the letters of your Piety should be exhibited. For although the bare word of a King is of equal weight and authority with his written command, especially if he who reports it, boldly affirms in writing that it has been given him; yet when they neither openly declared that they had received any command, nor, as they were requested to do, gave me assurance of it in writing, but acted altogether as by their own authority; I confess, I say it boldly, I was suspicious of them. For there were many Arians about them, who were their companions at table, and their counsellors; and while they attempted nothing openly, they were preparing to assail me by stratagem and treachery. Nor did they act at all as under the authority of a royal command, but, as their conduct betrayed, at the solicitation of enemies. This made me demand more urgently that they should produce letters from you,

seeing that all their undertakings and designs were of a suspicious nature; and because it was unseemly that after I had entered the Church, under the authority of so many letters from you, I should retire from it without such a sanction. When however Syrianus gave his promise, all the people assembled together in the Churches with feelings of joyfulness and security. But three and twenty days after , he burst into the Church with his soldiers, while we were engaged in our usual services, as those who entered in there witnessed;

for it was a vigil, preparatory to a communion on the morrow. And such things were done that night as the Arians desired and had before hand denounced against us. For the General brought them with him; and they were the instigators and advisers of the attack. This is no incredible story of mine, most religious Augustus; for it was not done in secret, but was noised abroad everywhere. When therefore I saw the assault begun, I first exhorted the people to retire, and then withdrew myself after them, God hiding and guiding me, as those who were with me at the time witness. Since then, I have remained by myself, though I have all confidence to answer for my conduct, in the first place before God, and also before your Piety, for that I did not flee and desert my people, but can point to the attack of the General upon us, as a proof of persecution. His proceedings have caused the greatest astonishment among all men; for either he ought not to have made a promise, or not to have broken it after he had made it.

26. How Athanasius Acted When This Took Place.

Now why did they form this plot against me, and treacherously lay an ambush to take me, when it was in their power to enforce the order by a written declaration? The command of an Emperor is wont to give great boldness to those entrusted with it; but their desire to act secretly made the suspicion stronger that they had received no command. And did I require anything so very absurd? Let your Majesty's candour decide. Will not every one say, that such a demand was reasonable for a Bishop to make? You know, for you have read the Scriptures, how great an offence it is for a Bishop to desert his Church, and to neglect the flocks of God. For the absence of the Shepherd gives the wolves an opportunity to attack the sheep. And this was what the Arians and all the other heretics desired, that during my absence they might find an opportunity to entrap the people into impiety. If then I had fled, what defence could I have made before the true Bishops? or rather before Him Who has committed to me His flock? He it is Who judges the whole earth, the true King of all, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Would not every one have rightly charged me with neglect of my people?

Would not your Piety have blamed me, and have justly asked, 'After you had returned under the authority of our letters, why did you withdraw without such authority, and desert your people?' Would not the people themselves at the day of judgment have reasonably imputed to me this neglect of them, and have said, 'He that had the oversight of us fled, and we were neglected, there being no one to put us in mind of our duty?' When they said this, what could I have answered? Such a complaint was made by Ezekiel against the Pastors of old ; and the blessed Apostle Paul, knowing this, has charged every one of us through his disciple,

saying, 'Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery .' Fearing this, I wished not to flee, but to receive your commands, if indeed such was the will of your Piety. But I never obtained what I so reasonably requested, and now I am falsely accused before you; for I resisted no commands of your Piety; nor will I now attempt to return to Alexandria, until your Grace shall desire it. This I say beforehand, lest the slanderers should again make this a pretence for accusing me.

27. Athanasius Leaves Alexandria to Go to Constantius, But is Stopped by the News for the Banishment of the Bishops.

Observing these things, I did not give sentence against myself, but hastened to come to your Piety, with this my defence, knowing your goodness, and remembering your faithful promises, and being confident that, as it is written in the divine Proverbs, 'Just speeches are acceptable to a gracious king .' But when I had already entered upon my journey, and had passed through the desert , a report suddenly reached me , which at first I thought to be incredible, but which afterwards proved to be true. It was rumoured everywhere that Liberius, Bishop of Rome, the great Hosius of Spain, Paulinus of Gaul, Dionysius and Eusebius of Italy, Lucifer of Sardinia, and certain other Bishops and Presbyters and Deacons, had been banished because they refused to subscribe to my condemnation. These had been banished: and Vincentius of Capua, Fortunatian of Aquileia, Heremius of Thessalonica, and all the Bishops of the West, were treated with no ordinary force, nay were suffering extreme violence and grievous injuries, until they could be induced to promise that they would not communicate with me. While I was astonished and perplexed at these tidings, behold another report overtook me, respecting them of Egypt and Libya, that nearly ninety Bishops had been under persecution, and that their Churches were given up to the professors of Arianism; that sixteen had been banished, and of the rest, some had fled, and others were constrained to dissemble.

For the persecution was said to be so violent in those parts, that at Alexandria, while the brethren were praying during Easter and on the Lord's days in a desert place near the cemetery, the General came upon them with a force of soldiery, more than three thousand in number, with arms, drawn swords, and spears; whereupon outrages, such as might be expected to follow so unprovoked an attack, were committed against women and children, who were doing nothing more than praying to God. It would perhaps be unseasonable to give an account of them now, lest the mere mention of such enormities should move us all to tears. But such was their cruelty, that virgins were stripped, and even the bodies of those who died from the blows they received were not immediately given up for burial, but were cast out to the dogs, until their relatives, with great risk to themselves, came secretly and stole them away, and much effort was necessary, that no one might know it.

28. The News of the Intrusion of George.

The rest of their proceedings will perhaps be thought incredible, and will fill all men with astonishment, by reason of their extreme atrocity. It is necessary however to speak of them, in order that your Christian zeal and piety may perceive that their slanders and calumnies

against us are framed for no other end, than that they may drive us out of the Churches, and introduce their own impiety in our place. For when the lawful Bishops, men of advanced age, had some of them been banished, and others forced to fly, heathens and catechumens, those who hold the first places in the senate and men who are notorious for their wealth, were straightway commissioned by the Arians to preach the holy faith instead of Christians . And enquiry was no longer made, as the Apostle enjoined, 'if any be blameless :' but according to the practice of the impious Jeroboam, he who could give most money was named Bishop; and it made no difference to them, even if the man happened to be a heathen, so long as he furnished them with money. Those who had been Bishops from the time of Alexander monks and ascetics, were banished: and men practised only in calumny corrupted, as far as in them lay, the Apostolic rule, and polluted the Churches. Truly their false accusations against us have gained them much, that they should be able to commit iniquity, and to do such things as these in your time; so that the words of Scripture may be applied to them, 'Woe unto those through whom My name is blasphemed among the Gentiles .'

29. Athanasius Has Heard of His Own Proscription.

Such were the rumours that were noised abroad; and although everything was thus turned upside down, I still did not relinquish my earnest desire of coming to your Piety, but was again setting forward on my journey. And I did so the more eagerly, being confident that these proceedings were contrary to your wishes, and that if your Grace should be informed of what was done, you would prevent it for the time to come. For I could not think that a righteous king could wish Bishops to be banished, and virgins to be stripped, or the Churches to be in any way disturbed. While I thus reasoned and hastened on my journey, behold a third report reached me, to the effect that letters had been written to the Princes of Auxumis, desiring that Frumentius , Bishop of Auxumis, should be brought from thence, and that search should be made for me even as far as the country of the Barbarians, that I might be handed over to the Commentaries (as they are called) of the Prefects, and that all the laity and clergy should be compelled to communicate with the Arian heresy, and that such as would not comply with this order should be put to death. To shew that these were not merely idle rumours, but that they were confirmed by facts, since your Grace has given me leave, I produce the letter. My enemies were constantly reading it, and threatening each one with death.

30. A Copy of the Letter of Constantius Against Athanasius.

Victor Constantius Maximus Augustus to the Alexandrians.

Your city, preserving its national character, and remembering the virtue of its founders, has habitually shewn itself obedient unto us, as it does at this day; and we on our part should consider ourselves greatly wanting in our duty, did not our good will eclipse even that of Alexander himself. For as it belongs to a temperate mind, to behave itself orderly in all respects, so it is the part of royalty, on account of virtue, permit me to say, such as yours, to embrace you above all others; you, who rose up as the first teachers of wisdom who were the first to acknowledge God; who moreover have chosen for yourselves the most

consummate masters; and have cordially acquiesced in our opinion, justly abominating that impostor and cheat, and dutifully uniting yourselves to those venerable men who are beyond all admiration. And yet, who is ignorant, even among those who live in the ends of the earth, what violent party spirit was displayed in the late proceedings? with which we know not anything that has ever happened, worthy to be compared. The majority of the citizens had their eyes blinded, and a man who had come forth from the lowest dens of infamy obtained authority among them, entrapping into falsehood, as under cover of darkness, those who were desirous to know the truth;-one who never provided for them any fruitful and edifying discourse, but corrupted their minds with unprofitable subtleties. His flatterers shouted and applauded him; they were astonished at his powers, and they still probably murmur secretly;

while the majority of the more simple sort took their cue from them. And thus all went with the stream, as if a flood had broken in, while everything was entirely neglected. One of the multitude was in power;-how can I describe him more truly than by saying, that he was superior in nothing to the meanest of the people, and that the only kindness which he shewed to the city was, that he did not thrust her citizens down into the pit. This noble-minded and illustrious person did not wait for judgment to proceed against him, but sentenced himself to banishment, as he deserved. So that now it is for the interest of the Barbarians to remove him out of the way, lest he lead some of them into impiety, for he will make his complaint, like distressed characters in a play, to those who first fall in with him. To him however we will now bid a long farewell. For yourselves there are few with whom I can compare you: I am bound rather to honour you separately above all others, for the great virtue and wisdom which your actions, that are celebrated almost through the whole world, proclaim you to possess. Go on in this sober course. I would gladly have repeated to me a description of your conduct in such terms of praise as it deserves;

O you who have eclipsed your predecessors in the race of glory, and will be a noble example both to those who are now alive, and to all who shall come after, and alone have chosen for yourselves the most perfect of beings as guide for your conduct, both in word and deed, and hesitated not a moment, but manfully transferred your affections, and gave yourselves up to the other side, leaving those grovelling and earthly teachers, and stretching forth towards heavenly things, under the guidance of the most venerable Georges , than whom no man is more perfectly instructed therein. Under him you will continue to have a good hope respecting the future life, and will pass your time in this present world, in rest and quietness. Would that all the citizens together would lay hold on his words, as a sacred anchor, so that we might need neither knife nor cautery for those whose souls are diseased! Such persons we most earnestly advise to renounce their zeal in favour of Athanasius, and not even to remember the foolish things which he spoke so plentifully among them. Otherwise they will bring themselves before they are aware into extreme peril, from which we know not any one who will be skilful enough to deliver such factious persons.

For while that pestilent fellow Athanasius is driven from place to place, being convicted of the basest crimes, for which he would only suffer the punishment he deserves, if one were to kill him ten times over, it would be inconsistent in us to suffer those flatterers and juggling ministers of his to exult against us; men of such a character as it is a shame even to speak of, respecting whom orders have long ago been given to the magistrates, that they should be put to death. But even now perhaps they shall not die, if they desist from their former offences, and repent at last. For that most pestilent fellow Athanasius led them on, and corrupted the whole state, and laid his impious and polluted hands upon the most holy things.

31. Letter of Constantius to the Ethiopians Against Frumentius.

The following is the letter which was written to the Princes of Auxumis respecting Frumentius, Bishop of that place. Constantius Victor Maximus Augustus, to Aezanes and Sazanes.

It is altogether a matter of the greatest care and concern to us, to extend the knowledge of the supreme God ; and I think that the whole race of mankind claims from us equal regard in this respect, in order that they may pass their lives in hope, being brought to a proper knowledge of God, and having no differences with each other in their enquiries concerning justice and truth. Wherefore considering that you are deserving of the same provident care as the Romans, and desiring to shew equal regard for your welfare, we command that the same doctrine be professed in your Churches as in theirs. Send therefore speedily into Egypt the Bishop Frumentius to the most venerable Bishop George, and the rest who are there, who have especial authority to appoint to these offices, and to decide questions concerning them. For of course you know and remember (unless you alone pretend to be ignorant of that which all men are well aware of) that this Frumentius was advanced to his present rank by Athanasius, a man who is guilty of ten thousand crimes; for he has not been able fairly to clear himself of any of the charges brought against him, but was at once deprived of his see, and now wanders about destitute of any fixed abode, and passes from one country to another, as if by this means he could escape his own wickedness.

Now if Frumentius shall readily obey our commands, and shall submit to an enquiry into all the circumstances of his appointment, he will shew plainly to all men, that he is in no respect opposed to the laws of the Church and the established faith. And being brought to trial, when he shall have given proof of his general good conduct, and submitted an account of his life to those who are to judge of these things, he shall receive his appointment from them, if it shall indeed appear that he has any right to be a Bishop. But if he shall delay and avoid the trial, it will surely be very evident, that he has been induced by the persuasions of the wicked Athanasius, thus to indulge impiety against God, choosing to follow the course of him whose wickedness has been made manifest. And our fear is lest he should pass over into Auxumis and corrupt your people, by setting before them accursed and impious statements, and not only unsettle and disturb the Churches, and blaspheme the supreme God, but also thereby cause utter overthrow and destruction to the several nations whom he visits. But I am sure that Frumentius will return home, perfectly acquainted with all matters that

concern the Church, having derived much instruction, which will be of great and general utility, from the conversation of the most venerable George, and such other of the Bishops, as are excellently qualified to communicate such knowledge. May God continually preserve you, most honoured brethren.

32. He Defends His Flight.

Hearing, nay almost seeing, these things, through the mournful representations of the messengers, I confess I turned back again into the desert, justly concluding, as your Piety will perceive, that if I was sought after, that I might be sent as soon as I was discovered to the Prefects , I should be prevented from ever coming to your Grace; and that if those who would not subscribe against me, suffered so severely as they did, and the laity who refused to communicate with the Arians were ordered for death, there was no doubt at all but that ten thousand new modes of destruction would be devised by the calumniators against me; and that after my death, they would employ against whomsoever they wished to injure, whatever means they chose, venting their lies against us the more boldly, for that then there would no longer be any one left who could expose them. I fled, not because I feared your Piety (for I know your long-suffering and goodness), but because from what had taken place, I perceived the spirit of my enemies, and considered that they would make use of all possible means to accomplish my destruction, from fear that they would be brought to answer for what they had done contrary to the intentions of your Excellency. For observe, your Grace commanded that the Bishops should be expelled only out of the cities and the province.

But these worthy persons presumed to exceed your commands, and banished aged men and Bishops venerable for their years into desert and unfrequented and frightful places, beyond the boundaries of three provinces . Some of them were sent off from Libya to the great Oasis; others from the Thebais to Ammoniaca in Libya . Neither was it from fear of death that I fled; let none of them condemn me as guilty of cowardice; but because it is the injunction of our Saviour that we should flee when we are persecuted, and hide ourselves when we are sought after, and not expose ourselves to certain dangers, nor by appearing before our persecutors inflame still more their rage against us. For to give one's self up to one's enemies to be murdered, is the same thing as to murder one's self; but to flee, as our Saviour has enjoined, is to know our time, and to manifest a real concern for our persecutors, lest if they proceed to the shedding of blood, they become guilty of the transgression of the law, 'Thou shalt not kill .' And yet these men by their calumnies against me, earnestly wish that I should suffer death. What they have again lately done proves that this is their desire and murderous intention. You will be astonished, I am sure, Augustus, most beloved of God, when you hear it; it is indeed an outrage amazement.What it is, I pray worthy of you briefly to hear.

33. Conduct of the Arians Towards the Consecrated Virgins.

The Son of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, having become man for our sakes, and having destroyed death, and delivered our race from the bondage of corruption , in addition to all His other benefits bestowed this also upon us, that we should possess upon earth, in

the state of virginity , a picture of the holiness of Angels. Accordingly such as have attained this virtue, the Catholic Church has been accustomed to call the brides of Christ. And the heathen who see them express their admiration of them as the temples of the Word. For indeed this holy and heavenly profession is nowhere established, but only among us Christians, and it is a very strong argument that with us is to be found the genuine and true religion. Your most religious father Constantine Augustus, of blessed memory, honoured the Virgins above all the rest, and your Piety in several letters has given them the titles of the honourable and holy women. But now these worthy Arians who have slandered me, and by whom conspiracies have been formed against most of the Bishops, having obtained the consent and cooperation of the magistrates, first stripped them, and then caused them to be suspended upon what are called the Hermetaries , and scourged them on the ribs so severely three several times, that not even real malefactors have ever suffered the like. Pilate, to gratify the Jews of old, pierced one of our Saviour's sides with a spear.

These men have exceeded the madness of Pilate, for they have scourged not one but both His sides; for the limbs of the Virgins are in an especial manner the Saviour's own. All men shudder at hearing the bare recital of deeds like these. These men alone not only did not fear to strip and to scourge those undefiled limbs, which the Virgins had dedicated solely to our Saviour Christ; but, what is worse than all, when they were reproached by every one for such extreme cruelty, instead of manifesting any shame, they pretended that it was commanded by your Piety. So utterly presumptuous are they and full of wicked thoughts and purposes. Such a deed as this was never heard of in past persecutions : or supposing that it ever occurred before, yet surely it was not befitting either that Virginity should suffer such outrage and dishonour, in the time of your Majesty, a Christian, or that these men should impute to your Piety their own cruelty. Such wickedness belongs only to heretics, to blaspheme the Son of God, and to do violence to His holy Virgins.

34. He Expostulates with Constantius.

Now when such enormities as these were again perpetrated by the Arians, I surely was not wrong in complying with the direction of Holy Scripture, which says, 'Hide thyself for a little moment, until the wrath of the Lord be overpast .' This was another reason for my withdrawing myself, Augustus, most beloved of God; and I refused not, either to depart into the desert, or, if need were, to be let down from a wall in a basket . I endured everything, I even dwelt among wild beasts, that your favour might return to me, waiting for an opportunityto offer to you this my defence, confident as I am that they will be condemned, and your goodness manifested unto me. O, Augustus, blessed and most beloved of God, what would you have had me to do? to come to you while my calumniators were inflamed with rage against me, and were seeking to kill me; or, as it is written, to hide myself a little, that in the mean time they might be condemned as heretics, and your goodness might be manifested unto me? or would you have had me, Sire, to appear before your magistrates, in order that though you had written merely in the way of threatening, they not understanding your intention, but being exasperated against me by the Arians, might kill me on the authority of your letters, and on that ground ascribe the murder to you? It would neither have been

becoming in me to surrender, and give myself up that my blood might be shed, nor in you, as a Christian King, to have the murder of Christians, and those too Bishops, imputed unto you.

35. It was therefore better for me to hide myself, and to wait for this opportunity. Yes, I am sure that from your knowledge of the sacred Scriptures you will assent and approve of my conduct in this respect. For you will perceive that, now those who exasperated you against us have been silenced, your righteous clemency is apparent, and it is proved to all men that you never persecuted the Christians at all, but that it was they who made the Churches desolate, that they might sow the seeds of their own impiety everywhere; on account of which I also, had I not fled, should long ago have suffered from their treachery. For it is very evident that they who scrupled not to utter such calumnies against me, before the great Augustus, and who so violently assailed Bishops and Virgins, sought also to compass my death. But thanks be to the Lord who has given you the kingdom. All men are confirmed in their opinion of your goodness, and of their wickedness, from which I fled at the first, that I might now make this appeal unto you, and that you might find some one towards whom you may shew kindness. I beseech you, therefore, forasmuch as it written, 'A soft answer turneth away wrath,' and 'righteous thoughts are acceptable unto the King ;' receive this my defence, and restore all the Bishops and the rest of the Clergy to their countries and their Churches;

so that the wickedness of my accusers may be made manifest, and that you, both now and in the day of judgment, may have boldness to say to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the King of all, '" None of Thine have I lost ," but these are they who designed the ruin of all, while I was grieved for those who perished, and for the Virgins who were scourged, and for all other things that were committed against the Christians; and I brought back them that were banished, and restored them to their own Churches.'

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.