To the Bishops of Egypt

Athanasius of Alexandria (c. AD 296–373)

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Chapter I.

1. Christ warned His followers against false prophets.

All things whatsoever our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as Luke wrote, 'both hath done and taught ,' He effected after having appeared for our salvation; for He came, as John saith, 'not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved .' And among the rest we have especially to admire this instance of His goodness, that He was not silent concerning those who should fight against us, but plainly told us beforehand, that, when those things should come to pass, we might straightway be found with minds established by His teaching. For He said, 'There shall arise false prophets and false Christs, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, the very elect shall be deceived. Behold, I have told you before .' Manifold indeed and beyond human conception are the instructions and gifts of grace which He has laid up in us; as the pattern of heavenly conversation, power against demons, the adoption of sons, and that exceeding great and singular grace, the knowledge of the Father and of the Word Himself, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. But the mind of man is prone to evil exceedingly; moreover, our adversary the devil, envying us the possession of such great blessings, goeth about seeking to snatch away the seed of the word which is sown within us.

Wherefore as if by His prophetic warnings He would seal up His instructions in our hearts as His own peculiar treasure, the Lord said, 'Take heed that no man deceive you: for many shall come in My name, saying, I am he; and the time draweth near; and they shall deceive many: go ye not therefore after them .' This is a great gift which the Word has bestowed upon us, that we should not be deceived by appearances, but that, howsoever these things are concealed, we should all the more distinguish them by the grace of the Spirit. For whereas the inventor of wickedness and great spirit of evil, the devil, is utterly hateful, and as soon as he shews himself is rejected of all men,-as a serpent, as a dragon, as a lion seeking whom he may seize upon and devour,-therefore he conceals and covers what he really is, and craftily personates that Name which all men desire, so that deceiving by a false appearance, he may thenceforth fix fast in his own chains those whom he has led astray. And as if one that desired to kidnap the children of others during the absence of their parents, should

personate their appearance, and so putting a cheat on the affections of the offspring, should carry them far away and destroy them;

in like manner this evil and wily spirit the devil, having no confidence in himself, and knowing the love which men bear to the truth, personates its appearance, and so spreads his own poison among those that follow after him.

2. Satan pretending to be holy, is detected by the Christian.

Thus he deceived Eve, not speaking his own, but artfully adopting the words of God, and perverting their meaning. Thus he suggested evil to the wife of Job, persuading her to feign affection for her husband, while he taught her to blaspheme God. Thus does the crafty spirit mock men by false displays, deluding and drawing each into his own pit of wickedness. When of old he deceived the first man Adam, thinking that through him he should have all men subject unto him, he exulted with great boldness and said, 'My hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people; and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there is none that shall escape me or speak against me .' But when the Lord came upon earth, and the enemy made trial of His human Economy, being unable to deceive the flesh which He had taken upon Him, from that time forth he, who promised himself the occupation of the whole world, is for His sake mocked even by children: that proud one is mocked as a sparrow . For now the infant child lays his hand upon the hole of the asp, and laughs at him that deceived Eve ; and all that rightly believe in the Lord tread under foot him that said, 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: I will be like the Most High .' Thus he suffers and is dishonoured;

and although he still ventures with shameless confidence to disguise himself, yet now, wretched spirit, he is detected the rather by them that bear the Sign on their foreheads ; yea, more, he is rejected of them, and is humbled, and put to shame. For even if, now that he is a creeping serpent, he shall transform himself into an angel of light, yet his deception will not profit him; for we have been taught that 'though an angel from heaven preach unto us any other gospel than that we have received, he is anathema .'

3. And although, again, he conceal his natural falsehood, and pretend to speak truth with his lips; yet are we 'not ignorant of his devices ,' but are able to answer him in the words spoken by the Spirit against him; 'But unto the ungodly, said God, why dost thou preach My laws?' and, 'Praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner .' For even though he speak the truth, the deceiver is not worthy of credit. And whereas Scripture shewed this, when relating his wicked artifices against Eve in Paradise, so the Lord also reproved him,-first in the mount, when He laid open 'the folds of his breast-plate ,' and shewed who the crafty spirit was, and proved that it was not one of the saints , but Satan that was tempting Him. For He said, 'Get thee behind Me Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve .' And again, when He put a curb in the mouths of the demons that cried after Him from the tombs. For although what they said was true, and they lied not then, saying, 'Thou art the Son of God,' and 'the Holy One of Gods ;' yet He

would not that the truth should proceed from an unclean mouth, and especially from such as them, lest under pretence thereof they should mingle with it their own malicious devices, and sow these also while men slept.

Therefore He suffered them not to speak such words, neither would He have us to suffer such, but hath charged us by His own mouth, saying, 'Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheeps' clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves ;' and by the mouth of His Holy Apostles, 'Believe not every spirit .' Such is the method of our adversary's operations; and of the like nature are all these inventions of heresies, each of which has for the father of its own device the devil, who changed and became a murderer and a liar from the beginning. But being ashamed to profess his hateful name, they usurp the glorious Name of our Saviour 'which is above every name ,' and deck themselves out in the language of Scripture, speaking indeed the words, but stealing away the true meaning thereof; and so disguising by some artifice their false inventions, they also become the murderers of those whom they have led astray.

4. It profits not to receive part of Scripture, and reject part.

For whence do Marcion and Manichaeus receive the Gospel while they reject the Law? For the New Testament arose out of the Old, and bears witness to the Old; if then they reject this, how can they receive what proceeds from it? Thus Paul was an Apostle of the Gospel, 'which God promised afore by His prophets in the holy Scriptures :' and our Lord Himself said, 'ye search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of Me .' How then shall they confess the Lord unless they first search the Scriptures which are written concerning Him? And the disciples say that they have found Him, 'of whom Moses and the Prophets did write .' And what is the Law to the Sadducees if they receive not the Prophets ? For God who gave the Law, Himself promised in the Law that He would raise up Prophets also, so that the same is Lord both of the Law and of the Prophets, and he that denies the one must of necessity deny the other also. And again, what is the Old Testament to the Jews, unless they acknowledge the Lord whose coming was expected according to it? For had they believed the writings of Moses, they would have believed the words of the Lord; for He said, 'He wrote of Me .' Moreover, what are the Scriptures to him of Samosata, who denies the Word of God and His incarnate Presence , which is signified and declared both in the Old and New Testament?

And of what use are the Scriptures to the Arians also, and why do they bring them forward, men who say that the Word of God is a creature, and like the Gentiles 'serve the creature more than' God 'the Creator ?' Thus each of these heresies, in respect of the peculiar impiety of its invention, has nothing in common with the Scriptures. And their advocates are aware of this, that the Scriptures are very much, or rather altogether, opposed to the doctrines of every one of them; but for the sake of deceiving the more simple sort (such as are those of whom it is written in the Proverbs, 'The simple believeth every word),' they pretend like their 'father the devil ' to study and to quote the language of Scripture, in order that they may appear by their words to have a right belief, and so may persuade their wretched followers

to believe what is contrary to the Scriptures. Assuredly in every one of these heresies the devil has thus disguised himself, and has suggested to them words full of craftiness. The Lord spake concerning them, that 'there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, so that they shall deceive many .' Accordingly the devil has come, speaking by each and saying, 'I am Christ, and the truth is with me;' and he has made them, one and all, to be liars like himself.

And strange it is, that while all heresies are at variance with one another concerning the mischievous inventions which each has framed, they are united together only by the common purpose of lying . For they have one and the same father that has sown in them all the seeds, of falsehood. Wherefore the faithful Christian and true disciple of the Gospel, having grace to discern spiritual things, and having built the house of his faith upon a rock, stands continually firm and secure from their deceits. But the simple person, as I said before, that is not thoroughly grounded in knowledge, such an one, considering only the words that are spoken and not perceiving their meaning, is immediately drawn away by their wiles. Wherefore it is good and needful for us to pray that we may receive the gift of discerning spirits, so that every one may know, according to the precept of John, whom he ought to reject, and whom to receive as friends and of the same faith. Now one might write at great length concerning these things, if one desired to go rate details respecting them; for the impiety and perverseness of heresies will appear to be manifold and various, and the craft of the deceivers to be very terrible.

But since holy Scripture is of all things most sufficient for us, therefore recommending to those who desire to know more of these matters, to read the Divine word, I now hasten to set before you that which most claims attention, and for the sake of which principally I have written these things.

5. Attempt of Arians to substitute a Creed for the Nicene.

I heard during my sojourn in these parts (and they were true and orthodox brethren that informed me), that certain professors of Arian opinions had met together, and drawn a confession of faith to their own liking, and that they intend to send word to you, that you must either subscribe to what pleases them, or rather to what the devil has inspired them with, or in case of refusal must suffer banishment. They are indeed already beginning to molest the Bishops of these parts; and thereby are plainly manifesting their disposition. For inasmuch as they frame this document only for the purpose of inflicting banishment or other punishments, what does such conduct prove them to be, but enemies of the Christians, and friends of the devil and his angels? and especially since they spread abroad what they like contrary to the mind of that gracious Prince, our most religious Emperor Constantius . And this they do with great craftiness, and, as appears to me, chiefly with two ends in view; first, that by obtaining your subscriptions, they may seem to remove the evil repute that rests upon the name of Arius, and may escape notice themselves as if not professing his opinions; and again, that by putting forth these statements they may cast a shade over the Council of Nicaea , and the confession of faith which was then put forth against the Arian

heresy. But this proceeding does but prove the more plainly their own maliciousness and heterodoxy.

For had they believed aright, they would have been satisfied with the confession put forth at Nicaea by the whole Ecumenic Council; and had they considered themselves calumniated and falsely called Arians, they ought not to have been so eager to innovate upon what was written against Arius, lest what was directed against him might seem to be aimed at them also. This, however, is not the course they pursue, but they conduct the struggle in their own behalf, just as if they were Arius. Observe how entirely they disregard the truth, and how everything they say and do is for the sake of the Arian heresy. For in that they dare to question those sound definitions of the faith, and take upon themselves to produce others contrary to them, what else do they but accuse the Fathers, and stand up in defence of that heresy which they opposed and protested against? And what they now write proceeds not from any regard for the truth, as I said before, but rather they do it as in mockery and by an artifice, for the purpose of deceiving men; that by sending about their letters they may engage the ears of the people to listen to these notions, and so put off the time when they will be brought to trial; and that by concealing their impiety from observation, they may have room to extend their heresy, which, 'like a gangrene ,' eats its way everywhere.

6. Accordingly they disturb and disorder everything, and yet not even thus are they satisfied with their own proceedings. For every year, as if they were going to draw up a contract, they meet together and pretend to write about the faith, whereby they expose themselves the more to ridicule and disgrace, because their expositions are rejected, not by others, but by themselves. For had they had any confidence in their previous statements, they would not have desired to draw up others; nor again, leaving these last, would they now have set down the one in question, which no doubt true to their custom they will again alter, after a very short interval, and as soon as they shall find a pretence for their customary plotting against certain persons. For when they have a design against any, then it is that they make a great show of writing about the faith; that, as Pilate washed his hands, so they by writing may destroy those who rightly believe in Christ, hoping that, as making definitions about the faith, they may appear, as I have repeatedly said, to be free from the charge of false doctrine. But they will not be able to hide themselves, nor to escape; for they continually become their own accusers even while they defend themselves. Justly so, since instead of answering those who bring proof against them, they do but persuade themselves to believe whatever they wish. And when is an acquittal obtained, upon the criminal becoming his own judge?

Hence it is that they are always writing, and always altering their own previous statements, and thus they shew an uncertain faith ,' or rather a manifest unbelief and perverseness. And this, it appears to me, must needs be the case with them; for since, having fallen away from the truth, and desiring to overthrow that sound confession of faith which was drawn up at Nicaea, they have, in the language of Scripture, 'loved to wander, and have not refrained their feet ;' therefore, like Jerusalem of old, they labour and toil in their changes, sometimes

writing one thing, and sometimes another, but only for the sake of gaining time, and that they may continue enemies of Christ, and deceivers of mankind.

7. The party of Acacius really, Arians.

Who, then, that has any rear regard for truth, will be willing to suffer these men any longer? who will not justly reject their writing? who will not denounce their audacity, that being but few in number, they would have their decisions to prevail over everything, and as desiring the supremacy of their own meetings, held in corners and suspicious in their circumstances, would forcibly cancel the decrees of an uncorrupt, pure, and Ecumenic Council? Men who have been promoted by Eusebius and his fellows for advocating this Antichristian heresy, venture to define articles of faith, and while they ought to be brought to judgment as criminals, like Caiaphas, they take upon themselves to judge. They compose a Thalia, and would have it received as a standard of faith, while they are not yet themselves determined what they believe. Who does not know that Secundus of Pentapolis, who was several times degraded long ago, was received by them for the sake of the Arian madness; and that George , now of Laodicea, and Leontius the Eunuch, and before him Stephanus, and Theodorus of Heraclea , were promoted by them? Ursacius and Valens also, who from the first were instructed by Arius as young men , though they had been formerly degraded from the Priesthood, afterwards got the title of Bishops on account of their impiety; as did also Acacius, Patrophilus , and Narcissus, who have been most forward in all manner of impiety. These were degraded in the great Synod of Sardica;

Eustathius also now of Sebastea, Demophilus and Germinius , Eudoxius, and Basil, who are supporters of that impiety, were advanced in the same manner. Of Cecropius , and him they called Auxentius, and of Epictetus the impostor, it were superfluous for me to speak, since it is manifest to all men, in what manner, on what pretexts, and by what enemies of ours these were promoted, that they might bring their false charges against the orthodox Bishops who were the objects of their designs. For although they resided at the distance of eighty posts, and were unknown to the people, yet on the ground of their impiety they purchased for themselves the title of Bishop. For the same reason also they have now hired one George of Cappadocia, whom they wish to impose upon you. But no respect is due to him any more than to the rest; for there is a report in these parts that he is not even a Christian, but is devoted to the worship of idols; and he has a hangman's temper . And this person, such as he is described to be, they have taken into their ranks, that they may be able to injure, to plunder, and to slay; for in these things he is a great proficient, but is ignorant of the very principles of the Christian faith.

8. Words are bad, though Scriptural, which proceed from bad men.

Such are the machinations of these men against the truth: but their designs are manifest to all the world, though they attempt in ten thousand ways, like eels, to elude the grasp, and to escape detection as enemies of Christ. Wherefore I beseech you, let no one among you be deceived, no one seduced by them; rather, considering that a sort of judaical impiety

is invading the Christian faith, be ye all zealous for the Lord; hold fast, every one, the faith we have received from the Fathers, which they who assembled at Nicaea recorded in writing, and endure not those who endeavour to innovate thereon. And however they may write phrases out of the Scripture, endure not their writings; however they may speak the language of the orthodox, yet attend not to what they say; for they speak not with an upright mind, but putting on such language like sheeps' clothing, in their hearts they think with Arius, after the manner of the devil, who is the author of all heresies. For he too made use of the words of Scripture, but was put to silence by our Saviour. For if he had indeed meant them as he used them, he would not have fallen from heaven; but now having fallen through his pride, he artfully dissembles in his speech, and oftentimes maliciously endeavours to lead men astray by the subtleties and sophistries of the Gentiles.

Had these expositions of theirs proceeded from the orthodox, from such as the great Confessor Hosius, and Maximinus of Gaul, or his successor , or from such as Philogonius and Eustathius , Bishops of the East , or Julius and Liberius of Rome, or Cyriacus of Moesia , or Pistus and Aristaeus of Greece, or Silvester and Protogenes of Dacia, or Leontius and Eupsychius of Cappadocia, or Caecilianus of Africa, or Eustorgius of Italy, or Capito of Sicily, or Macarius of Jerusalem, or Alexander of Constantinople, or Paederos of Heraclea, or those great Bishops Meletius, Basil, and Longianus, and the rest from Armenia and Pontus, or Lupus and Amphion from Cilicia, or James and the rest from Mesopotamia, or our own blessed Alexander, with others of the same opinions as these;-there would then have been nothing to suspect in their statements, for the character of apostolical men is sincere and incapable of fraud.

9. For such words do but serve as their cloak.

But when they proceed from those who are hired to advocate the cause of heresy, and since, according to the divine proverb, 'The words of the wicked are to lie in wait,' and 'The mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things,' and 'The counsels of the wicked are deceit :' it becomes us to watch and be sober, brethren, as the Lord has said, lest any deception arise from subtlety of speech and craftiness; lest any one come and pretend to say, 'I preach Christ,' and after a little while he be found to be Antichrist. These indeed are Antichrists, whosoever come to you in the cause of the Arian madness. For what defect is there among you, that any one need to come to you from without? Or, of what do the Churches of Egypt and Libya and Alexandria stand so much in need, that these men should make a purchase of the Episcopate instead of wood and goods, and intrude into Churches which do not belong to them? Who is not aware, who does not perceive clearly, that they do all this in order to support their impiety? Wherefore although they should make themselves dumb, or although they should bind on their garments larger borders than the Pharisees, and pour themselves forth in long speeches, and practise the tones of their voice , they ought not to be believed; for it is not the mode of speaking, but the intentions of the heart and a godly conversation that recommend the faithful Christian.

And thus the Sadducees and Herodians, although they have the law in their mouths, were put to rebuke by our Saviour, who said unto them, 'Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God :' and all men witnessed the exposure of those who pretended to quote the words of the Law, as being in their minds heretics and enemies of God . Others indeed they deceived by these professions, but when our Lord became man they were not able to deceive Him; 'for the Word was made Flesh,' who 'knoweth the thoughts of men that they are vain.' Thus He exposed the carping of the Jews, saying, 'If God were your Father, ye would love Me, for I proceeded forth from the Father, and am come to you .' In like manner these men seem now to act; for they disguise their real sentiments, and then make use of the language of Scripture for their writings, which they hold forth as a bait for the ignorant, that they may inveigle them into their own wickedness.

10. They ought first to condemn Arius, if they are to be heard.

Consider, whether this be not so. If, when there is no reason for their doing so, they write confessions of faith, it is a superfluous, and perhaps also a mischievous proceeding, because, when there is no enquiry, they offer occasion for controversy of words, and unsettle the simple hearts of the brethren, disseminating among them such notions as have never entered into their minds. And if they are attempting to write a defence of themselves in regard to the Arian heresy, they ought first to have removed the seeds of those evils which have sprung up, and to have proscribed those who produced them, and then in the room of former statements to set forth others which are sound; or else let them openly vindicate the opinions of Arius, that they may no longer covertly but openly shew themselves enemies of Christ, and that all men may fly from them as from the face of a serpent. But now they keep back those opinions, and for a pretence write on other matters; just as if a surgeon, when summoned to attend a person wounded and suffering, should upon coming in to him say not a word concerning his wounds, but proceed to discourse about his sound limbs. Such an one would be chargeable with utter stupidity, for saying nothing on the matter for which he came, but discoursing on those other points in which he was not needed.

Yet just in the same manner these men omit those matters which concern their heresy, and take upon themselves to write on other subjects; whereas if they had any regard for the Faith, or any love for Christ, they ought first to have removed out of the way those blasphemous expressions uttered against Him, and then in the room of them to speak and to write the sound words. But this they neither do themselves, nor permit those that desire to do so, whether it be from ignorance, or through craft and artifice.

11. No profit to do right in one may, if we do wrong in another.

If they do this from ignorance they must be charged with rashness, because they affirm positively concerning things that they know not; but if they dissemble knowingly, their condemnation is the greater, because while they overlook nothing in consulting for their own interests, in writing about faith in our Lord they make a mockery, and do anything rather than speak the truth; they keep back those particulars respecting which their heresy is

accused, and merely bring forward the language of the Scriptures. Now this is a manifest theft of the truth, and a practice full of all iniquity; and so I am sure your piety will readily perceive it to be from the following illustrations. No person being accused of adultery defends himself as innocent of theft; nor would any one in prosecuting a charge of murder suffer the accused parties to defend themselves by saying, 'We have not committed perjury, but have preserved the deposit which was entrusted to us.' This would be mere child's play, instead of a refutation of the charge and a demonstration of the truth. For what has murder to do with a deposit, or adultery with theft? The vices are indeed related to each other as proceeding from the same heart; yet in respect to the refutation of an alleged offence, they have no connection with each other. Accordingly as it is written in the Book of Joshua the son of Nun, when Achan was charged with theft, he did not excuse himself with the plea of his zeal in the wars;

but being convicted of the offence was stoned by all the people. And when Saul was charged with negligence and a breach of the law, he did not benefit his cause by alleging his conduct on other matters . For a defence on one count will not operate to obtain an acquittal on another count; but if all things should be done according to law and justice, a man must defend himself in those particulars wherein he is accused, and must either disprove the past, or else confess it with the promise that he will desist, and do so no more. But if he is guilty of the crime, and will not confess, but in order to conceal the truth speaks on other points instead of the one in question, he shews plainly that he has acted amiss, nay, and is conscious of his delinquency. But what need of many words, seeing that these persons are themselves accusers of the Arian heresy? For since they have not the boldness to speak out, but conceal their blasphemous expressions, it is plain that they know that this heresy is separate and alien from the truth. But since they themselves conceal it and are afraid to speak, it is necessary for me to strip off the veil from their impiety, and to expose the heresy to public view, knowing as I do the statements which Arius and his fellows formerly made, and how they were cast out of the Church, and degraded from the Clergy.

But here first I ask for pardon of the foul words which I am about to produce, since I use them, not because I thus think, but in order to convict the heretics.

Chapter II.

12. Arian statements.

Now the Bishop Alexander of blessed memory cast Arius out of the Church for holding and maintaining the following opinions: 'God was not always a Father: The Son was not always: But whereas all things were made out of nothing, the Son of God also was made out of nothing: And since all things are creatures, He also is a creature and a thing made: And since all things once were not, but were afterwards made, there was a time when the Word of God Himself was not; and He was not before He was begotten, but He had a beginning of existence: For He has then originated when God has chosen to produce Him: For He also is one among the rest of His works. And since He is by nature changeable, and only continues good because He chooses by His own free will, He is capable of being changed, as are all

other things, whenever He wishes. And therefore God, as l foreknowing that He would be good, gave Him by anticipation that glory which He would have obtained afterwards by His virtue; and He is now become good by His works which God foreknew.' Accordingly they say, that Christ is not truly God, but that He is called God on account of His participation in God's nature, as are all other creatures. And they add, that He is not that Word which is by nature in the Father, and is proper to His Essence, nor is He His proper wisdom by which He made this world;

but that there is another Word which is properly in the Father, and another Wisdom which is properly in the Father, by which Wisdom also He made this Word; and that the Lord Himself is called the Word (Reason) conceptually in regard of things endued with reason, and is called Wisdom conceptually in regard of things endued with wisdom. Nay, they say that as all things are in essence separate and alien from the Father, so He also is in all respects separate and alien from the essence of the Father, and properly belongs to things made and created, and is one of them; for He is a creature, and a thing made, and a work. Again, they say that God did not create us for His sake, but Him for our sakes. For they say, 'God was alone, and the Word was not with Him, but afterwards when He would produce us, then He made Him; and from the time He was made, He called Him the Word, and the Son, and the Wisdom, in order that He might create us by Him. And as all things subsisted by the will of God, and did not exist before; so He also was made by the will of God, and did not exist before. For the Word is not the proper and natural Offspring of the Father, but has Himself originated by grace:

for God who existed made by His will the Son who did not exist, by which will also He made all things, and produced, and created, and willed them to come into being.' Moreover they say also, that Christ is not the natural and true power of God; but as the locust and the cankerworm are called a power , so also He is called the power of the Father. Furthermore he said, that the Father is secret from the Son, and that the Son can neither see nor know the Father perfectly and exactly. For having a beginning of existence, He cannot know Him that is without beginning; but what He knows and sees, He knows and sees in a measure proportionate to His own measure, as we also know and see in proportion to our powers. And he added also, that the Son not only does not know His own Father exactly, but that He does not even know His own essence.

13. Arguments from Scripture against Arian statements.

For maintaining these and the like opinions Arius was declared a heretic; for myself, while I have merely been writing them down, I have been cleansing myself by thinking of the contrary doctrines, and by holding fast the sense of the true faith. For the Bishops who all assembled from all parts at the Council of Nicaea, began to hold their ears at these statements, and all with one voice condemned this heresy on account of them, and anathematized it, declaring it to be alien and estranged from the faith of the Church. It was no compulsion which led the judges to this decision, but they all deliberately vindicated the truth : and they did so justly and rightly. For infidelity is coming in through these men, or

rather a Judaism counter to the Scriptures, which has close upon it Gentile superstition, so that he who holds these opinions can no longer be even called a Christian, for they are all contrary to the Scriptures. John, for instance, saith, 'In the beginning was the Word ;' but these men say, 'He was not, before He was begotten.' And again he wrote, 'And we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ; this is the true God, and eternal life ;' but these men, as if in contradiction to this, allege that Christ is not the true God, but that He is only called God, as are other creatures, in regard of His participation in the divine nature.

And the Apostle blames the Gentiles, because they worship the creatures, saying, 'They served the creature more than' God 'the Creator .' But if these men say that the Lord is a creature, and worship Him as a creature, how do they differ from the Gentiles? If they hold this opinion, is not this passage also against them; and does not the blessed Paul write as blaming them? The Lord also says, 'I and My Father are One:' and 'He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father ;' and the Apostle who was sent by Him to preach, writes, 'Who being the Brightness of His glory, and the express Image of His Persons .' But these men dare to separate them, and to say that He is alien from the essence and eternity of the Father; and impiously to represent Him as changeable, not perceiving, that by speaking thus, they make Him to be, not one with the Father, but one with created things. Who does not see, that the brightness cannot be separated from the light, but that it is by nature proper to it, and co-existent with it, and is not produced after it?

Again, when the Father says, 'This is My beloved Son ,' and when the Scriptures say that 'He is the Word' of the Father, by whom 'the heavens were established ,' and in short, 'All things were made by Him ;' these inventors of new doctrines and fictions represent that there is another Word, and another Wisdom of the Father, and that He is only called the Word and the Wisdom conceptually on account of things endued with reason, while they perceive not the absurdity of this.

14. Arguments from Scripture against Arian statements.

But if He be styled the Word and the Wisdom by a fiction on our account, what He really is they cannot tell . For if the Scriptures affirm that the Lord is both these, and yet these men will not allow Him to be so, it is plain that in their godless opposition to the Scriptures they would deny His existence altogether. The faithful are able to conclude this truth both from the voice of the Father Himself, and from the Angels that worshipped Him, and from the Saints that have written concerning Him; but these men, as they have not a pure mind, and cannot bear to hear the words of divine men who teach of God, may be able to learn something even from the devils who resemble them, for they spoke of Him, not as if there were many besides, but, as knowing Him alone, they said, 'Thou art the Holy One of God,' and 'the Son of Gods .' He also who suggested to them this heresy, while tempting Him, in the mount, said not, 'If Thou also be a Son of God,' as though there were others besides Him, but, 'If Thou be the Son of God,' as being the only one.

But as the Gentiles, having fallen from the notion of one God, have sunk into polytheism, so these wonderful men, not believing that the Word of the Father is one, have come to adopt the idea of many words, and they deny Him that is really God and the true Word, and have dared to conceive of Him as a creature, not perceiving how full of impiety is the thought. For if He be a creature, how is He at the same time the Creator of creatures? or how the Son and the Wisdom and the Word? For the Word is not created, but begotten; and a creature is not a Son, but a production. And if all creatures were made by Him, and He is also a creature, then by whom was He made? Things made must of necessity originate through some one; as in fact they have originated through the Word; because He was not Himself a thing made, but the Word of the Father. And again, if there be another wisdom in the Father beside the Lord, then Wisdom has originated in wisdom: and if the Word of God be the Wisdom of God, then the Word has originated in a word: and if the Son be he Word of God, then the Son must have been made in the Son.

15. Arguments from Scripture against Arian statements.

How is it that the Lord has said, 'I am in the Father, and the Father in Me ,' if there be another in the Father, by whom the Lord Himself also was made? And how is it that John, passing over that other, relates of this One, saying, 'All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made ?' If all things that were made by the will of God were made by Him, how can He be Himself one of the things that were made? And when the Apostle says, 'For whom are all things, and by whom are all things ,' how can these men say, that we were not made for Him, but He for us? If it be so, He ought to have said, 'For whom the Word was made;' but He saith not so, but, 'For whom are all things, and by whom are all things,' thus proving these men to be heretical and false. But further, as they have had the boldness to say that there is another Word in God, and since they cannot bring any clear proof of this from the Scriptures, let them but shew one work of His, or one work of the Father that was done without this Word; so that they may seem to have some ground at least for their own idea. The works of the true Word are manifest to all, so as for Him to be contemplated by analogy from them.

For as, when we see the creation, we conceive of God as the Creator of it; so when we see that nothing is without order therein, but that all things move and continue with order and providence, we infer a Word of God who is over all and governs all. This too the holy Scriptures testify, declaring that He is the Word of God, and that 'all things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made .' But of that other Word, of whom they speak, there is neither word nor work that they have to shew. Nay, even the Father Himself, when He says, 'This is My beloved Son ,' signifies that besides Him there is none other

16. Arians parallel to the Manichees.

It appears then that so far as these doctrines are concerned, these wonderful men have now joined themselves to the Manichees. For these also confess the existence of a good God, so far as the mere name goes, but they are unable to point out any of His works either visible or

invisible. But inasmuch as they deny Him who is truly and indeed God, the Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things invisible, they are mere inventors of fables. And this appears to me to be the case with these evil-minded men. They see the works of the true Word who alone is in the Father, and yet they deny Him, and make to themselves another Word , whose existence they are unable to prove either by His Works or by the testimony of others. Unless it be that they have adopted a fabulous notion of God, that He is a composite being like man, speaking and then changing His words, and as a man exercising understanding and wisdom; not perceiving to what absurdities they are reduced by such an opinion. For if God has a succession of words , they certainly must consider Him as a man. And if those words proceed from Him and then vanish away, they are guilty of a greater impiety, because they resolve into nothing what proceeds from the self-existent God.

If they conceive that God doth at all beget, it were surely better and more religious to say that He is the begetter of One Word, who is the fulness of His Godhead, in whom are hidden the treasures of all knowledge , and that He is co-existent with His Father, and that all things were made by Him; rather than to suppose God to be the Father of many words which are nowhere to be found, or to represent Him who is simple in His nature as compounded of many , and as being subject to human passions and variable. Next whereas the Apostle says, 'Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God ,' these men reckon Him but as one among many powers; nay, worse than this, they compare Him, transgressors as they are, with the cankerworm and other irrational creatures which are sent by Him for the punishment of men. Next, whereas the Lord says, 'Noone knoweth the Father, save the Son ;' and again, 'Not that any man hath seen the Father save He which is of the Father ;' are not these indeed enemies of God which say that the Father is neither seen nor known of the Son perfectly? If the Lord says, 'As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father ,' and if the Father knows not the Son partially, are they not mad to say idly that the Son knows the Father only partially, and not fully?

Next, if the Son has a beginning of existence, and all things likewise have a beginning, let them say, which is prior to the other. But indeed they have nothing to say, neither can they with all their craft prove such a beginning of the Word. For He is the true and proper Offspring of the Father, and 'in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God .' For with regard to their assertion, that the Son knows not His own essence, it is superfluous to reply to it, except only so far as to condemn their madness; for how does not the Word know Himself, when He imparts to all men the knowledge of His Father and of Himself, and blames those who know not themselves?

17. Arguments from Scripture against Arian statements.

But it is written , say they, 'The Lord created me in the beginning of His ways for His works.' O untaught and insensate that ye are! He is called also in the Scriptures, 'servant ,' and 'son of a handmaid,' and 'lamb,' and 'sheep,' and it is said that He suffered toil, and thirst, and was beaten, and has suffered pain. But there is plainly a reasonable ground and cause , why such representations as these are given of Him in the Scriptures; and it is because

He became man and the Son of man, and took upon Him the form of a servant, which is the human flesh: for 'the Word,' says John, 'was made flesh .' And since He became man, no one ought to be offended at such expressions; for it is proper to man to be created, and born, and formed, to suffer toil and pain, to die and to rise again from the dead. And as, being Word and Wisdom of the Father, He has all the attributes of the Father, His eternity, and His unchangeableness, and the being like Him in all respects and in all things , and is neither before nor after, but co-existent with the Father, and is the very form of the Godhead, and is the Creator, and is not created:

(for since He is in essence like the Father, He cannot be a creature, but must be the Creator, as Himself hath said, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work :') so being made man, and bearing our flesh, He is necessarily said to be created and made, and that is proper to all flesh; however, these men, like Jewish vintners, who mix their wine with water , debase the Word, and subject His Godhead to their notions of created things. Wherefore the Fathers were with reason and justice indignant, and anathematized this most impious heresy; which these persons are now cautious of and keep back, as being easy to be disproved and unsound in every part of it. These that I have set down are but a few of the arguments which go to condemn their doctrines; but if any one desires to enter more at large into the proof against them, he will find that this heresy is not far removed from heathenism, and that it is the lowest and the very dregs of all the other heresies. These last are in error either concerning the body or the incarnation of the Lord, falsifying the truth, some in one way and some in another, or else they deny that the Lord has sojourned here at all, as the Jews erroneously suppose. But this one alone more madly than the rest has dared to assail the very Godhead, and to assert that the Word is not at all, and that the Father was not always a father;

so that one might reasonably say that that Psalm was written against them; 'The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God . Corrupt are they, and become abominable in their doings.'

18. If the Arians felt they were right, they would speak openly.

'But,' say they, 'we are strong, and are able to defend our heresy by our many devices.' They would have a better answer to give, if they were able to defend it, not by artifice nor by Gentile sophisms, but by the simplicity of their faith. If however they have confidence in it, and know it to be in accordance with the doctrines of the Church, let them openly express their sentiments; for no man when he hath lighted a candle putteth it under the bushel , but on the candlestick, and so it gives light to all that come in. If therefore they are able to defend it, let them record in writing the opinions above imputed to them, and expose their heresy bare to the view of all men, as they would a candle, and let them openly accuse the Bishop Alexander, of blessed memory, as having unjustly ejected Arius for professing these opinions; and let them blame the Council of Nicaea for putting forth a written confession of the true faith in place of their impiety. But they will not do this, I am sure, for they are not so ignorant of the evil nature of those notions which they have invented and are ambitious of sowing abroad; but they know well enough, that although they may at first lead astray

the simple by vain deceit, yet their imaginations will soon be extinguished, 'as the light of the ungodly ,' and themselves branded everywhere as enemies of the Truth.

Therefore although they do all things foolishly, and speak as fools, yet in this at least they have acted wisely, as 'children of this world ,' hiding their candle under the bushel, that it may be supposed to give light, and lest, if it appear, it be condemned and extinguished. Thus when Arius himself, the author of the heresy, and the associate of Eusebius, was summoned through the interest of Eusebius and his fellows to appear before Constantine Augustus of blessed memory , and was required to present a written declaration of his faith, the wily man wrote one, but kept out of sight the peculiar expressions of his impiety, and pretended, as the Devil did, to quote the simple words of Scripture, just as they are written. And when the blessed Constantine said to him, 'If thou holdest no other opinions in thy mind besides these, take the Truth to witness for thee; the Lord is thy avenger if thou swear falsely:' the unfortunate man swore that he held no other, and that be had never either spoken or thought otherwise than as he had now written. But as soon as he went out he dropped down, as if paying the penalty of his crime, and 'falling headlong burst asunder in the midst .'

19. Significance of the death of Arius.

Death, it is true, is the common end of all men, and we ought not to insult the dead, though he be an enemy, for it is uncertain whether the same event may not happen to ourselves before evening. But the end of Arius was not after an ordinary manner, and therefore it deserves to be related. Eusebius and his fellows threatening to bring him into the Church, Alexander, the Bishop of Constantinople, resisted them; but Arius trusted to the violence and menace of Eusebius. It was the Sabbath, and he expected to join communion on the following day. There was therefore a great struggle between them; the others threatening, Alexander praying. But the Lord being judge of the case, decided against the unjust party: for the sun had not set, when the necessities of nature compelled him to that place, where he fell down, and was forthwith deprived of communion with the Church and of his life together. The blessed Constantine hearing of this at once, was struck with wonder to find him thus convicted of perjury. And indeed it was then evident to all that the threats of Eusebius and his fellows had proved of no avail and the hope of Arius had become vain. It was shewn too that the Arian madness was rejected from communion by our Saviour both here and in the Church of the first-born in heaven.

Now who will not wonder to see the unrighteous ambition of these men, whom the Lord has condemned;-to see them vindicating the heresy which the Lord has pronounced excommunicate (since He did not suffer its author to enter into the Church), and not fearing that which is written, but attempting impossible things? 'For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it ?' and whom God hath condemned, who shall justify? Let them however in defence of their own imaginations write what they please; but do you, brethren, as 'bearing the vessels of the Lord ,' and vindicating the doctrines of the Church, examine this matter, I beseech you; and if they write in other terms than those above recorded as the language of Arius, then condemn them as hypocrites, who hide the poison of their opinions,

and like the serpent flatter with the words of their lips. For, though they thus write, they have associated with them those who were formerly rejected with Arius, such as Secundus of Pentapolis, and the clergy who were convicted at Alexandria; and thay write to them in Alexandria. But what is most astonishing, they have caused us and our friends to be persecuted, although the most religious Emperor Constantine sent us back in peace to our country and Church, and shewed his concern for the harmony of the people.

But now they have caused the Churches to be given up to these men, thus proving to all that for their sake the whole conspiracy against us and the rest has been carried on from the beginning.

20. While they are friends of Arius, in vain their moderate words.

Now while such is their conduct, how can they claim credit for what they write? Had the opinions they have put in writing been orthodox, they would have expunged from their list of books the Thalia of Arius, and have rejected the scions of the heresy, viz. those disciples of Arius, and the partners of his impiety and his punishment. But since they do not renounce these, it is manifest to all that their sentiments are not orthodox, though they write them over ten thousand times . Wherefore it becomes us to watch, lest some deception be conveyed under the clothing of their phrases, and they lead away certain from the true faith. And if they venture to advance the opinions of Arius, when they see themselves proceeding in a prosperous course, nothing remains for us but to use great boldness of speech, remembering the predictions of the Apostle, which he wrote to forewarn us of such like heresies, and which it becomes us to repeat. For we know that, as it is written, 'in the latter times some shall depart from the sound faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, that turn from the truth ;' and, 'as many as will live godly in Christ shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.' But none of these things shall prevail over us, nor 'separate us from the love of Christ ,' though the heretics threaten us with death. For we are Christians, not Arians ;

would that they too, who have written these things, had not embraced the doctrines of Arius! Yea, brethren, there is need now of such boldness of speech; for we have not received 'the spirit of bondage again to fear ,' but God hath called us 'to liberty .' And it were indeed disgraceful to us, most disgraceful, were we, on account of Arius or of those who embrace and advocate his sentiments, to destroy the faith which we have received from our Saviour through His Apostles. Already very many in these parts, perceiving the craftiness of these writers, are ready even unto blood to oppose their wiles, especially since they have heard of your firmness. And seeing that the refutation of the heresy has gone forth from you , and it has been drawn forth from its concealment, like a serpent from his hole, the Child that Herod sought to destroy is preserved among you, and the Truth lives in you, and the Faith thrives among you.

21. To make a stand for the Faith equivalent to martyrdom.

Wherefore I exhort you, keeping in your hands the confession which was framed by the Fathers at Nicaea, and defending it with great zeal and confidence in the Lord, be ensamples to the brethren everywhere, and shew them that a struggle is now before us in support of the Truth against heresy, and that the wiles of the enemy are various. For the proof of a martyr lies not only in refusing to burn incense to idols; but to refuse to deny the Faith is also an illustrious testimony of a good conscience. And not only those who turned aside unto idols were condemned as aliens, but those also who betrayed the Truth. Thus Judas was degraded from the Apostolical office, not because he sacrificed to idols, but because he proved a traitor; and Hymenaeus and Alexander fell away not by betaking themselves to the service of idols, but because they 'made shipwreck concerning the faith .' On the other hand, the Patriarch Abraham received the crown, not because he suffered death, but because he was faithful unto God; and the other Saints, of whom Paul speaks , Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephtha, David and Samuel, and the rest, were not made perfect by the shedding of their blood, but by faith they were justified; and to this day they are the objects of our admiration, as being ready even to suffer death for piety towards the Lord.

And if one may add an instance from our own country, ye know how the blessed Alexander contended even unto death against this heresy, and what great afflictions and labours, old man as He was, he sustained, until in extreme age he also was gathered to his fathers. And how many beside have undergone great toil, in their teachings against this impiety, and now enjoy in Christ the glorious reward of their confession! Wherefore, let us also, considering that this struggle is for our all, and that the choice is now before us, either to deny or to preserve the faith, let us also make it our earnest care and aim to guard what we have received, taking as our instruction the Confession drawn up at Nicaea, and let us turn away from novelties, and teach our people not to give heed to 'seducing spirits ,' but altogether to withdraw from the impiety of the Arian madmen, and from the coalition which the Meletians have made with them.

22. Coalition of sordid Meletians with insane Arians.

For you perceive how, though they were formerly at variance with one another, they have now, like Herod and Pontius, agreed together in order to blaspheme our Lord Jesus Christ. And for this they truly deserve the hatred of every man, because they were at enmity with one another on private grounds, but have now become friends and join hands, in their hostility to the Truth and their impiety towards God. Nay, they are content to do or suffer anything, however contrary to their principles, for the satisfaction of securing their several aims; the Meletians for the sake of pre-eminence and the mad love of money, and the Arian madmen for their own impiety. And thus by this coalition they are able to assist one another in their malicious designs, while the Meletians put on the impiety of the Arians, and the Arians from their own wickedness concur in their baseness, so that by thus mingling together their respective crimes, like the cup of Babylon , they may carry on their plots against the orthodox worshippers of our Lord Jesus Christ. The wickedness and falsehood of the Meletians were indeed even before this evident unto all men; so too the impiety and

godless heresy of the Arians have long been known everywhere and to all; for the period of their existence has not been a short one.

The former became schismatics five and fifty years ago, and it is thirty-six years since the latter were pronounced heretics , and they were rejected from the Church by the judgment of the whole Ecumenic Council. But by their present proceedings they have proved at length, even to those who seem openly to favour them, that they have carried on their designs against me and the rest of the orthodox Bishops from the very first solely for the sake of advancing their own impious heresy. For observe, that which was long ago the great object of Eusebius and his fellows is now brought about. They have caused the Churches to be snatched out of our hands, they have banished as they pleased, the Bishops and Presbyters who refused to communicate with them; and the people who withdrew from them they have excluded from the Churches, which they have given up into the hands of the Arians who were condemned so long ago, so that with the assistance of the hypocrisy of the Meletians they can without fear pour forth in them their impious language, and make ready, as they think, the way of deceit for Antichrist , who sowed among them the seeds of this heresy.

23. Conclusion.

Let them however thus dream and imagine vain things. We know that when our gracious Emperor shall hear of it, he will put a stop to their wickedness, and they will not continue long, but according to the words of Scripture, 'the hearts of the impious shall quickly fail them .' But let us, as it is written, 'put on the words of holy Scripture ,' and resist them as apostates who would set up fanaticism in the house of the Lord. And let us not fear the death of the body, nor let us emulate their ways; but let the word of Truth be preferred before all things. We also, as you all know, were formerly required by Eusebius and his fellows either to put on their impiety, or to expect their hostility; but we would not engage ourselves with them, but chose rather to be persecuted by them, than to imitate the conduct of Judas. And assuredly they have done what they threatened; for after the manner of Jezebel, they engaged the treacherous Meletians to assist them, knowing how the latter resisted the blessed martyr Peter, and after him the great Achillas, and then Alexander, of blessed memory, in order that, as being practised in such matters, the Meletians might pretend against us also whatever might be suggested to them, while Eusebius and his fellows gave them an opening for persecuting and for seeking to kill me. For this is what they thirst after; and they continue to this day to desire to shed my blood.

But of these things I have no care; for I know and am persuaded that they who endure shall receive a reward from our Saviour; and that ye also, if ye endure as the Fathers did, and shew yourselves examples to the people, and overthrow these strange and alien devices of impious men, shall be able to glory, and say, We have 'kept the Faith ;' and ye shall receive the 'crown of life,' which God 'hath promised to them that love Him .' And God grant that I also together with you may inherit the promises, which, were given, not to Paul only, but also to all them that 'have loved the appearing ' of our Lord, and Saviour, and God, and

universal King, Jesus Christ; through whom to the Father be glory and dominion in the Holy Spirit, both now and for ever, world without end . Amen.

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.