

Athanasius - Apologia Contra Arianos (Defence Against the Arians)

Chapter 1

Introduction. 1. I supposed that, after so many proofs of my innocence had been given, my enemies would have shrunk from further enquiry, and would now have condemned themselves for their false accusations of others. But as they are not yet abashed, though they have been so clearly convicted, but, as insensible to shame, persist in their slanderous reports against me, professing to think that the whole matter ought to be tried over again (not that they may have judgment passed on them, for that they avoid, but in order to harass me, and to disturb the minds of the simple); I therefore thought it necessary to make my defence unto you, that you may listen to their murmurings no longer, but may denounce their wickedness and base calumnies. And it is only to you, who are men of sincere minds, that I offer a defence: as for the contentious, I appeal confidently to the decisive proofs which I have against them. For my cause needs no further judgment; for judgment has already been given, and not once or twice only, but many times. First of all, it was tried in my own country in an assembly of nearly one hundred of its Bishops [472] ; a second time at Rome, when, in consequence of letters from Eusebius, both they and we were summoned, and more than fifty Bishops met [473] ; and a third time in the great Council assembled at Sardica by order of the most religious Emperors Constantius and Constans, when my enemies were degraded as false accusers, and the sentence that was passed in my favour received the suffrages of more than three hundred Bishops, out of the provinces of Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis, Palestine, Arabia, Isauria, Cyprus, Pamphylia, Lycia, Galatia, Dacia, Moesia, Thrace, Dardania, Macedonia, Epirus, Thessaly, Achaia, Crete, Dalmatia, Siscia, Pannonia, Noricum, Italy, Picenum, Tuscany, Campania, Calabria, Apulia, Bruttia, Sicily, the whole of Africa, Sardinia, Spain, Gaul, and Britain.

Added to these was the testimony [474] of Ursacius and Valens, who had formerly calumniated me, but afterwards changed their minds, and not only gave their assent to the sentence that was passed in my favour, but also confessed that they themselves and the rest of my enemies were false accusers; for men who make such a change and such a recantation of course reflect upon Eusebius and his fellows, for with them they had contrived the plot against me. Now after a matter has been examined and decided on such clear evidence by so many eminent Bishops, every one will confess that further discussion is unnecessary; else, if an investigation be instituted at this time, it may be again discussed and again investigated, and there will be no end to such trifling.

2. Now the decision of so many Bishops was sufficient to confound those who would still fain pretend some charge against me. But when my enemies also bear testimony in my favour and against themselves, declaring that the proceedings against me were a conspiracy, who is there that would not be ashamed to doubt any longer? The law requires that in the mouth of two or three witnesses [475] judgments shall be settled,

and we have here this great multitude of witnesses in my favour, with the addition of the proofs afforded by my enemies; so much so that those who still continue opposed to me no longer attach any importance to their own arbitrary [476] judgment, but now have recourse to violence, and in the place of fair reasoning seek to injure [477] those by whom they were exposed. For this is the chief cause of vexation to them, that the measures they carried on in secret, contrived by themselves in a corner, have been brought to light and disclosed by Valens and Ursacius; for they are well aware that their recantation while it clears those whom they have injured, condemns themselves.

Indeed this led to their degradation in the Council of Sardica, as mentioned before; and with good reason; for, as the Pharisees of old, when they undertook the defence of Paul [478] , fully exposed the conspiracy which they and the Jews had formed against him; and as the blessed David was proved to be persecuted unjustly when the persecutor confessed, I have sinned, my son David [479] ;' so it was with these men; being overcome by the truth they made a request, and delivered it in writing to Julius, Bishop of Rome. They wrote also to me requesting to be on terms of peace with me, though they have spread such reports concerning me; and probably even now they are covered with shame, on seeing that those whom they sought to destroy by the grace of the Lord are still alive. Consistently also with this conduct they anathematized Arius and his heresy; for knowing that Eusebius and his fellows had conspired against me in behalf of their own misbelief, and of nothing else, as soon as they had determined to confess their calumnies against me, they immediately renounced also that antichristian heresy for the sake of which they had falsely asserted them.

The following are the letters written in my favour by the Bishops in the several Councils and first the letter of the Egyptian Bishops.

Encyclical Letter of the Council of Egypt. The holy Council assembled at Alexandria out of Egypt, the Thebais, Libya, and Pentapolis, to the Bishops of the Catholic Church everywhere, brethren beloved and greatly longed for in the Lord, greeting.

3. Dearly beloved brethren, we might have put forth a defence of our brother Athanasius as respects the conspiracy of Eusebius and his fellows against him, and complained of his sufferings at their hands, and have exposed all their false charges, either at the beginning of their conspiracy or upon his arrival at Alexandria. But circumstances did not permit it then, as you also know; and lately, after the return of the Bishop Athanasius, we thought that they would be confounded and covered with shame at their manifest injustice: in consequence we prevailed with ourselves to remain silent. Since, however, after all his severe sufferings, after his retirement into Gaul, after his sojourn in a foreign and far distant country in the place of his own, after his narrow escape from death through their calumnies, but thanks to the clemency of the Emperor,--distress which would have satisfied even the most cruel

enemy,--they are still insensible to shame, are again acting insolently against the Church and Athanasius; and from indignation at his deliverance venture on still more atrocious schemes against him, and are ready with an accusation, fearless of the words in holy Scripture [480] , 'A false witness shall not be unpunished;' and, 'The mouth that believeth slayeth the soul;' we therefore are unable longer to hold our peace, being amazed at their wickedness and at the insatiable love of contention displayed in their intrigues.

For see, they cease not to disturb the ear of royalty with fresh reports against us; they cease not to write letters of deadly import, for the destruction of the Bishop who is the enemy of their impiety. For again have they written to the Emperors against him; again they wish to conspire against him, charging him with a butchery which has never taken place; again they wish to shed his blood, accusing him of a murder that never was committed (for at that former time would they have murdered him by their calumnies, had we not had a kind Emperor); again they are urgent, to say the least, that he should be sent into banishment, while they pretend to lament the miseries of those alleged to have been exiled by him. They lament before us things that have never been done, and, not satisfied with what has been done to him, desire to add thereto other and more cruel treatment. So mild are they and merciful, and of so just a disposition; or rather (for the truth shall be spoken) so wicked are they and malicious; obtaining respect through fear and by threats, rather than by their piety and justice, as becomes Bishops. They have dared in their letters to the Emperors to pour forth language such as no contentious person would employ even among those that are without; they have charged him with a number of murders and butcheries, and that not before a Governor, or any other superior officer, but before the three Augusti; nor shrink they from any journey however long, provided only all greater courts may be filled with their accusations. For indeed, dearly beloved, their business consists in accusations, and that of the most solemn character, forasmuch as the tribunals to which they make their appeal are the most solemn of any upon earth. And what other end do they propose by these investigations, except to move the Emperor to capital punishment?

4. Their own conduct therefore, and not that of Athanasius, is the fittest subject for lamentation and mourning, and one would more properly lament them, for such actions ought to be bewailed, since it is written, 'Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away, for he shall return no more [481] .' For their whole letter contemplates nothing but death; and their endeavour is to kill, whenever they may be permitted, or if not, to drive into exile. And this they were permitted to do by the most religious father of the Emperors, who gratified their fury by the banishment of Athanasius [482] , instead of his death. Now that this is not the conduct even of ordinary Christians, scarcely even of heathens, much less of Bishops, who profess to teach others righteousness, we suppose that your Christian consciences must at once perceive. How can they forbid others to accuse their brethren, who themselves become their accusers, and that to the Emperors? How can

they teach compassion for the misfortunes of others, who cannot rest satisfied even with our banishment? For there was confessedly a general sentence of banishment against us Bishops, and we all looked upon ourselves as banished men: and now again we consider ourselves as restored with Athanasius to our native places, and instead of our former lamentations and mourning over him, as having the greatest encouragement and grace,--which may the Lord continue to us, nor suffer Eusebius and his fellows to destroy?

Even if their charges against him were true, here is a certain charge against them, that against the precept of Christianity, and after his banishment and trials, they have assaulted him again, and accuse him of murder, and butchery, and other crimes, which they sound in the royal ears against the Bishops. But how manifold is their wickedness, and what manner of men think you them, when every word they speak is false, every charge they bring a calumny, and there is no truth whatever either in their mouths or their writings! Let us then at length enter upon these matters, and meet their last charges. This will prove, that in their former representations in the Council [483] and at the trial their conduct was dishonourable, or rather their words untrue, besides exposing them for what they have now advanced.

5. We are indeed ashamed to make any defence against such charges. But since our reckless accusers lay hold of any charge, and allege that murders and butcheries were committed after the return of Athanasius, we beseech you to bear with our answer though it be somewhat long; for circumstances constrain us. No murder has been committed either by Athanasius or on his account, since our accusers, as we said before, compel us to enter upon this humiliating defence. Slaughter and imprisonment are foreign to our Church. No one did Athanasius commit into the hands of the executioner; and the prison, so far as he was concerned, was never disturbed. Our sanctuaries are now, as they have always been, pure, and honoured only with the Blood of Christ and His pious worship. Neither Presbyter nor Deacon was destroyed by Athanasius; he perpetrated no murder, he caused the banishment of no one. Would that they had never caused the like to him, nor given him actual experience of it! No one here has been banished on his account; no one at all except Athanasius himself, the Bishop of Alexandria, whom they banished, and whom, now that he is restored, they again seek to entangle in the same or even a more cruel plot than before, setting their tongues to speak all manner of false and deadly words against him.

For, behold, they now attribute to him the acts of the magistrates; and although they plainly confess in their letter that the Prefect of Egypt passed sentence upon certain persons, they now are not ashamed to impute this sentence to Athanasius; and that, though he had not at the time entered Alexandria, but was yet on his return from his place of exile. Indeed he was then in Syria; since we must needs adduce in defence his length of way from home, that a man may not be responsible for the actions of a Governor or Prefect of Egypt. But supposing Athanasius had been in Alexandria,

what were the proceedings of the Prefect to Athanasius? However, he was not even in the country; and what the Prefect of Egypt did was not done on ecclesiastical grounds, but for reasons which you will learn from the records, which, after we understood what they had written, we made diligent enquiry for, and have transmitted to you. Since then they now raise a cry against certain things which were never done either by him or for him, as though they had certainly taken place, and testify against such evils as though they were assured of their existence; let them inform us from what Council they obtained their knowledge of them, from what proofs, and from what judicial investigation? But if they have no such evidence to bring forward, and nothing but their own mere assertion, we leave it to you to consider as regards their former charges also, how the things took place, and why they so speak of them. In truth, it is nothing but calumny, and a plot of our enemies, and a temper of ungovernable mood, and an impiety in behalf of the Arian madmen which is frantic against true godliness, and desires to root out the orthodox, so that henceforth the advocates of impiety may preach without fear whatever doctrines they please. The history of the matter is as follows:--

6. When Arius, from whom the heresy of the Arian madmen has its name, was cast out of the Church for his impiety by Bishop Alexander, of blessed memory, Eusebius and his fellows, who are the disciples and partners of his impiety, considering themselves also to have been ejected, wrote frequently to Bishop Alexander, beseeching him not to leave the heretic Arius out of the Church [484] . But when Alexander in his piety towards Christ refused to admit that impious man, they directed their resentment against Athanasius, who was then a Deacon, because in their busy enquiries they had heard that he was much in the familiarity of Bishop Alexander, and much honoured by him. And their hatred of him was greatly increased after they had experience of his piety towards Christ, in the Council assembled at Nicaea [485] , wherein he spoke boldly against the impiety of the Arian madmen. But when God raised him to the Episcopate, their long-cherished malice burst forth into a flame, and fearing his orthodoxy and resistance of their impiety, they (and especially Eusebius [486] , who was smitten with a consciousness of his own evil doings), engaged in all manner of treacherous designs against him. They prejudiced the Emperor against him; they frequently threatened him with Councils; and at last assembled at Tyre; and to this day they cease not to write against him, and are so implacable that they even find fault with his appointment to the Episcopate [487] , taking every means of shewing their enmity and hatred towards him, and spreading false reports for the sole purpose of thereby vilifying his character.

However, the very misrepresentations which they now are making do but convict their former statements of being falsehoods, and a mere conspiracy against him. For they say, that after the death of Bishop Alexander, a certain few having mentioned the name of Athanasius, six or seven Bishops elected him clandestinely in a secret place:' and this is what they wrote to the Emperors, having no scruple about asserting the greatest falsehoods. Now that the whole multitude and all the people of the

Catholic Church assembled together as with one mind and body, and cried, shouted, that Athanasius should be Bishop of their Church, made this the subject of their public prayers to Christ, and conjured us to grant it for many days and nights, neither departing themselves from the Church, nor suffering us to do so; of all this we are witnesses, and so is the whole city, and the province too. Not a word did they speak against him, as these persons represented, but gave him the most excellent titles they could devise, calling him good, pious, Christian, an ascetic [488] , a genuine Bishop. And that he was elected by a majority of our body in the sight and with the acclamations of all the people, we who elected him also testify, who are surely more credible witnesses than those who were not present, and now spread these false accounts.

But yet Eusebius finds fault with the appointment of Athanasius,--he who perhaps never received any appointment to his office at all; or if he did, has himself rendered it invalid [489] . For he had first the See of Berytus, but leaving that he came to Nicomedia. He left the one contrary to the law, and contrary to the law invaded the other; having deserted his own without affection, and holding possession of another's without reason; he lost his love for the first in his lust for another, without even keeping to that which he obtained at the prompting of his lust. For, behold, withdrawing himself from the second, again he takes possession of another's [490] , casting an evil eye all around him upon the cities of other men, and thinking that godliness [491] consists in wealth and in the greatness of cities, and making light of the heritage of God to which he had been appointed; not knowing that where' even two or three are gathered in the name of the' Lord, there' is the Lord in the midst of them;' not considering the words of the Apostle, I will not boast in another man's labours;' not perceiving the charge which he has given, Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed.' For if this expression applies to a wife, how much more does it apply to a Church, and to the same Episcopate; to which whosoever is bound ought not to seek another, lest he prove an adulterer according to holy Scripture.

7. But though conscious of these his own misdoings, he has boldly undertaken to arraign the appointment of Athanasius, to which honourable testimony has been borne by all, and he ventures to reproach him with his deposition, though he has been deposed himself, and has a standing proof of his deposition in the appointment of another in his room. How could either he or Theognius [492] depose another, after they had been deposed themselves, which is sufficiently proved by the appointment of others in their room? For you know very well that there were appointed instead of them Amphion to Nicomedia and Chrestus to Nicaea, in consequence of their own impiety and connection with the Arian madmen, who were rejected by the Ecumenic Council. But while they desire to set aside that true Council, they endeavour to give that name to their own unlawful combination [493] ; while they are unwilling that the decrees of the Council should be enforced, they desire to enforce their own decisions; and they use the name of a Council, while they refuse to submit themselves to one so great as this. Thus they care not for Councils, but only pretend to do so in order that

they may root out the orthodox, and annul the decrees of the true and great Council against the Arians, in support of whom, both now and heretofore, they have ventured to assert these falsehoods against the Bishop Athanasius. For their former statements resembled those they now falsely make, viz., that disorderly meetings were held at his entrance [494] , with lamentation and mourning, the people indignantly refusing to receive him. Now such was not the case, but, quite the contrary, joy and cheerfulness prevailed, and the people ran together, hastening to obtain the desired sight of him. The churches were full of rejoicings, and thanksgivings were offered up to the Lord everywhere; and all the Ministers and Clergy beheld him with such feelings, that their souls were possessed with delight, and they esteemed that the happiest day of their lives. Why need we mention the inexpressible joy that prevailed among us Bishops, for we have already said that we counted ourselves to have been partakers in his sufferings?

8. Now this being confessedly the truth of the matter, although it is very differently represented by them, what weight can be attached to that Council or trial of which they make their boast? Since they presume thus to interfere in a case which they did not witness, which they have not examined, and for which they did not meet, and to write as though they were assured of the truth of their statements, how can they claim credit respecting these matters for the consideration of which they say that they did meet together? Will it not rather be believed that they have acted both in the one case and in the other out of enmity to us? For what kind of a Council of Bishops was then held? Was it an assembly which aimed at the truth? Was not almost every one among them our enemy [495] ? Did not the attack of Eusebius and his fellows upon us proceed from their zeal for the Arian madness? Did they not urge on the others of their party? Have we not always written against them as professing the doctrines of Arius? Was not Eusebius of Caesarea in Palestine accused by our confessors of sacrificing to idols [496] ? Was not George proved to have been deposed by the blessed Alexander [497] ? Were not they charged with various offences, some with this, some with that?

How then could such men entertain the purpose of holding a meeting against us? How can they have the boldness to call that a Council, at which a Count presided, which an executioner attended, and where an usher [498] instead of the Deacons of the Church introduced us into Court; and where the Count only spoke, and all present held their peace, or rather obeyed his directions [499] ? The removal of those Bishops who seemed to deserve it was prevented at his desire; and when he gave the order we were dragged about by soldiers;--or rather Eusebius and his fellows gave the order, and he was subservient to their will. In short, dearly beloved, what kind of Council was that, the object of which was banishment and murder at the pleasure of the Emperor? And of what nature were their charges?--for here is matter of still greater astonishment. There was one Arsenius whom they declared to have been murdered; and they also complained that a chalice belonging to the sacred mysteries had been broken.

Now Arsenius is alive, and prays to be admitted to our communion. He waits for no other testimony to prove that he is still living, but himself confesses it, writing in his own person to our brother Athanasius, whom they positively asserted to be his murderer. The impious wretches were not ashamed to accuse him of having murdered a man who was at a great distance from him, being separated by so great a distance, whether by sea or land, and whose abode at that time no one knew. Nay, they even had the boldness to remove him out of sight, and place him in concealment, though he had suffered no injury; and, if it had been possible, they would have transported him to another world, nay, or have taken him from life in earnest, so that either by a true or false statement of his murder they might in good earnest destroy Athanasius. But thanks to divine Providence for this also which permitted them not to succeed in their injustice, but presented Arsenius [500] alive to the eyes of all men, who has clearly proved their conspiracy and calumnies. He does not withdraw from us as murderers, nor hate us as having injured him (for indeed he has suffered no evil at all); but he desires to hold communion with us; he wishes to be numbered among us, and has written to this effect.

9. Nevertheless they laid their plot against Athanasius, accusing him of having murdered a person who was still alive; and those same men are the authors of his banishment [501]. For it was not the father of the Emperors, but their calumnies, that sent him into exile. Consider whether this is not the truth. When nothing was discovered to the prejudice of our fellow-minister Athanasius, but still the Count threatened him with violence, and was very zealous against him, the Bishop [502] fled from this violence and went up [503] to the most religious Emperor, where he protested against the Count and their conspiracy against him, and requested either that a lawful Council of Bishops might be assembled, or that the Emperor would himself receive his defence concerning the charges they brought against him. Upon this the Emperor wrote in anger, summoning them before him, and declaring that he would hear the cause himself, and for that purpose he also ordered a Council to be held. Whereupon Eusebius and his fellows went up and falsely charged Athanasius, not with the same offences which they had published against him at Tyre, but with an intention of detaining the vessels laden with corn, as though Athanasius had been the man to pretend that he could stop the exports of corn from Alexandria to Constantinople [504].

Certain of our friends were present at the palace with Athanasius, and heard the threats of the Emperor upon receiving this report. And when Athanasius cried out upon the calumny, and positively declared that it was not true, (for how, he argued, should he a poor man, and in a private station, be able to do such a thing?) Eusebius did not hesitate publicly to repeat the charge, and swore that Athanasius was a rich man, and powerful, and able to do anything; in order that it might thence be supposed that he had used this language. Such was the accusation these venerable Bishops proffered against him. But the grace of God proved superior to their wickedness, for it moved the pious Emperor to mercy, who instead of death passed

upon him the sentence of banishment. Thus their calumnies, and nothing else, were the cause of this. For the Emperor, in the letter which he previously wrote, complained of their conspiracy, censured their machinations, and condemned the Meletians as unscrupulous and deserving of execration; in short, expressed himself in the severest terms concerning them. For he was greatly moved when he heard the story of the dead alive; he was moved at hearing of murder in the case of one alive, and not deprived of life. We have sent you the letter.

10. But these marvellous men, Eusebius and his fellows, to make a show of refuting the truth of the case, and the statements contained in this letter, put forward the name of a Council, and ground its proceedings upon the authority of the Emperor. Hence the attendance of a Count at their meeting, and the soldiers as guards of the Bishops, and royal letters compelling the attendance of any persons whom they required. But observe here the strange character of their machinations, and the inconsistency of their bold measures, so that by some means or other they may take Athanasius away from us. For if as Bishops they claimed for themselves alone the judgment of the case, what need was there for the attendance of a Count and soldiers? or how was it that they assembled under the sanction of royal letters? Or if they required the Emperor's countenance and wished to derive their authority from him, why were they then annulling his judgment? and when he declared in the letter which he wrote, that the Meletians were calumniators, unscrupulous, and that Athanasius was most innocent, and made much stir about the pretended murder of the living, how was it that they determined that the Meletians had spoken the truth, and that Athanasius was guilty of the offence; and were not ashamed to make the living dead, living both after the Emperor's judgment, and at the time when they met together, and who even until this day is amongst us? So much concerning the case of Arsenius.

11. And as for the cup belonging to the mysteries, what was it, or where was it broken by Macarius? for this is the report which they spread up and down. But as for Athanasius, even his accusers would not have ventured to blame him, had they not been suborned by them. However, they attribute the origin of the offence to him; although it ought not to be imputed even to Macarius who is clear of it. And they are not ashamed to parade the sacred mysteries before Catechumens, and worse than that, even before heathens [505] : whereas, they ought to attend to what is written, It is good to keep close the secret of a king [506] ;' and as the Lord has charged us, Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine [507] .' We ought not then to parade the holy mysteries before the uninitiated, lest the heathen in their ignorance deride them, and the Catechumens being over-curious be offended. However, what was the cup, and where and before whom was it broken? It is the Meletians who make the accusation, who are not worthy of the least credit, for they have been schismatics and enemies of the Church, not of a recent date, but from the times of the blessed Peter, Bishop and Martyr [508] . They formed a conspiracy against Peter himself; they calumniated his successor Achillas; they accused

Alexander even before the Emperor; and being thus well versed in these arts, they have now transferred their enmity to Athanasius, acting altogether in accordance with their former wickedness. For as they slandered those that have been before him, so now they have slandered him. But their calumnies and false accusations have never prevailed against him until now, that they have got Eusebius and his fellows for their assistants and patrons, on account of the impiety which these have adopted from the Arian madmen, which has led them to conspire against many Bishops, and among the rest Athanasius.

Now the place where they say the cup was broken, was not a Church; there was no Presbyter in occupation of the place; and the day on which they say that Macarius did the deed, was not the Lord's day. Since then there was no church there; since there was no one to perform the sacred office; and since the day did not require the use of it [509] ; what was this cup belonging to the mysteries, and when, or where was it broken? There are many cups, it is plain, both in private houses, and in the public market; and if a person breaks one of them, he is not guilty of impiety. But the cup which belongs to the mysteries, and which if it be broken intentionally, makes the perpetrator of the deed an impious person, is found only among those who lawfully preside. This is the only description that can be given of this kind of cup; there is none other; this you legally give to the people to drink; this you have received according to the canon of the Church [510] ; this belongs only to those who preside over the Catholic Church, for to you only it appertains to administer the Blood of Christ, and to none besides. But as he who breaks the cup belonging to the mysteries is an impious person, much more impious is he who treats the Blood of Christ with contumely: and he does so who does this [511] ' contrary to the rule of the Church. (We say this, not as if a cup even of the schismatics was broken by Macarius, for there was no cup there at all; how should there be? where there was neither Lord's house nor any the belonging to the Church, nay, it was not the time of the celebration of the mysteries). Now such a person is the notorious Ischyras, who was never appointed to his office by the Church, and when Alexander admitted the Presbyters that had been ordained by Meletius, he was not even numbered amongst them; and therefore did not receive ordination even from that quarter.

12. By what means then did Ischyras become a Presbyter? who was it that ordained him? was it Colluthus? for this is the only supposition that remains. But it is well known and no one has any doubt about the matter that Colluthus died a Presbyter, and that every ordination of his was invalid, and that all that were ordained by him during the schism were reduced to the condition of laymen, and in that rank appear in the congregation. How then can it be believed that a private person, occupying a private house had in his possession a sacred chalice? But the truth is, they gave the name of Presbyter at the time to a private person, and gratified him with this title to support him in his iniquitous conduct towards us; and now as the reward of his accusations they procure for him the erection of a Church [512] . So that this man had then no Church; but as the reward of his malice and subserviency to them in accusing

us, he receives now what he had not before; nay, perhaps they have even remunerated his services with the Episcopate, for so he goes about reporting, and accordingly behaves towards us with great insolence. Thus are such rewards as these now bestowed by Bishops upon accusers and calumniators though indeed it is reasonable, in the case of an accomplice, that as they have made him a partner in their proceedings, so they should also make him their associate in their own Episcopate. But this is not all; give ear yet further to their proceedings at that time.

13. Being unable to prevail against the truth, though they had thus set themselves in array against it, and Ischyras having proved nothing at Tyre, but being shewn to be a calumniator, and the calumny ruining their plot, they defer proceedings for fresh evidence, and profess that they are going to send to the Mareotis certain of their party to enquire diligently into the matter. Accordingly they dispatched secretly, with the assistance of the civil power, persons to whom we openly objected on many accounts, as being of the party of Arius, and therefore our enemies; namely, Diognius [513], Maris, Theodorus, Macedonius, and two others, young both in years and mind [514], Ursacius and Valens from Pannonia; who, after they had undertaken this long journey for the purpose of sitting in judgment upon their enemy, set out again from Tyre for Alexandria. They did not shrink from becoming witnesses themselves, although they were the judges, but openly adopted every means of furthering their design, and undertook any labour or journey whatsoever in order to bring to a successful issue the conspiracy which was in progress. They left the Bishop Athanasius detained in a foreign country while they themselves entered their enemy's city, as if to have their revel both against his Church and against his people. And what was more outrageous still, they took with them the accuser Ischyras, but would not permit Macarius, the accused person, to accompany them, but left him in custody at Tyre. For Macarius the Presbyter of Alexandria' was made answerable for the charge far and near.

14. They therefore entered Alexandria alone with the accuser, their partner in lodging, board, and cup; and taking with them Philagrius the Prefect of Egypt they proceeded to the Mareotis, and there carried on the so-called investigation by themselves, all their own way, with the forementioned person. Although the Presbyters frequently begged that they might be present, they would not permit them. The Presbyters both of the city and of the whole country desired to attend, that they might detect who and whence the persons were who were suborned by Ischyras. But they forbade the Ministers to be present, while they carried on the examination concerning church, cup, table, and the holy things, before the heathen; nay, worse than that, they summoned heathen witnesses during the enquiry concerning a cup belonging to the mysteries; and those persons who they affirmed were taken out of the way by Athanasius by summons of the Receiver-general, and they knew not where in the world they were, these same individuals they brought forward before themselves and the Prefect only, and avowedly used their testimony, whom they affirmed without shame to have been secreted by the Bishop Athanasius.

But here too their only object is to effect his death, and so they again pretend that persons are dead who are still alive, following the same method they adopted in the case of Arsenius. For the men are living, and are to be seen in their own country; but to you who are at a great distance from the spot they make a great stir about the matter as though they had disappeared, in order that, as the evidence is so far removed from you, they may falsely accuse our brother-minister, as though he used violence and the civil power; whereas they themselves have in all respects acted by means of that power and the countenance of others. For their proceedings in the Mareotis were parallel to those at Tyre; and as there a Count attended with military assistance, and would permit nothing either to be said or done contrary to their pleasure, so here also the Prefect of Egypt was present with a band of men, frightening all the members of the Church, and permitting no one to give true testimony. And what was the strangest thing of all, the persons who came, whether as judges or witnesses, or, what was more likely, in order to serve their own purposes and those of Eusebius, lived in the same place with the accuser, even in his house, and there seemed to carry on the investigation as they pleased.

15. We suppose you are not ignorant what outrages they committed at Alexandria; for they are reported everywhere. Naked swords [515] were at work against the holy virgins and brethren; scourges were at work against their persons, esteemed honourable in the sight of God, so that their feet were lamed by the stripes, whose souls are whole and sound in purity and all good works [516]. The trades were excited against them; and the heathen multitude was set to strip them naked, to beat them, wantonly to insult them, and to threaten them with their altars and sacrifices. And one coarse fellow, as though license had now been given them by the Prefect in order to gratify the Bishops, took hold of a virgin by the hand, and dragged her towards an altar that happened to be near, imitating the practice of compelling to offer sacrifice in time of persecution. When this was done, the virgins took to flight, and a shout of laughter was raised by the heathen against the Church; the Bishops being in the place, and occupying the very house where this was going on; and from which, in order to obtain favour with them, the virgins were assaulted with naked swords, and were exposed to all kinds of danger, and insult, and wanton violence. And this treatment they received on a fast-day [517], and at the hands of persons who themselves were feasting with the Bishops indoors.

16. Foreseeing these things, and reflecting that the entrance of enemies into a place is no ordinary calamity, we protested against this commission. And Alexander [518], Bishop of Thessalonica, considering the same, wrote to the people residing there, discovering the conspiracy, and testifying of the plot. They indeed reckon him to be one of themselves, and account him a partner in their designs; but they only prove thereby the violence they have exercised towards him. For even the profligate Ischyras himself was only induced by fear and violence to proceed in the matter, and was obliged by force to undertake the accusation. As a proof of this, he wrote himself to our brother Athanasius [519], confessing that nothing of the kind that was alleged

had taken place there, but that he was suborned to make a false statement. This declaration he made, though he was never admitted by Athanasius as a Presbyter, nor received such a title of grace from him, nor was entrusted by way of recompense with the erection of a Church, nor expected the bribe of a Bishopric; all of which he obtained from them in return for undertaking the accusation. Moreover, his whole family held communion with us [520] , which they would not have done had they been injured in the slightest degree.

17. Now to prove that these things are facts and not mere assertions, we have the testimony [521] of all the Presbyters of the Mareotis [522] , who always accompany the Bishop in his visitations, and who also wrote at the time against Ischyras. But neither those of them who came to Tyre were allowed to declare the truth [523] , nor could those who remained in the Mareotis obtain permission to refute the calumnies of Ischyras [524] . The copies also of the letters of Alexander, and of the Presbyters, and of Ischyras will prove the same thing. We have sent also the letter of the father of the Emperors, in which he expresses his indignation that the murder of Arsenius was charged upon any one while the man was still alive; as also his astonishment at the variable and inconsistent character of their accusations with respect to the cup; since at one time they accused the Presbyter Macarius, at another the Bishop Athanasius, of having broken it with his hands. He declares also on the one hand that the Meletians are calumniators, and on the other that Athanasius is perfectly innocent.

And are not the Meletians calumniators, and above all John [525] , who after coming into the Church, and communicating with us, after condemning himself, and no longer taking any part in the proceedings respecting the cup, when he saw Eusebius and his fellows zealously supporting the Arian madmen, though they had not the daring to co-operate with them openly, but were attempting to employ others as their masks, undertook a character, as an actor in the heathen theatres [526] ? The subject of the drama was a contest of Arians; the real design of the piece being their success, but John and his partizans being put on the stage and playing the parts, in order that under colour of these, the supporters of the Arians in the garb of judges might drive away the enemies of their impiety, firmly establish their impious doctrines, and bring the Arians into the Church. And those who wish to drive out true religion strive all they can to prevail by irreligion; they who have chosen the part of that impiety which wars against Christ, endeavour to destroy the enemies thereof, as though they were impious persons; and they impute to us the breaking of the cup, for the purpose of making it appear that Athanasius, equally with themselves, is guilty of impiety towards Christ.

For what means this mention of a cup belonging to the mysteries by them? Whence comes this religious regard for the cup among those who support impiety towards Christ? Whence comes it that Christ's cup is known to them who know not Christ? How can they who profess to honour that cup, dishonour the God of the cup? or how can they who lament over the cup, seek to murder the Bishop who celebrates the

mysteries therewith? for they would have murdered him, had it been in their power. And how can they who lament the loss of the throne that was Episcopally covered [527], seek to destroy the Bishop that sat upon it, to the end that both the throne may be without its Bishop, and that the people may be deprived of godly doctrine? It was not then the cup, nor the murder, nor any of those portentous deeds they talk about, that induced them to act thus; but the forementioned heresy of the Arians, for the sake of which they conspired against Athanasius and other Bishops, and still continue to wage war against the Church. Who are they that have really been the cause of murders and banishments? Is it not these?

Who are they that, availing themselves of external support, conspire against the Bishops? Are not Eusebius and his fellows the men, and not Athanasius, as they say in their letters? Both he and others have suffered at their hands. Even at the time of which we speak, four Presbyters [528] of Alexandria, though they had not even proceeded to Tyre, were banished by their means. Who then are they whose conduct calls for tears and lamentations? Is it not they, who after they have been guilty of one course of persecution, do not scruple to add to it a second, but have recourse to all manner of falsehood, in order that they may destroy a Bishop who will not give way to their impious heresy? Hence arises the enmity of Eusebius and his fellows; hence their proceedings at Tyre; hence their pretended trials; hence also now the letters which they have written even without any trial, expressing the utmost confidence in their statements; hence their calumnies before the father of the Emperors, and before the most religious Emperors themselves.

18. For it is necessary that you should know what is now reported to the prejudice of our fellow-minister Athanasius, in order that you may thereby be led to condemn their wickedness, and may perceive that they desire nothing else but to murder him. A quantity of corn was given by the father of the Emperors for the support of certain widows, partly of Libya, and partly certain out of Egypt. They have all received it up to this time, Athanasius getting nothing therefrom, but the trouble of assisting them. But now, although the recipients themselves make no complaint, but acknowledge that they have received it, Athanasius has been accused of selling all the corn, and appropriating the profits to his own use: and the Emperor wrote to this effect about it, charging him with the offence in consequence of the calumnies which had been raised against him. Now who are they which have raised these calumnies? Is it not those who after they have been guilty of one course of persecution, scruple not to set on foot another? Who are the authors of those letters which are said to have come from the Emperor? Are not the Arians, who are so zealous against Athanasius, and scruple not to speak and write anything against him? No one would pass over persons who have acted as they have done, in order to entertain suspicion of others. Nay, the proof of their calumny appears to be most evident for they are anxious under cover of it, to take away the corn from the Church, and to give it to the Arians. And this circumstance more than any other, brings the matter home to the authors of this design and their principals, who scrupled neither to set on foot a charge of murder

against Athanasius, as a base means of prejudicing the Emperor against him, nor yet to take away from the Clergy of the Church the subsistence of the poor, in order that in fact they might make gain for the heretics.

19. We have sent also the testimony of our fellow-ministers in Libya, Pentapolis, and Egypt, from which likewise you may learn the false accusations which have been brought against Athanasius. And these things they do, in order that, the professors of true godliness being henceforth induced by fear to remain quiet, the heresy of the impious Arians may be brought in in its stead. But thanks be to your piety, dearly beloved, that you have frequently anathematized the Arians in your letters, and have never given them admittance into the Church. The exposure of Eusebius and his fellows is also easy and ready at hand. For behold, after their former letters concerning the Arians, of which also we have sent you copies, they now openly stir up the Arian madmen against the Church, though the whole Catholic Church has anathematized them; they have appointed a Bishop [529] over them; they distract the Churches with threats and alarms, that they may gain assistants in their impiety in every part. Moreover, they send Deacons to the Arian madmen, who openly join their assemblies; they write letters to them, and receive answers from them, thus making schisms in the Church, and holding communion with them; and they send to every part, commending their heresy, and repudiating the Church, as you will perceive from the letters they have addressed to the Bishop of Rome [530] and perhaps to yourselves also. You perceive therefore, dearly beloved, that these things are not undeserving of vengeance: they are indeed dreadful and alien from the doctrine of Christ.

Wherefore we have assembled together, and have written to you, to request of your Christian wisdom to receive this our declaration and sympathize with our brother Athanasius, and to shew your indignation against Eusebius and his fellows who have essayed such things, in order that such malice and wickedness may no longer prevail against the Church. We call upon you to be the avengers of such injustice, reminding you of the injunction of the Apostle, Put away from among yourselves that wicked person [531]. ' Wicked indeed is their conduct, and unworthy of your communion. Wherefore give no further heed to them, though they should again write to you against the Bishop Athanasius (for all that proceeds from them is false); not even though they subscribe their letter with names [532] of Egyptian Bishops. For it is evident that it will not be we who write, but the Meletians [533], who have ever been schismatics, and who even unto this day make disturbances and raise factions in the Churches. For they ordain improper persons, and all but heathens; and they are guilty of such actions as we are ashamed to set down in writing, but which you may learn from those whom we have sent unto you, who will also deliver to you our letter.

20. Thus wrote the Bishops of Egypt to all Bishops, and to Julius, Bishop of Rome.

[472] The Council of Sardica says eighty; which is a usual number in Egyptian Councils. (vid. Tillemont, vol. 8. p. 74.) There were about ninety Bishops in Egypt, the Thebais, and Libya. The present Council was held [at the end of 338 or possibly at the beginning of 339]. Its synodal Epistle is contained below, S:3, and is particularly addressed to Pope Julius, S:20.

[473] This was held in 340. Julius's Letter is found below, S:21.

[474] Vid. infr. S:58. This was a.d. 347.

[475] Deut. xvii. 6.

[476] hos ethelesan. vid. infr. S:14. de Decr. S:3. de Syn. S:13. Ep. AEG. S:5.

[477] This implies that Valens and Ursacius were subjected to some kind of persecution, which is natural [most improbable]. They relapsed in 351, when Constantius on the death of Constans came into possession of his brother's dominions; and professed to have been forced to their former recantation by the latter Emperor.

[478] Acts xxiii. 9.

[479] 1 Sam. xxvi. 21.

[480] Prov. xix. 5; Wisd. i. 11.

[481] Jer. xxii. 10.

[482] Hist. Ar. 50.

[483] Of Tyre. See below, S:71.

[484] Cf. de Syn. 17.

[485] Cf. Socr. i. 8.

[486] Cf. Nicomedia.

[487] The Eusebians alleged that, fifty-four Bishops of the two parties of S. Alexander and Meletius being assembled for the election, and having sworn to elect by the common voice, six or seven of these broke their oaths in favour of S. Athanasius,

whom no one had thought of, and consecrated him in secret to the great surprise and scandal of both ecclesiastical and lay persons. vid. Socr. ii. 17. Philostorgius (a.d. 425) adds particulars, explanatory or corrective of this statement, of which the Bishops in the text do not seem to have heard; viz., that Athanasius with his party one night seized on the Church of St. Dionysius, and compelled two Bishops whom he found there to consecrate him against their will; that he was in consequence anathematized by all the other Bishops, but that, fortifying himself in his position, he sent in his election to the Emperor, and by this means obtained its confirmation. H. E. ii. 16. It appears, in matter of fact, that S. Athan. was absent at time of his election; as Socrates says, in order to avoid it, or as Epiphanius, on business at the Court; these reasons are compatible. [Cf. Prolegg. ch. ii. S:4, and Gwatkin's note, quoted there.]

[488] It is contested whether S. Athan. was ever one of S. Antony's monks, the reading of a passage in the commencement of his Vit. Ant., which would decide the question, varying in different mss. The word "ascetic" is used of those who lived a life, as afterwards followed in Monasteries, in the Ante-Nicene times. [See D.C.B. 1. 181^a, and Prolegg. ch. ii. S:1 ad fin, and Introd. to Vit. Ant.]

[489] The Canons of Nicaea and Sardica were absolute against translation, but, as Bingham observes, Antiqu. vi. 4. S:6, only as a general rule. The so-called Apostolical Canons except "a reasonable cause" and the sanction of a Council; one of the Councils of Carthage prohibits them when subserving ambitious views, and except for the advantage of the Church. Vid. list of translations in Socr. Hist. vii. 36. Cassiodor. Hist. xii. 8. Niceph. Hist. xiv. 39. Coteler. adds others ad Can. Apost. 14. [cf. Hist Ari. 7.]

[490] i.e. Constantinople on the expulsion of Paul.

[491] 1 Tim. vi. 5; Matt. xviii. 20; 2 Cor. x. 15; 1 Cor. vii. 27.

[492] Or Theognis; he was, as well as Eusebius, a pupil of Lucian's, and was deposed together with him after the Nicene Council for communicating with Arians. [They were not ecclesiastically deposed, but exiled by the Emperor, see Prolegg. ch. ii. S:S:3 (1) and (2) c, 6 (1).] Constantine banished them to Gaul; they were recalled in the course of two or three years. He was dead by the date of the Council of Sardica.

[493] Eusebian Council of Tyre, a.d. 335.

[494] On his return from Gaul, Nov. 23, a.d. 337. [Prolegg. ch. ii. S:6 (1).]

[495] Cf. S:77.

[496] At the Council of Tyre, Potamo, an Egyptian Bishop and Confessor asked Eusebius what had happened to him in prison during the persecution, Epiph. Haer.

68, 7, as if hinting at his cowardice. It appears that Eusebius was prisoner at Caesarea with S. Pamphilus; yet he never mentions the fact himself, which is unlike him, if it was producible. [The insinuation of Potammon was groundless: see Dic. C. Biog. ii. 311.]

[497] George, Bishop of Laodicea, had been degraded when a priest by S. Alexander, for his profligate habits as well as his Arianism. Athan. speaks of him elsewhere as reprobated even by his party. de Fug. 26. [Cf. S:49, de Syn. 17. Prolegg. ch. ii. S:3 (2) c, 2.]

[498] Conventarius.

[499] Hist. Ari. 11, and below S:S:36, 71.

[500] S:65.

[501] By Constantine into Gaul, a.d. 336.

[502] The circumstances of this appeal, which are related by Athan. below, S:86, are thus summed up by Gibbon; "Before the final sentence could be pronounced at Tyre, the intrepid primate threw himself into a bark which was ready to hoist sail for the imperial city. The request of a formal audience might have been opposed or eluded; but Athanasius concealed his arrival, watched the moment of Constantine's return from an adjacent villa, and boldly encountered his angry sovereign as he passed on horseback through the principal street of Constantinople. So strange an apparition excited his surprise and indignation; and the guards were ordered to remove the importunate suitor; but his resentment was subdued by involuntary respect; and the haughty spirit of the Emperor was awed by the courage and eloquence of a Bishop, who implored his justice and awakened his conscience." Decl. and Fall, xxi. Athan. was a small man in person.

[503] i.e. to Constantinople.

[504] S:87.

[505] This period, when Christianity was acknowledged by the state but not embraced by the population, is just the time when we hear most of this Reserve as a principle. While Christians were but a sect, persecution enforced a discipline, and when they were commensurate with the nation, faith made it unnecessary. We are now returned to the state of the fourth century.

[506] Tob. xii. 7.

[507] Matt. vii. 6.

[508] [Cf. S:59, and Ep. AEg. 22, Prolegg. ch. ii. S:2 init.]

[509] This seems to imply that the Holy Communion was only celebrated on Sundays in the Egyptian Churches. [Cf. S:S:63, 74, 76.]

[510] Vid. Can. Ap. 65.

[511] 1 Cor. xi. 25.

[512] Cf. S:85.

[513] Vid. also Ep. AEg. 7. Euseb. Vit. C. iv. 43. Hilar. ad Const. i. 5. Fragm. ii. 12. [Diognius' is another form of Theognius' or Theognis. See Prolegg. ch. ii. S:5.]

[514] Vid. also Ep. AEg. 7. Euseb. Vit. C. iv. 43. Hilar. ad Const. i. 5. Fragm. ii. 12. [Diognius' is another form of Theognius' or Theognis. See Prolegg. ch. ii. S:5.]

[515] Cf. Encycl. 3, Apol. Const. 33.

[516] Hist. Arian. 12.

[517] [Not in Lent, for the commission were at Alexandria in September, see the date of the protest, infra, S:76.]

[518] This Alexander had been one of the Nicene Fathers, in 325, and had the office of publishing their decrees in Macedonia, Greece, &c. He was at the Council of Jerusalem ten years after, at which the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was consecrated, and afterwards Arius admitted to communion. His influence with the Court party seems to have been great, judging from Count Dionysius's tone in speaking of him. Infr. S:S:66, 80, 81.

[519] Infr. S:64.

[520] Vid infr. S:63 fin. S:85 fin.

[521] Infr. S:74.

[522] The district, called Mareotis from a neighbouring lake, lay in the territory and diocese of Alexandria, to the south-west. It consisted of various large villages, with handsome Churches, and resident Priests, and of hamlets which had none; of the latter was "Irene of Secontarurus" (infr. S:85.) where Ischyra lived.

[523] Infr. S:79.

[524] S:72 fin.

[525] Arcaph. infr. 65 fin., head of the Meletians.

[526] Vid. infr. S:37, 46. and de Syn. 32, note.

[527] Cathedrae velatae, see Bingh. viii. 6. S:10.

[528] Vid. their names infr. S:40.

[529] Pistus.

[530] Vid. infr. S:21.

[531] 1 Cor. v. 13.

[532] The Eusebians availed themselves of the subscriptions of the Meletians, as at Philippopolis, Hilar. Fragm. 3.

[533] Infr. S:73.