

**SELECT TREATISES OF S.
ATHANASIUS, ARCHBISHOP OF
ALEXANDRIA; IN CONTROVERSY
WITH THE ARIANS: TRANSLATED
WITH NOTES AND INDICES**

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Select Treatises of S. Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria; In Controversy with the Arians:
Translated with Notes and Indices by S. Athanasius

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S. ATHANASIUS

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SELECT TREATISES

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OF

S. ATHANASIUS,

ARCHBISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA,

IN CONTROVERSY WITH THE ARIANS, 2 VOLS.

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TRANSLATED,

WITH NOTES AND INDICES. IN VOL. 2.

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EPISTLE
OF
S. ATHANASIUS,
ARCHBISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA,
IN DEFENCE OF THE NICENE DEFINITION.

CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTION.

The complaint of the Arians against the Nicene Council; their fickleness; they are like Jews; their employment of force instead of reason.

I. THOU hast done well, in signifying to me the discussion CHAP. I.
thou hast had with the advocates of Arianism, among whom I.
were certain of the friends of Eusebius, as well as very many §. 1.
of the brethren who hold the doctrine of the Church. I hailed thy vigilance for the love of Christ, which excellently exposed the irreligion^a of their heresy; while I marvelled at the effrontery which led the Arians, after all the past detection of unsoundness and futility in their arguments, nay, after the general conviction of their extreme perverseness, still to complain like the Jews, "Why did the Fathers at Nicæa use terms not in Scripture^b, 'Of the substance' and

^a εὐσεβεία, ἀσεβεία, &c. here translated "religion, irreligion, religious, &c. &c." are technical words throughout, being taken from St. Paul's text, "Great is the mystery of godliness," εὐσεβείας, i. e. orthodoxy. Such too seems to be the meaning of "godly admonitions," and "godly judgments," and "this godly and well-learned man," in our Ordination Services. The Latin translation is "pious," "pietas." It might be in some respects suitably rendered by "devout" and its derivatives. On its familiar use in the controversy depends the blasphemous jest of Eudoxius, Arian Bishop of Constantinople, which was received with loud laughter in the Cathedral, and remained in esteem down to Socrates's day, "The Father is

ἀσεβής, as being without devotion, the Son εὐσεβής devout, as paying devotion to the Father." Soer. Hist. ii. 43. Hence Arius ends his Letter to Eusebius with ἀληθῶς εὐσεβέε. Theod. Hist. i. 4.

^b It appears that the Arians did not venture to speak disrespectfully of the definition of the Council till the date (A.D. 350.) of this work; when Acacius healed them. Yet the plea here used, the unscriptural character of its symbol, had been suggested to Constantius on his accession, A.D. 337, by the Arian priest, the favourite of Constantia, to whom Constantine had entrusted his will, Theod. Hist. ii. 3; and Eusebius of Cæsarea glances at it, at the time of the Council, in the letter to his Church, which is subjoined to this Treatise.

NICEN. 'One in substance?' Thou then, as a man of learning, ^{DEF.} in spite of their subterfuges, didst convict them of talking ^{ὁμοούσιον} to no purpose; and they in devising them were but acting suitably to their own evil disposition. For they are as variable and fickle in their sentiments, as chameleons in their colours^c; and when exposed they look confused; and when questioned they hesitate, and then they lose shame, and betake themselves to evasions. And then, when detected in these, they do not rest till they invent fresh matters which Ps. 2, 1. are not, and, according to the Scripture, *imagine a vain thing*; and that they may be constant to their irreligion.

2. Now such endeavours^d are nothing else than an obvious token of their defect of reason^e, and a copying, as I have said, of Jewish malignity. For the Jews too, when convicted by the John 6, Truth, and unable to confront it, used evasions, such as *What 30. sign doest Thou, that we may see and believe Thee? What doest Thou work?* though so many signs were given, that they said John 11, themselves, *What do we? for this man doeth many miracles?* 17. In truth, dead men were raised, lame walked, blind saw afresh, lepers were cleansed, and the water became wine, and five loaves satisfied five thousand, and all wondered and worshipped the Lord, confessing that in Him were fulfilled the prophecies, and that He was God the Son of God; all but the Pharisees, who, though the signs shone brighter than the John 10, sun, yet complained still, as ignorant men, *Why dost Thou, 33. being a man, make Thyself God?* Inscensate, and verily blind in understanding! they ought contrariwise to have said, "Why hast Thou, being God, become man?" for His works proved Him God, that they might both worship the

^c Alexander also calls them chameleons, Socr. i. 6. p. 12. Athanasius so calls the Meletians, Hist. Arian. §. 79. Cyril compares them to "the leopard which cannot change his spots." Dial. ii. init. Naz. Or. 28. 2. On the fickleness of the Arians, vid. infra, §. 4. &c. Orat. ii. 40. He says, ad Ep. Aeg. 6. that they considered Creeds as yearly covenants; and de Synod. §. 3. 4. as State Edicts. vid. also §. 14. and *passim*.
^d What wonder that they fight against their fathers, when they fight against themselves? §. 37.

^e ἐπιχειρήματα. and so Orat. i. §. 44. init.

but infra, §. 25. ἐπιχειρήματα means more definitely reasonings or argumentations.

^e ἀλογίας; an allusion, frequent in Athanasius, to the judicial consequence of their denying the Word of God. Thus, just below, n. 3. "Denying the Word^f or Reason^g of God, reason have they none." Also Orat. i. §. 35. fin. §. 40. init. §. 62. Orat. ii. §. 7. init. Hence he so often calls the Arians 'mad' and 'deranged'; e. g. "not aware how mad their reason is." Orat. i. §. 37.

goodness of the Father, and admire the Son's economy for our sakes. However, this they did not say; no, nor liked to witness what He was doing; or they witnessed indeed, for this they could not help, but they changed their ground of complaint again, "Why healest Thou the paralytic, why makest Thou the born-blind to see, on the sabbath day?" But this too was an excuse, and mere murmuring; for on other days as well did the Lord heal *all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease*, but they complained still according to their wont, and by calling Him Beelzebub, preferred the suspicion of Atheism^f, to a recantation of their own wickedness. And though in such sundry times and diverse manners the Saviour shewed His Godhead and preached the Father to all men, nevertheless, as kicking against the pricks, they contradicted in the language of folly, and this they did,

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1.

Mat. 4,
23.

^f or ungodliness, ἀθεότητος. Thus Aetius was called ὁ ἄθεος, the ungodly. de Synod. §. 6; and Arius complains that Alexander had expelled him and his from Alexandria, ὡς ἀθεοτάτους ἄθεους. Theodor. Hist. i. 4. "Atheism" and "Atheist" imply intention, system, and profession, and are so far too strong a rendering of the Greek. Since Christ was God, to deny Him was to deny God. The force of the term, however, seems to be, that, whereas the Son had revealed the "unknown God," and destroyed the reign of idols, the denial of the Son was bringing back idolatry and its attendant spiritual ignorance. Thus in the Orat. contr. Gent. §. 29. fin. written before the Arian controversy, he speaks of "the Greek idolatry as full of all Atheism" or ungodliness, and contrasts with it the knowledge of "the Guide and Framers of the Universe, the Father's Word," "that through Him we may discern His Father, and the Greeks may know how far they have separated themselves from the truth." And Orat. ii. 43. he classes Arians with the Greeks, who "though they have the name of God in their mouths, incur the charge of Atheism, because they know not the real and true God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (vid. also Basil in Eunom. ii. 22.) Shortly afterwards he gives a further reason for the title, observing that Arianism was worse than previous heresies, such as Manicheism, inasmuch as the latter denied the Incarnation, but it tore from God's substance

His connatural Word, and, as far as its words went, infringed upon the perfections and being of the First Cause. And so ad Ep. Æg. §. 17. fin. he says, that it alone, beyond other heresies, "has been bold against the Godhead itself in a mad way, (μανικώτερον, vid. foregoing note,) denying that there is a Word, and that the Father was always Father." Elsewhere, he speaks more generally, as if Arianism introduced "an Atheism or rather Judaism against the Scriptures, being next door to Heathenism, so that its disciple cannot be even named Christian; for all such tenets are contrary to the Scriptures;" and he makes this the reason why the Nicene Fathers stopped their ears and condemned it. ad Ep. Æg. §. 13. For the same reason he calls the heathen ἄθεοι, atheistical or ungodly, "who are arraigned of irreligion by Divine Scripture." Orat. contr. Gent. §. 14. vid. εἰδῶσαν ἀθεότητα. §. 46. init. Moreover, he calls the Arian persecution worse than the pagan cruelties, and therefore "a Babylonian Atheism," Ep. Encycl. §. 5. as not allowing the Catholics the use of prayer and baptism, with a reference to Dan. vi. 11, &c. Thus too he calls Constantius atheist, for his treatment of Hosius; οὐτε τὸν θεὸν φοβηθεὶς ὁ ἄθεος. Hist. Arian. 45. Another reason for the title seems to have lain in the idolatrous character of Arian worship on its own shewing, viz. as worshipping One whom they yet maintained to be a creature.