

Letters

By Saint Athanasius (296 – 373)

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Letter 1

For 329. Easter-day xi Pharmuthi; viii Id. April; Ær. Dioclet. 45; Coss. Constantinus Aug. VIII. Constantinus Cæs. IV; Præfect. Septimius Zenius; Indict. II.

Of Fasting, and Trumpets, and Feasts.

Come, my beloved, the season calls us to keep the feast. Again, 'the Sun of Righteousness [Malachi 4:2](#), causing His divine beams to rise upon us, proclaims beforehand the time of the feast, in which, [obeying](#) Him, we ought to celebrate it, lest when the time has passed by, [gladness](#) likewise may pass us by. For discerning the time is one of the duties most urgent on us, for the practice of [virtue](#); so that the [blessed Paul](#), when instructing his [disciple](#), teaches him to observe the time, saying, 'Stand (ready) in season, and out of season'—that [knowing](#) both the one and the other, he might do things befitting the season, and avoid the blame of unseasonableness. For thus the [God](#) of all, after the manner of wise Solomon, distributes everything in time and season, to the end that, in due time, the [salvation](#) of men should be everywhere spread abroad. Thus the 'Wisdom of God [1 Corinthians 1:24](#),' [our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ](#), not out of season, but in season, 'passed upon [holy souls](#), fashioning the friends of [God](#) and the [prophets](#) [Wisdom 7:27](#);' so that although very many were [praying](#) for Him, and saying, 'O that the [salvation](#) of God were come out of Sion!'—the Spouse also, as it is written in the Song of Songs, was [praying](#) and saying, 'O that You were my sister's son, that sucked the breasts of my mother [Song of Songs 8:1](#) !' that You were like the children of [men](#), and wouldest take upon You human [passions](#) for our sake!—nevertheless, the [God](#) of all, the Maker of times and seasons, Who [knows](#) our affairs better than we do, while, as a good physician, He exhorts to [obedience](#) in season—the only one in which we may be healed—so also does He send Him not unseasonably, but seasonably, saying, 'In an acceptable time have I heard You, and in the day of [salvation](#) I have helped You [Isaiah 49:8](#).'

2. And, on this account, the [blessed Paul](#), urging us to note this season, wrote, saying, 'Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of [salvation](#) [2 Corinthians 6:2](#).' At set seasons also He called the children of [Israel](#) to the Levitical feasts by [Moses](#), saying, 'Three times in a year you shall keep a feast to Me [Exodus 23:14](#) ' (one of which, my beloved, is that now at hand), the trumpets of the [priests](#) sounding and urging its observance; as the [holy](#) Psalmist commanded, saying, 'Blow with the trumpet in the new moon, on the [solemn] day of your feast.' Since this sentence enjoins upon us to blow both on the new moons, and on the solemn days, He has made a solemn day of that in

which the light of the moon is perfected in the full; which was then a type, as is this of the trumpets. At one time, as has been said, they called to the feasts; at another time to [fasting](#) and to [war](#). And this was not done without [solemnity](#), nor by chance, but this sound of the trumpets was appointed, so that every man should come to that which was proclaimed. And this ought to be learned not merely from me, but from the [divine Scriptures](#), when God was revealed to [Moses](#), and said, as it is written in the book of Numbers; 'And the Lord spoke unto [Moses](#), saying, Make to you two trumpets; of silver shall you make them, and they shall be for you to call the congregation [Numbers 10:1-2](#);'—very properly for those who here [love](#) Him. So that we may [know](#) that these things had reference to the time of [Moses](#)—yea, were to be observed so long as the shadow lasted, the whole being appointed for use, 'till the time of reformation [Hebrews 9:10](#).' 'For' (said He) 'if you shall go out to battle in your land against your enemies that rise up against you [Numbers 10:9](#)' (for such things as these refer to the land, and no further), 'then you shall proclaim with the trumpets, and shall be remembered before the Lord, and be delivered from your enemies.' Not only in [wars](#) did they blow the trumpet, but under the law, there was a festal trumpet also. Hear him again, going on to say, 'And in the day of your [gladness](#), and in your feasts, and your new moons, you shall blow with the trumpets.' And let no man think it a light and contemptible matter, if he hear the law command respecting trumpets; it is a wonderful and fearful thing. For beyond any other voice or instrument, the trumpet is awakening and terrible; so [Israel](#) received instruction by these means, because he was then but a child. But in order that the proclamation should not be thought merely human, being superhuman, its sounds resembled those which were uttered when they trembled before the mount [Exodus 19:16](#); and they were reminded of the law that was then given them, and kept it.

3. For the law was admirable, and the shadow was excellent, otherwise, it would not have wrought [fear](#), and induced reverence in those who heard; especially in those who at that time not only heard but saw these things. Now these things were typical, and done as in a shadow. But let us pass on to the meaning, and henceforth leaving the figure at a distance, come to the [truth](#), and look upon the [priestly](#) trumpets of [our Saviour](#), which cry out, and call us, at one time to [war](#), as the [blessed Paul](#) says; 'We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities, with powers, with the rulers of this dark world, with [wicked](#) spirits in heaven [Ephesians 6:12](#).' At another time the call is made to [virginity](#), and self-denial, and conjugal harmony, saying, To [virgins](#), the things of [virgins](#); and to those who [love](#) the way of abstinence, the things of abstinence; and to those who are married, the things of an [honourable](#) marriage; thus assigning to each its own [virtues](#) and an [honourable](#) recompense. Sometimes the call is made to [fasting](#), and sometimes to a feast. Hear again the same [Apostle] blowing the trumpet, and proclaiming, 'Christ our [Passover](#) is [sacrificed](#); therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of [malice](#) and [wickedness](#).' If you would listen to a trumpet much greater than all these, hear our Saviour saying; 'In that last and great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink [John 7:37](#).' For it became the Saviour not simply to call us to a feast, but to 'the great feast;' if only we will be prepared to hear, and to conform to the proclamation of every trumpet.

4. For since, as I before said, there are various proclamations, listen, as in a figure, to the [prophet](#) blowing the trumpet; and further, having turned to the [truth](#), be ready for the announcement of the trumpet, for he says, 'Blow the trumpet in Sion: sanctify a fast [Joel 2:15](#).' This is a warning trumpet, and commands with great earnestness, that when we fast, we should hallow the fast. For not all those who call upon [God](#), hallow [God](#), since there are some who defile Him; yet not Him—that is impossible—but their own mind concerning Him; for He is [holy](#), and has pleasure in the [saints](#). And therefore the [blessed Paul](#) accuses those who dishonour [God](#); 'Transgressors of the law dishonour God [Romans 2:23](#).' So then, to make a separation from those who pollute the fast, he says here, 'sanctify a fast.' For many, crowding to the fast, pollute themselves in the thoughts of their hearts, sometimes by doing [evil](#) against their brethren, sometimes by daring to defraud. And, to mention nothing else, there are many who exalt themselves above their neighbours, thereby causing great mischief. For the boast of [fasting](#) did no good to the [Pharisee](#), although he fasted twice in the week [Luke 18:12](#), only because he exalted himself against the [publican](#). In the same manner the Word blamed the children of [Israel](#) on account of such a fast as this, exhorting them by Isaiah the Prophet, and saying, 'This is not the fast and the day that I have chosen, that a man should [humble](#) his [soul](#); not even if you should bow down your neck like a hook, and should spread sackcloth and ashes under you; neither thus shall you call the fast acceptable [Isaiah 58:5](#).' That we may be able to show what kind of [persons](#) we should be when we fast, and of what character the fast should be, listen again to God commanding [Moses](#), and saying, as it is written in Leviticus, 'And the Lord spoke unto [Moses](#), saying, In the tenth day of this seventh month, there shall be a day of atonement; a convocation, and a [holy](#) day shall it be to you; and you shall [humble](#) your [souls](#), and offer whole burnt-offerings unto the Lord.' And afterwards, that the law might be defined on this point, He proceeds to say; 'Every [soul](#) that shall not [humble](#) itself, shall be cut off from the people.'

5. Behold, my brethren, how much a fast can do, and in what manner the law commands us to fast. It is required that not only with the body should we fast, but with the [soul](#). Now the [soul](#) is humbled when it does not follow [wicked](#) opinions, but feeds on becoming [virtues](#). For [virtues](#) and [vices](#) are the food of the [soul](#), and it can eat either of these two meats, and incline to either of the two, according to its own will. If it is bent toward [virtue](#), it will be nourished by [virtues](#), by righteousness, by [temperance](#), by meekness, by [fortitude](#), as [Paul](#) says; 'Being nourished by the word of [truth 1 Timothy 4:6](#).' Such was the case with our Lord, who said, 'My meat is to do the [will](#) of My Father which is in heaven [John 4:34](#).' But if it is not thus with the [soul](#), and it inclines downwards, it is then nourished by nothing but [sin](#). For thus the [Holy Ghost](#), describing sinners and their food, referred to the [devil](#) when He said, 'I have given him to be meat to the people of Æthiopia.' For this is the food of sinners. And as [our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ](#), being heavenly bread, is the food of the [saints](#), according to this; 'Unless you eat My flesh, and drink My blood [John 6:53](#);' so is the [devil](#) the food of the impure, and of those who do nothing which is of the light, but work the deeds of darkness. Therefore, in order to withdraw and turn them from [vices](#), He commands them to be nourished with the food of [virtue](#); namely, humbleness of [mind](#), lowliness to endure humiliations, the acknowledgment of [God](#). For not only does such a fast as this obtain pardon for [souls](#), but being kept [holy](#), it prepares the [saints](#), and raises them above the earth.

6. And indeed that which I am about to say is wonderful, yea it is of those things which are very miraculous; yet not far from the [truth](#), as you may be able to learn from the sacred writings. That great man [Moses](#), when [fasting](#), conversed with [God](#), and received the law. The great and [holy](#) Elijah, when [fasting](#), was thought worthy of [divine visions](#), and at last was taken up like Him who ascended into heaven. And Daniel, when [fasting](#), although a very young man, was entrusted with the [mystery](#), and he alone understood the secret things of the king, and was thought worthy of [divine visions](#). But because the length of the fast of these men was wonderful, and the days prolonged, let no man lightly fall into unbelief; but rather let him [believe](#) and [know](#), that the [contemplation](#) of [God](#), and the word which is from Him, suffice to nourish those who hear, and stand to them in place of all food. For the [angels](#) are no otherwise sustained than by [beholding at all times the face of the Father](#), and of the Saviour who is in heaven. And thus [Moses](#), as long as he talked with [God](#), fasted indeed bodily, but was nourished by divine words. When he descended among [men](#), and God was gone up from him, he suffered hunger like other men. For it is not said that he fasted longer than forty days—those in which he was conversing with [God](#). And, generally, each one of the [saints](#) has been thought worthy of similar transcendent nourishment.

7. Wherefore, my beloved, having our [souls](#) nourished with divine food, with the Word, and according to the [will](#) of [God](#), and [fasting](#) bodily in things external, let us keep this great and saving feast as becomes us. Even the [ignorant Jews](#) received this divine food, through the type, when they ate a lamb in the passover. But not understanding the type, even to this day they eat the lamb, erring in that they are without the city and the [truth](#). As long as Judæa and the city [existed](#), there were a type, and a lamb, and a shadow, since the law thus commanded: These things shall not be done in another city; but in the land of Judæa, and in no place without [the land of Judæa]. And besides this, the law commanded them to offer whole burnt-offerings and [sacrifices](#), there being no other altar than that in Jerusalem. For on this account, in that city alone was there an altar and temple built, and in no other city were they permitted to perform these [rites](#), so that when that city should come to an end, then those things that were figurative might also be done away.

8. Now observe; that city, since the coming of our Savior, has had an end, and all the land of the [Jews](#) has been laid waste; so that from the testimony of these things (and we need no further [proof](#), being assured by our own eyes of the fact) there must, of necessity, be an end of the shadow. And not from me should these things be learned, but the sacred voice of the [prophet](#) foretold, crying; 'Behold upon the mountains the feet of Him that brings good tidings, and publishes peace [Nahum 1:15](#);' and what is the message he published, but that which he goes on to say to them, 'Keep your feasts, O Judah; pay to the Lord your vows. For they shall no more go to that which is old; it is finished; it is taken away: He is gone up who breathed upon the face, and delivered you from affliction.' Now who is he that went up? a man may say to the [Jews](#), in order that even the boast of the shadow may be done away; neither is it an idle thing to listen to the expression, 'It is finished; he is gone up who breathed.' For nothing was finished before he went up who breathed. But as soon as he went up, it was finished. Who was he then, O [Jews](#), as I said before? If [Moses](#), the assertion would be false; for the people were not yet come to the land in which alone they were commanded to perform these [rites](#). But if

Samuel, or any other of the [prophets](#), even in that case there would be a perversion of the [truth](#); for hitherto these things were done in Judæa, and the city was standing. For it was necessary that while that stood, these things should be performed. So that it was none of these, my beloved, who went up. But if you would hear the [true](#) matter, and be kept from Jewish fables, behold our Saviour who went up, and 'breathed upon the face, and said to His [disciples](#), Receive the [Holy Ghost John 20:22](#).' For as soon as these things were done, everything was finished, for the altar was broken, and the veil of the temple was rent; and although the city was not yet laid waste, the abomination was ready to sit in the midst of the temple, and the city and those ancient ordinances to receive their final consummation.

9. Since then we have passed beyond that time of shadows, and no longer perform [rites](#) under it, but have turned, as it were, unto the Lord; 'for the Lord is the [Spirit](#), and where the [Spirit of the Lord](#) is, there is liberty [2 Corinthians 3:17](#);'—as we hear the sacred trumpet, no longer slaying a material lamb, but that [true](#) Lamb that was slain, even [our Lord Jesus Christ](#); 'Who was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and was dumb as a lamb before her shearers [Isaiah 53:7](#);' being purified by His precious blood, which speaks better things than that of Abel, having our feet shod with the preparation of the [Gospel](#), holding in our hands the rod and staff of the Lord, by which that saint was comforted, who said, 'Your rod and Your staff they comfort me;' and to sum up, being in all respects prepared, and careful for nothing, because, as the [blessed Paul](#) says, 'The Lord is at hand [Philippians 4:5](#);' and as our Saviour says, 'In an hour when we think not, the Lord comes;—Let us keep the Feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of [malice](#) and [wickedness](#); but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and [truth](#). Putting off the old man and his deeds, let us put on the new man, which is created in [God](#),' in humbleness of [mind](#), and a pure [conscience](#); in meditation of the law by night and by day. And casting away all hypocrisy and fraud, putting far from us all [pride](#) and deceit, let us take upon us [love](#) towards God and towards our neighbour, that being new [creatures], and receiving the new wine, even the [Holy Spirit](#), we may properly keep the feast, even the month of these new [fruits].

10. We begin the [holy](#) fast on the fifth day of Pharmuthi (March 31), and adding to it according to the number of those six [holy](#) and great days, which are the [symbol](#) of the creation of this world, let us rest and cease (from [fasting](#)) on the tenth day of the same Pharmuthi (April 5), on the [holy sabbath](#) of the week. And when the first day of the [holy](#) week dawns and rises upon us, on the eleventh day of the same month (April 6), from which again we count all the seven weeks one by one, let us keep feast on the [holy](#) day of Pentecost—on that which was at one time to the [Jews](#), typically, the feast of weeks, in which they granted forgiveness and settlement of debts; and indeed that day was one of deliverance in every respect. Let us keep the feast on the first day of the great week, as a [symbol](#) of the world to come, in which we here receive a pledge that we shall have everlasting life hereafter. Then having passed hence, we shall keep a perfect feast with Christ, while we cry out and say, like the [saints](#), 'I will pass to the place of the wondrous tabernacle, to the house of [God](#);' with the voice of [gladness](#) and thanksgiving, the shouting of those who [rejoice](#);' whence pain and sorrow and sighing have fled, and upon our heads [gladness](#) and [joy](#) shall have come to us! May we be judged worthy to be partakers in these things.

11. Let us remember the [poor](#), and not forget kindness to strangers; above all, let us [love](#) God with all our [soul](#), and might, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves. So may we receive those things which the eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, and which have not entered into the heart of [man](#), which God has prepared for those that [love](#) Him, through His only Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; through Whom, to the Father alone, by the [Holy Ghost](#), be [glory](#) and dominion for ever and ever. [Amen](#).

Salute one another with a [kiss](#). All the brethren who are with me salute you.

Letter 2

For 330. Easter-day xxiv Pharmuthi; xiii Kal. Mai; Æra Dioclet. 46; Coss. Gallicianus, Valerius Symmachus; Præfect, Magninianus; Indict. iii.

Again, my brethren, is Easter come and [gladness](#); again the Lord has brought us to this season; so that when, according to custom, we have been nourished with His words, we may duly keep the feast. Let us celebrate it then, even heavenly [joy](#), with those [saints](#) who formerly proclaimed a like feast, and were ensamples to us of conversation in [Christ](#). For not only were they entrusted with the charge of preaching the [Gospel](#), but, if we enquire, we shall see, as it is written, that its power was displayed in them. 'Be therefore followers of me [1 Corinthians 4:16](#),' he wrote to the Corinthians. Now the apostolic precept exhorts us all, for those commands which he sent to individuals, he at the same time enjoined upon every man in every place, for he was 'a teacher of all nations in [faith](#) and [truth](#).' And, generally, the commands of all the [saints](#) urge us on similarly, as Solomon makes use of proverbs, saying, 'Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, and attend to [know](#) understanding; for I give you a good gift, forsake not my word: for I was an [obedient](#) son to my father, and beloved in the sight of my mother [Proverbs 4:1](#).' For a just father brings up [his children] well, when he is diligent in teaching others in accordance with his own upright conduct, so that when he meets with opposition, he may not be ashamed on hearing it said, 'You therefore that teachest others, do you not teach yourself?' [Romans 2:21](#) but rather, like the good servant, may both save himself and gain others; and thus, when the [grace](#) committed to him has been doubled, he may hear, 'You good and faithful servant, you have been faithful in a little, I will set you over much: enter into the [joy](#) of your Lord [Matthew 25:21](#).'

2. Let us then, as is becoming, as at all times, yet especially in the days of the feast, be not hearers only, but doers of the commandments of our Saviour; that having imitated the behaviour of the [saints](#), we may enter together into the [joy](#) of our Lord which is in heaven, which is not transitory, but [truly](#) abides; of which [evil](#) doers having deprived themselves, there remains to them as the fruit of their ways, sorrow and affliction, and groaning with torments. Let a man see what these become like, that they bear not the likeness of the conversation of the [saints](#), nor of that right understanding, by which man at the beginning was rational, and in the image of [God](#). But they are compared to their disgrace to beasts without understanding, and becoming like them in unlawful pleasures, they are spoken of as wanton horses ; [also, for their craftiness, and errors](#), and [sin](#) laden

with death, they are called a 'generation of vipers,' as John says. Now having thus fallen, and grovelling in the dust like the serpent, having their minds set on nothing beyond visible things, they esteem these things good, and rejoicing in them, serve their own [lusts](#) and not God.

3. Yet even in this state, the man-loving Word, who came for this very reason, that He might seek and find that which was lost, sought to restrain them from such folly, crying and saying, 'Be not as the horse and the mule which have no understanding, whose cheeks you hold in with bit and bridle.' Because they were careless and imitated the [wicked](#), the [prophet prays](#) in spirit and says, 'You are to me like merchant-men of Phœnicia.' And the avenging Spirit protests against them in these words, 'Lord, in Your city You will despise their image.' Thus, being changed into the likeness of fools, they fell so low in their understanding, that by their excessive reasoning, they even likened the Divine Wisdom to themselves, thinking it to be like their own arts. Therefore, 'professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the [glory](#) of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the corruptible image of [man](#), and birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God gave them over to a reprobate [mind](#), to do those things which are not convenient.' For they did not listen to the prophetic voice that reproved them (saying), 'To what have you likened the Lord, and with what have you compared Him [Isaiah 40:18](#) ?' neither to David, who [prayed](#) concerning such as these, and sang, 'All those that make them are like them, and all those who put their trust in them.' Being blind to the [truth](#), they looked upon a stone as [God](#), and hence, like senseless creatures, they walked in darkness, and, as the [prophet](#) cried, 'They hear indeed, but they do not understand; they see indeed, but they do not perceive; for their heart is waxen fat, and with their ears they hear heavily [Isaiah 6:9](#).'

4. Now those who do not observe the feast, continue such as these even to the present day, feigning indeed and devising names of feasts, but rather introducing days of mourning than of [gladness](#); 'For there is no peace to the [wicked](#), says the Lord [Isaiah 48:22](#).' And as Wisdom says, 'Gladness and [joy](#) are taken from their mouth.' Such are the feasts of the [wicked](#). But the wise servants of the Lord, who have [truly](#) put on the man which is created in God [Ephesians 4:24](#), have received gospel words, and reckon as a general commandment that given to Timothy, which says, 'Be an example to the [believers](#) in word, in conversation, in [love](#), in [faith](#), in purity [1 Timothy 4:12](#).' So well do they keep the Feast, that even the unbelievers, seeing their order, may say, 'God is with them of a [truth 1 Corinthians 14:25](#).' For as he who receives an apostle receives Him who sent him [Matthew 10:40](#), so he who is a follower of the [saints](#), makes the Lord in every respect his end and aim, even as [Paul](#), being a follower of Him, goes on to say, 'As I also of Christ [1 Corinthians 11:1](#).' For there were first our Saviour's own words, who from the height of His divinity, when conversing with His [disciples](#), said, 'Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest to your [souls Matthew 11:29](#).' Then too when He poured water into a basin, and girded Himself with a towel, and washed His [disciples'](#) feet, He said to them, 'Know what I have done. You call Me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If therefore I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet: for I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, you also should do [John 13:12](#).'

5. Oh! my brethren, how shall we admire the loving-kindness of the Saviour? With what power, and with what a trumpet should a man cry out, exalting these His benefits! That not only should we bear His image, but should receive from Him an example and pattern of heavenly conversation; that as He has begun, we should go on, that suffering, we should not threaten, being reviled, we should not revile again, but should bless them that curse, and in everything commit ourselves to God who judges righteously. For those who are thus disposed, and fashion themselves according to the [Gospel](#), will be partakers of [Christ](#), and imitators of apostolic conversation, on account of which they shall be deemed worthy of that praise from him, with which he praised the Corinthians, when he said, 'I praise you that in everything you are mindful of me [1 Corinthians 11:2](#).' Afterwards, because there were men who used his words, but chose to hear them as suited their [lusts](#), and dared to pervert them, as the followers of Hymenæus and Alexander, and before them the [Sadducees](#), who as he said, 'having made shipwreck of [faith](#),' scoffed at the [mystery](#) of the resurrection, he immediately proceeded to say, 'And as I have delivered to you traditions, hold them fast.' That means, indeed, that we should think not otherwise than as the teacher has delivered.

6. For not only in outward form did those [wicked](#) men dissemble, putting on as the Lord says sheep's clothing, and appearing like whited sepulchres; but they took those divine words in their mouth, while they inwardly cherished [evil](#) intentions. And the first to put on this appearance was the serpent, the inventor of [wickedness](#) from the beginning—the [devil](#),—who, in disguise, conversed with Eve, and forthwith deceived her. But after him and with him are all inventors of unlawful [heresies](#), who indeed refer to the [Scriptures](#), but do not hold such opinions as the [saints](#) have handed down, and receiving them as the traditions of [men](#), [err](#), because they do not rightly [know](#) them nor their [Matthew 22:29](#) power. Therefore [Paul](#) [justly](#) praises the Corinthians [1 Corinthians 11:2](#), because their opinions were in accordance with his traditions. And the Lord most righteously reproveth the [Jews](#), saying, 'Wherefore do you also transgress the commandments of God on account of your traditions [Matthew 15:3](#).' For they changed the commandments they received from God after their own understanding, preferring to observe the traditions of men. And about these, a little after, the [blessed Paul](#) again gave directions to the Galatians who were in danger thereof, writing to them, 'If any man preach to you anything else than that you have received, let him be accursed [Galatians 1:9](#).'

7. For there is no fellowship whatever between the words of the [saints](#) and the fancies of human invention; for the [saints](#) are the ministers of the [truth](#), preaching the [kingdom of heaven](#), but those who are borne in the opposite direction have nothing better than to eat, and think their end is that they shall cease to be, and they say, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die [Isaiah 22:13](#).' Therefore blessed Luke reproves the inventions of [men](#), and hands down the narrations of the [saints](#), saying in the beginning of the [Gospel](#), 'Since many have presumed to write narrations of those events of which we are assured, as those who from the beginning were witnesses and ministers of the Word have delivered to us; it has seemed good to me also, who have adhered to them all from the first, to write correctly in order to you, O excellent Theophilus, that you may [know](#) the [truth](#) concerning the things in which you have been instructed [Luke 1:1](#).' For as each of the [saints](#) has received, that they impart without alteration, for the confirmation of the

doctrine of the [mysteries](#). Of these the (divine) word would have us [disciples](#), and these should of right be our teachers, and to them only is it necessary to give heed, for of them only is 'the word faithful and worthy of all acceptation [1 Timothy 1:15](#);' these not being [disciples](#) because they heard from others, but being eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word, that which they had heard from Him have they handed down.

Now some have related the wonderful signs performed by our Saviour, and preached His [eternal](#) Godhead. And others have written of His being born in the flesh of the Virgin, and have proclaimed the festival of the [holy](#) passover, saying, 'Christ our [Passover](#) is [sacrificed 1 Corinthians 5:7](#);' so that we, individually and collectively, and all the churches in the world may remember, as it is written, 'That Christ rose from the dead, of the seed of [David](#), according to the [Gospel 2 Timothy 2:8](#).' And let us not forget that which [Paul](#) delivered, declaring it to the Corinthians; I mean His [resurrection](#), whereby 'He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the [devil Hebrews 2:14](#);' and raised us up together with Him, having loosed the bands of death, and vouchsafed a blessing instead of a curse, [joy](#) instead of grief, a feast instead of mourning, in this [holy joy](#) of Easter, which being continually in our hearts, we always [rejoice](#), as [Paul](#) commanded; 'We [pray](#) without ceasing; in everything we give thanks .' So we are not remiss in giving notice of its seasons, as we have received from the Fathers. Again we write, again keeping to the apostolic traditions, we remind each other when we come together for [prayer](#); and keeping the feast in common, with one mouth we [truly](#) give thanks to the Lord. Thus giving thanks unto Him, and being followers of the [saints](#), 'we shall make our praise in the Lord all the day,' as the Psalmist says. So, when we rightly keep the feast, we shall be counted worthy of that [joy](#) which is in heaven.

8. We begin the fast of forty days on the 13th of the month Phamenoth ([Mar. 9](#)). After we have given ourselves to [fasting](#) in continued succession, let us begin the [holy](#) Paschal week on the 18th of the month Pharmuthi (April 13). Then resting on the 23rd of the same month Pharmuthi (April 18), and keeping the feast afterwards on the first of the week, on the 24th (April 19), let us add to these the seven weeks of the great Pentecost, wholly rejoicing and exulting in [Christ Jesus our Lord](#), through Whom to the Father be [glory](#) and dominion in the [Holy Ghost](#), for ever and ever. [Amen](#).

The brethren which are with me salute you. Salute one another with a [holy kiss](#).

Here ends the second Festal Letter of the [holy](#) lord Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria.

Letter 3

For 331. Easter-day xvi Pharmuthi; iii Id. April; Æra Dioclet. 47; Coss. Annus Bassus, Ablabius; Præfect, Florentius; Indict. iv.

Again, my beloved brethren, the day of the feast draws near to us, which, above all others, should be devoted to [prayer](#), which the law commands to be observed, and which it would be an [unholy](#) thing for us to pass over in silence. For although we have been held

under restraint by those who afflict us, that, because of them, we should not announce to you this season; yet thanks be to '[God](#), who comforts the afflicted,' that we have not been overcome by the [wickedness](#) of our accusers and silenced; but [obeying](#) the voice of [truth](#), we together with you cry aloud in the day of the feast. For the [God](#) of all has commanded, saying, 'Speak, and the children of [Israel](#) shall keep the [Passover](#).' And the Spirit exhorts in the Psalm; 'Blow the trumpet in the new moons, in the solemn day of your feast.' And the [prophet](#) cries; 'Keep your feasts, O Judah.' I do not send word to you as though you were [ignorant](#); but I publish it to those who [know](#) it, that you may perceive that although men have separated us, yet God having made us companions, we approach the same feast, and worship the same Lord continually. And we do not keep the festival as observers of days, [knowing](#) that the Apostle reproves those who do so, in those words which he spoke; 'You observe days, and months, and times, and years [Galatians 4:10](#).' But rather do we consider the day solemn because of the feast; so that all of us, who serve God in every place, may together in our [prayers](#) be well-pleasing to [God](#). For the [blessed Paul](#), announcing the nearness of [gladness](#) like this, did not announce days, but the Lord, for whose sake we keep the feast, saying, 'Christ, our [Passover](#), is [sacrificed](#) [1 Corinthians 5:7](#);' so that we all, contemplating the [eternity](#) of the Word, may draw near to do Him service.

2. For what else is the feast, but the service of the [soul](#)? And what is that service, but prolonged [prayer](#) to [God](#), and unceasing thanksgiving? The unthankful departing far from these are rightly deprived of the [joy](#) springing therefrom: for '[joy](#) and [gladness](#) are taken from their mouth.' Therefore, the [divine] word does not allow them to have peace; 'For there is no peace to the [wicked](#), says the Lord [Isaiah 48:22](#),' they labour in pain and grief. So, not even to him who owed ten thousand talents did the [Gospel](#) grant forgiveness in the sight of the Lord [Matthew 18:24](#). For even he, having received forgiveness of great things, was forgetful of kindness in little ones, so that he paid the penalty also of those former things. And [justly](#) indeed, for having himself experienced kindness, he was required to be merciful to his fellow servant. He too that received the one talent, and bound it up in a napkin, and hid it in the earth, was in consequence cast out for unthankfulness, hearing the words, 'You [wicked](#) and slothful servant, you knew that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not scattered; you ought therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and on my return, I should have received my own. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him that has ten talents [Matthew 25:26](#).' For, of course, when he was required to deliver up to his lord that which belonged to him, he should have acknowledged the kindness of him who gave it, and the value of that which was given. For he who gave was not a hard man, had he been so, he would not have given even in the first instance; neither was that which was given unprofitable and vain, for then he had not found fault. But both he who gave was [good](#), and that which was given was capable of bearing fruit. As therefore 'he who withholds corn in seed-time is cursed [Proverbs 11:26](#),' according to the divine proverb, so he who neglects [grace](#), and hides it without culture, is properly cast out as a [wicked](#) and unthankful person. On this account, he praises those who increased [their talents], saying, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful in a little, I will place you over much; enter into the [joy](#) of your Lord [Matthew 25:23](#).'

3. This was right and reasonable; for, as the [Scripture](#) declares, they had gained as much as they had received. Now, my beloved, our will ought to keep pace with the [grace](#) of [God](#), and not fall short; lest while our will remains idle, the [grace](#) given us should begin to depart, and the enemy finding us empty and naked, should enter [into us], as was the case with him spoken of in the [Gospel](#), from whom the [devil](#) went out; 'for having gone through dry places, he took seven other spirits more [wicked](#) than himself; and returning and finding the house empty, he dwelt there, and the last state of that man was worse than the first.' For the departure from [virtue](#) gives place for the entrance of the unclean spirit. There is, moreover, the apostolic injunction, that the [grace](#) given us should not be unprofitable; for those things which he wrote particularly to his [disciple](#), he enforces on us through him, saying, 'Neglect not the gift that is in you. For he who tills his land shall be satisfied with bread; but the paths of the slothful are strewn with thorns;' so that the Spirit forewarns a man not to fall into them, saying, 'Break up your fallow ground, sow not among thorns.' For when a man despises the [grace](#) given him; and forthwith falls into the cares of the world, he delivers himself over to his [lusts](#); and thus in the time of [persecution](#) he is offended, and becomes altogether unfruitful. Now the [prophet](#) points out the end of such negligence, saying, 'Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord carelessly .' For a servant of the Lord should be diligent and careful, yea, moreover, burning like a flame, so that when, by an ardent spirit, he has destroyed all carnal [sin](#), he may be able to draw near to God who, according to the expression of the [saints](#), is called 'a consuming fire.'

4. Therefore, the [God](#) of all, 'Who makes His [angels](#) [spirits],' is a spirit, 'and His ministers a flame of fire.' Wherefore, in the departure from [Egypt](#), He forbade the multitude to touch the mountain, where God was appointing them the law, because they were not of this character. But He called blessed [Moses](#) to it, as being fervent in spirit, and possessing unquenchable [grace](#), saying, 'Let [Moses](#) alone draw near [Exodus 24:2](#).' He entered into the cloud also, and when the mountain was smoking, he was not injured; but rather, through 'the words of the Lord, which are choice silver purified in the earth,' he descended purified. Therefore the [blessed Paul](#), when desirous that the [grace](#) of the Spirit given to us should not grow cold, exhorts, saying, 'Quench not the Spirit .' For so shall we remain partakers of Christ, if we hold fast to the end the Spirit given at the beginning. For he said, 'Quench not;' not because the Spirit is placed in the power of [men](#), and is able to suffer anything from them; but because bad and unthankful men are such as manifestly wish to quench it, since they, like the impure, [persecute](#) the Spirit with [unholy](#) deeds. For the [holy](#) Spirit of discipline will flee deceit, nor dwell in a body that is subject unto [sin](#); but will remove from thoughts that are without understanding [Wisdom 1:5](#).' Now they being without understanding, and deceitful, and lovers of [sin](#), walk still as in darkness, not having that 'Light which lights every man that comes into the world [John 1:9](#).' Now a fire such as this laid hold of [Jeremiah the prophet](#), when the word was in him as a fire, and he said, 'I pass away from every place, and am not able to endure it.' And [our Lord Jesus Christ](#), being good and a lover of [men](#), came that He might cast this upon earth, and said, 'And what? would that it were already kindled [Luke 12:49](#) !' For He desired, as He testified in Ezekiel, the repentance of a man rather than his death; so that [evil](#) should be entirely consumed in all [men](#), that the [soul](#), being purified, might be able to bring forth fruit; for the word which is sown by Him will be productive, some thirty, some sixty,

some an hundred [Mark 4:20](#) . Thus, for instance, those who were with Cleopas [Luke xxiv](#), although infirm at first from lack of [knowledge](#), yet afterwards were inflamed with the words of the Saviour, and brought forth the fruits of the [knowledge](#) of Him. The [blessed Paul](#) also, when seized by this fire, revealed it not to flesh and blood, but having experienced the [grace](#), he became a preacher of the Word. But not such were those nine [lepers](#) who were cleansed from their [leprosy](#), and yet were unthankful to the Lord who healed them; nor Judas, who obtained the lot of an [apostle](#), and was named a [disciple](#) of the Lord, but at last, 'while eating bread with the Saviour, lifted up his heel against Him, and became a traitor.' But such men have the due reward of their folly, since their expectation will be vain through their ingratitude; for there is no hope for the ungrateful, the last fire, prepared for the [devil](#) and his [angels](#), awaits those who have neglected divine light. Such then is the end of the unthankful.

5. But the faithful and [true](#) servants of the Lord, [knowing](#) that the Lord loves the thankful, never cease to praise Him, ever giving thanks unto the Lord. And whether the time is one of ease or of affliction, they offer up praise to God with thanksgiving, not reckoning these things of time, but worshipping the Lord, the [God](#) of times. Thus of old time, Job, who possessed [fortitude](#) above all [men](#), thought of these things when in prosperity; and when in adversity, he patiently endured, and when he suffered, gave thanks. As also the [humble](#) David, in the very time of affliction sang praises and said, 'I will bless the Lord at all times.' And the [blessed Paul](#), in all his Epistles, so to say, ceased not to thank God. In times of ease, he failed not, and in afflictions he gloried, [knowing](#) that 'tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and that hope makes not ashamed [Romans 5:3](#).' Let us, being followers of such men, pass no season without thanksgiving, but especially now, when the time is one of tribulation, which the [heretics](#) excite against us, will we praise the Lord, uttering the words of the [saints](#); 'All these things have come upon us, yet have we not forgotten You.' For as the [Jews](#) at that time, although suffering an assault from the tabernacles of the Edomites, and oppressed by the enemies of Jerusalem, did not give themselves up, but all the more sang praises to [God](#); so we, my beloved brethren, though hindered from speaking the word of the Lord, will the more proclaim it, and being afflicted, we will sing Psalms, in that we are accounted worthy to be despised, and to labour anxiously for the [truth](#). Yea, moreover, being grievously vexed, we will give thanks. For the blessed Apostle, who gave thanks at all times, urges us in the same manner to draw near to God saying, 'Let your requests, with thanksgiving, be made [known](#) unto God [Philippians 4:6](#).' And being desirous that we should always continue in this resolution, he says, 'At all times give thanks; [pray](#) without ceasing .' For he [knew](#) that [believers](#) are strong while employed in thanksgiving, and that rejoicing they pass over the walls of the enemy, like those [saints](#) who said, 'Through You will we pierce through our enemies, and by my God I will leap over a wall.' At all times let us stand firm, but especially now, although many afflictions overtake us, and many [heretics](#) are furious against us. Let us then, my beloved brethren, celebrate with thanksgiving the [holy](#) feast which now draws near to us, 'girding up the loins of our minds [1 Peter 1:13](#),' like our Saviour Jesus Christ, of Whom it is written, 'Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins [Isaiah 11:5](#).' Each one of us having in his hand the staff which came out of the root of Jesse, and our feet shod with the preparation of the [Gospel](#), let us keep the feast as [Paul](#) says, 'Not with the

old leaven, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and [truth 1 Corinthians 5:8](#);' reverently trusting that we are reconciled through Christ, and not departing from [faith](#) in Him, nor do we defile ourselves together with [heretics](#), and strangers to the [truth](#), whose conversation and whose will degrade them. But rejoicing in afflictions, we break through the furnace of iron and darkness, and pass, unharmed, over that terrible [Red Sea](#). Thus also, when we look upon the confusion of [heretics](#), we shall, with [Moses](#), sing that great song of praise, and say, 'We will sing unto the Lord, for He is to be [gloriously](#) praised [Exodus 15:1](#).' Thus, singing praises, and seeing that the [sin](#) which is in us has been cast into the sea, we pass over to the wilderness. And being first purified by the fast of forty days, by [prayers](#), and [fastings](#), and discipline, and good works, we shall be able to eat the [holy Passover](#) in Jerusalem.

6. The beginning of the fast of forty days is on the fifth of Phamenoth ([Mar. 1](#)); and when, as I have said, we have first been purified and prepared by those days, we begin the [holy](#) week of the great Easter on the tenth of Pharmuthi (Apr. 5), in which, my beloved brethren, we should use more prolonged [prayers](#), and [fastings](#), and watchings, that we may be enabled to anoint our lintels with precious blood, and to escape the destroyer [Exodus 12:7, 23](#). Let us rest then, on the fifteenth of the month Pharmuthi (Apr. 10), for on the evening of that Saturday we hear the [angels'](#) message, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is risen [Luke 24:5](#).' Immediately afterwards that great Sunday receives us, I mean on the sixteenth of the same month Pharmuthi (April 11), on which our Lord having risen, gave us peace towards our neighbours. When then we have kept the feast according to His [will](#), let us add from that first day in the [holy](#) week, the seven weeks of Pentecost, and as we then receive the [grace](#) of the [Spirit](#), let us at all times give thanks to the Lord; through Whom to the Father be [glory](#) and dominion, in the [Holy Ghost](#), for ever and ever. [Amen](#).

Salute one another with a [holy kiss](#). The brethren who are with me salute you. I [pray](#), brethren beloved and longed for, that you may have health, and that you may be mindful of us in the Lord.

Here ends the third Festal Letter of [holy](#) Athanasius.

Letter 4

For 332. Easter-day vii Pharmuthi, iv Non. Apr.; Æra Dioclet. 48; Coss. Fabius Pacatianus, Mæcilius Hilarianus; Præfect, Hyginus; Indict. v.

He sent this Letter from the Emperor's Court by a soldier.

I send unto you, my beloved, late and beyond the accustomed time; yet I trust you will forgive the delay, on account of my protracted journey, and because I have been tried with illness. Being hindered by these two causes, and unusually severe storms having occurred, I have deferred writing to you. But notwithstanding my long journeys, and my grievous sickness, I have not forgotten to give you the festal notification, and, in

discharge of my duty, I now announce to you the feast. For although the date of this letter is later than that usual for this announcement, it should still be considered well-timed, since our enemies having been put to shame and reproved by the [Church](#), because they [persecuted](#) us without a [cause](#), we may now sing a festal song of praise, uttering the triumphant hymn against [Pharaoh](#); 'We will sing unto the Lord, for He is to be [gloriously](#) praised; the horse and his rider He has cast into the sea [Exodus 15:1](#).'

2. It is well, my beloved, to proceed from feast to feast; again festal meetings, again [holy vigils](#) arouse our minds, and compel our [intellect](#) to keep vigil unto [contemplation](#) of [good](#) things. Let us not fulfil these days like those that mourn, but, by enjoying spiritual food, let us seek to silence our fleshly [lusts](#). For by these means we shall have strength to overcome our adversaries, like blessed Judith [Judith 13:8](#), when having first exercised herself in [fastings](#) and [prayers](#), she overcame the enemies, and killed Olophernes. And blessed Esther, when destruction was about to come on all her race, and the nation of [Israel](#) was ready to perish, defeated the fury of the tyrant by no other means than by [fasting](#) and [prayer](#) to [God](#), and changed the ruin of her people into safety [Esther 4:16](#). Now as those days are considered feasts for [Israel](#), so also in old time feasts were appointed when an enemy was slain, or a conspiracy against the people broken up, and [Israel](#) delivered. Therefore blessed [Moses](#) of old time ordained the great [feast of the Passover](#), and our celebration of it, because, namely, [Pharaoh](#) was killed, and the people were delivered from bondage. For in those times it was especially, when those who tyrannized over the people had been slain, that temporal feasts and holidays were observed in Judæa.

3. Now, however, that the [devil](#), that tyrant against the whole world, is slain, we do not approach a temporal feast, my beloved, but an [eternal](#) and heavenly. Not in shadows do we show it forth, but we come to it in [truth](#). For they being filled with the flesh of a dumb lamb, accomplished the feast, and having anointed their door-posts with the blood, implored aid against the destroyer. But now we, eating of the Word of the [Father](#), and having the lintels of our hearts sealed with the blood of the [New Testament](#) [Matthew 26:28](#), acknowledge the [grace](#) given us from the Saviour, who said, 'Behold, I have given unto you to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy.' For no more does death reign; but instead of death henceforth is life, since our Lord said, 'I am the life [John 14:6](#);' so that everything is filled with [joy](#) and [gladness](#); as it is written, 'The Lord reigns, let the earth [rejoice](#).' For when death reigned, 'sitting down by the rivers of [Babylon](#), we wept,' and mourned, because we felt the bitterness of captivity; but now that death and the kingdom of the [devil](#) is abolished, everything is entirely filled with [joy](#) and [gladness](#). And God is no longer [known](#) only in Judæa, but in all the earth, 'their voice has gone forth, and the [knowledge](#) of Him has filled all the earth.' What follows, my beloved, is obvious; that we should approach such a feast, not with filthy raiment, but having clothed our minds with pure garments. For we need in this to put on our Lord Jesus [Romans 13:14](#), that we may be able to celebrate the feast with Him. Now we are clothed with Him when we [love virtue](#), and are enemies to [wickedness](#), when we exercise ourselves in [temperance](#) and mortify lasciviousness, when we [love](#) righteousness before iniquity, when we [honour](#) sufficiency, and have strength of [mind](#),

when we do not forget the [poor](#), but open our doors to all [men](#), when we assist [humble-mindedness](#), but [hate pride](#).

4. By these things [Israel](#) of old, having first, as in a figure, striven for the victory, came to the feast, for these things were then foreshadowed and typified. But we, my beloved, the shadow having received its fulfilment, and the types being accomplished, should no longer consider the feast typical, neither should we go up to Jerusalem which is here below, to [sacrifice](#) the [Passover](#), according to the unseasonable observance of the [Jews](#), lest, while the season passes away, we should be regarded as acting unseasonably; but, in accordance with the injunction of the Apostles, let us go beyond the types, and sing the new song of praise. For perceiving this, and being assembled together with the Truth, they drew near, and said unto our Saviour, 'Where will You that we should make ready for You the [Passover Matthew 26:17](#) ?' For no longer were these things to be done which belonged to Jerusalem which is beneath; neither there alone was the feast to be celebrated, but wherever God willed it to be. Now He willed it to be in every place, so that 'in every place [incense](#) and a [sacrifice](#) might be offered to Him [Malachi 1:11](#).' For although, as in the historical account, in no other place might the [feast of the Passover](#) be kept save only in Jerusalem, yet when the things pertaining to that time were fulfilled, and those which belonged to shadows had passed away, and the preaching of the [Gospel](#) was about to extend everywhere; when indeed the [disciples](#) were spreading the feast in all places, they asked the Saviour, 'Where will You that we shall make ready?' The Saviour also, since He was changing the typical for the spiritual, promised them that they should no longer eat the flesh of a lamb, but His own, saying, 'Take, eat and drink; this is My body, and My blood.' When we are thus nourished by these things, we also, my beloved, shall [truly](#) keep the [feast of the Passover](#).

5. We begin on the first of Pharmuthi ([Mar. 27](#)), and rest on the sixth of the same month (Apr. 1), on the evening of the seventh day; and the [holy](#) first day of the week having risen upon us on the seventh of the same Pharmuthi (Apr. 2), celebrate we too the days of [holy](#) Pentecost following thereon, showing forth through them the world to come, so that henceforth we may be with [Christ](#) for ever, praising God over all in [Christ Jesus](#), and through Him, with all [saints](#), we say unto the Lord, [Amen](#). Salute one another with a [holy kiss](#). All the brethren who are with me salute you. We have sent this letter from the Court, by the hand of an attendant officer, to whom it was given by Ablavius, the Præfect of the Prætorium, who fears God in [truth](#). For I am at the Court, having been summoned by the emperor Constantine to see him. But the [Meletians](#), who were present there, being [envious](#), sought our ruin before the Emperor. But they were put to shame and driven away thence as calumniators, being confuted by many things. Those who were driven away were Callinicus, Ision, Eudæmon, and Gelæus Hieracammon, who, on account of the shame of his name, calls himself Eulogius.

Here ends the fourth Festal Letter of [holy](#) Athanasius.

Letter 5

For 333. Easter-day, Coss. Dalmatius and Zenophilus; Præfect, Paternus; vi Indict.; xvii Kal. Maii, xx Pharmuthi; xv Moon; vii Gods; Æra Dioclet. 49.

We duly proceed, my brethren, from feasts to feasts, duly from [prayers](#) to [prayers](#), we advance from [fasts](#) to [fasts](#), and join [holy](#)-days to [holy](#)-days. Again the time has arrived which brings to us a new beginning, even the announcement of the blessed [Passover](#), in which the Lord was [sacrificed](#). We eat, as it were, the food of life, and constantly thirsting we delight our [souls](#) at all times, as from a fountain, in His precious blood. For we continually and ardently desire; He stands ready for those who thirst; and for those who thirst there is the word of [our Saviour](#), which, in His loving-kindness, He uttered on the day of the feast; 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink.' Nor was it then alone when any one drew near to Him, that He cured his thirst; but whenever any one seeks, there is free access for him to the Saviour. For the [grace](#) of the feast is not limited to one time, nor does its splendid brilliancy decline; but it is always near, enlightening the minds of those who earnestly desire it. For therein is constant [virtue](#), for those who are illuminated in their minds, and meditate on the [divine Scriptures](#) day and night, like the man to whom a blessing is given, as it is written in the sacred Psalms; 'Blessed is the man who has not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of corrupters. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law does he meditate day and night.' For it is not the sun, or the moon, or the host of those other stars which illumines him, but he glitters with the high effulgence of God over all.

2. For it is [God](#), my beloved, even the God Who at first established the feast for us, Who vouchsafes the celebration of it year by year. He both brought about the slaying of His Son for [salvation](#), and gave us this reason for the [holy](#) feast, to which every year bears [witness](#), as often as at this season the feast is proclaimed. This also leads us on from the cross through this world to that which is before us, and God produces even now from it the [joy](#) of [glorious salvation](#), bringing us to the same assembly, and in every place uniting all of us in spirit; appointing us common [prayers](#), and a common [grace](#) proceeding from the feast. For this is the marvel of His loving-kindness, that He should gather together in the same place those who are at a distance; and make those who appear to be far off in the body, to be near together in unity of spirit.

3. Wherefore then, my beloved, do we not acknowledge the [grace](#) as becomes the feast? Wherefore do we not make a return to our Benefactor? It is indeed impossible to make an adequate return to [God](#); still, it is a [wicked](#) thing for us who receive the gracious gift, not to acknowledge it. Nature itself manifests our inability; but our own will reproves our unthankfulness. Therefore the [blessed Paul](#), when admiring the greatness of the gift of [God](#), said, 'And who is sufficient for these things [2 Corinthians 2:17](#) ?' For He made the world free by the blood of the Saviour; then, again, He has caused the grave to be trodden down by the Saviour's death, and furnished a way to the heavenly gates free from obstacles to those who are going up. Wherefore, one of the [saints](#), while he acknowledged the [grace](#), but was insufficient to repay it, said, 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all He has done unto me?' For instead of death he had received life, instead of bondage, freedom, and instead of the grave, the [kingdom of heaven](#). For of old time, 'death reigned from Adam to [Moses](#);' but now the divine voice has said, 'Today shall you

be with Me in Paradise.' And the [saints](#), being sensible of this, said, 'Except the Lord had helped me, my [soul](#) had almost dwelt in [hell](#)..' Besides all this, being powerless to make a return, he yet acknowledged the gift, and wrote finally, saying, 'I will take the cup of [salvation](#), and call on the name of the Lord; precious in His sight is the death of His [saints](#).'

With regard to the cup, the Lord said, 'Are you able to drink of that cup which I am about to drink of?' And when the [disciples](#) assented, the Lord said, 'You shall indeed drink of My cup; but that you should sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give; but to those for whom it is prepared [Matthew 20:22-23](#).' Therefore, my beloved, let us be sensible of the gift, though we are found insufficient to repay it. As we have ability, let us meet the occasion. For although nature is not able, with things unworthy of the Word, to return a recompense for such benefits, yet let us render Him thanks while we persevere in [piety](#). And how can we more abide in [piety](#) than when we acknowledge [God](#), Who in His [love](#) to [mankind](#) has bestowed on us such benefits? (For thus we shall obediently keep the law, and observe its commandments. And, further, we shall not, as unthankful [persons](#), be accounted transgressors of the law, or do those things which ought to be [hated](#), for the Lord loves the thankful); when too we offer ourselves to the Lord, like the [saints](#), when we subscribe ourselves entirely [as] living henceforth not to ourselves, but to the Lord Who died for us, as also the [blessed Paul](#) did, when he said, 'I am crucified with Christ, yet I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me [Galatians 2:20](#).'

4. Now our life, my brethren, [truly](#) consists in our denying all bodily things, and continuing steadfast in those only of [our Saviour](#). Therefore the present season requires of us, that we should not only utter such words, but should also imitate the deeds of the [saints](#). But we imitate them, when we acknowledge Him who died, and no longer live unto ourselves, but Christ henceforth lives in us; when we render a recompense to the Lord to the utmost of our power, though when we make a return we give nothing of our own, but those things which we have before received from Him, this being especially of His [grace](#), that He should require, as from us, His own gifts. He bears [witness](#) to this when He says, 'My offerings are My own gifts.' That is, those things which you give Me are yours, as having received them from Me, but they are the gifts of [God](#). And let us offer to the Lord every [virtue](#), and that [true holiness](#) which is in Him, and in [piety](#) let us keep the feast to Him with those things which He has hallowed for us. Let us thus engage in the [holy fasts](#), as having been prescribed by Him, and by means of which we find the way to [God](#). But let us not be like the [heathen](#), or the [ignorant Jews](#), or as the [heretics](#) and schismatics of the present time. For the [heathen](#) think the accomplishment of the feast is in the abundance of food; the [Jews](#), erring in the type and shadow, think it still such; the schismatics keep it in separate places, and with vain imaginations. But let us, my brethren, be superior to the [heathen](#), in keeping the feast with sincerity of [soul](#), and purity of body; to the [Jews](#), in no longer receiving the type and the shadow, but as having been [gloriously](#) illumined with the light of [truth](#), and as looking upon the Sun of Righteousness [Malachi 4:2](#); to the schismatics, in not rending the coat of [Christ](#), but in one house, even in the [Catholic Church](#), let us eat the [Passover](#) of the Lord, Who, by ordaining His [holy laws](#), guided us towards [virtue](#), and counselled the abstinence of this feast. For the [Passover](#) is indeed abstinence from [evil](#) for exercise of [virtue](#), and a departure from death

unto life. This may be learned even from the type of old time. For then they toiled earnestly to pass from [Egypt](#) to Jerusalem, but now we depart from death to life; they then passed from [Pharaoh](#) to [Moses](#), but now we rise from the [devil](#) to the Saviour. And as, at that time, the type of deliverance bore [witness](#) every year, so now we commemorate our [salvation](#). We fast meditating on death, that we may be able to live; and we watch, not as mourners, but as they that wait for the Lord, when He shall have returned from the wedding, so that we may vie with each other in the triumph, hastening to announce the sign of victory over death.

5. Would therefore, O my beloved, that as the word requires, we might here so govern ourselves at all times and entirely, and so live, as never to forget the noble acts of [God](#), nor to depart from the practice of [virtue](#)! As also the Apostolic voice exhorts; 'Remember Jesus Christ, that He rose from the dead [2 Timothy 2:8](#).' Not that any limited season of remembrance was appointed, for at all times He should be in our thoughts. But because of the slothfulness of many, we delay from day to day. Let us then begin in these days. To this end a time of remembrance is permitted, that it may show forth to the [saints](#) the reward of their calling, and may exhort the careless while reproving them. Therefore in all the remaining days, let us persevere in [virtuous](#) conduct, repenting as is our duty, of all that we have neglected, whatever it may be; for there is no one free from defilement, though his course may have been but one hour on the earth, as Job, that man of surpassing [fortitude](#), testifies. But, 'stretching forth to those things that are to come,' let us [pray](#) that we may not eat the [Passover](#) unworthily, lest we be exposed to dangers. For to those who keep the feast in purity, the [Passover](#) is heavenly food; but to those who observe it profanely and contemptuously, it is a danger and reproach. For it is written, 'Whosoever shall eat and drink unworthily, is guilty of the death of our Lord [1 Corinthians 11:27](#).' Wherefore, let us not merely proceed to perform the festal [rites](#), but let us be prepared to draw near to the divine Lamb, and to touch heavenly food. Let us cleanse our hands, let us purify the body. Let us keep our whole mind from guile; not giving up ourselves to excess, and to [lusts](#), but occupying ourselves entirely with our Lord, and with divine doctrines; so that, being altogether pure, we may be able to partake of the Word.

6. We begin the [holy](#) fast on the fourteenth of Pharmuthi (Apr. 9), on the [first] evening of the week; and having ceased on the nineteenth of the same month Pharmuthi (Apr. 14), the first day of the [holy](#) week dawns upon us on the twentieth of the same month Pharmuthi (Apr. 15), to which we join the seven weeks of Pentecost; with [prayers](#), and fellowship with our neighbour, and [love](#) towards one another, and that peaceable will which is above all. For so shall we be heirs of the [kingdom of heaven](#), through [our Lord Jesus Christ](#), through Whom to the Father be [glory](#) and dominion for ever and ever. [Amen](#). All the brethren who are with me salute you. Salute one another with a [holy kiss](#).

Here ends the fifth Festal Letter of [holy](#) Athanasius.

Letter 10

For 338. Coss. Ursus and Polemius; Præf. the same Theodorus, of Heliopolis, and of the Catholics. After him, for the second year, Philagrius; Indict. xi; Easter-day, vii Kal. Ap. xxx Phamenoth; Moon 18½; Æra Dioclet. 54.

Although I have travelled all this distance from you, my brethren, I have not forgotten the custom which obtains among you, which has been delivered to us by the fathers, so as to be silent without notifying to you the time of the annual [holy](#) feast, and the day for its celebration. For although I have been hindered by those afflictions of which you have doubtless heard, and severe trials have been laid upon me, and a great distance has separated us; while the enemies of the [truth](#) have followed our tracks, laying snares to discover a letter from us, so that by their accusations, they might add to the pain of our wounds; yet the Lord, strengthening and comforting us in our afflictions, we have not feared, even when held fast in the midst of such machinations and conspiracies, to indicate and make [known](#) to you our saving Easter-feast, even from the ends of the earth. Also when I wrote to the [presbyters](#) of Alexandria, I urged that these letters might be sent to you through their instrumentality, although I [knew](#) the [fear](#) imposed on them by the adversaries. Still, I exhorted them to be mindful of the apostolic boldness of speech, and to say, 'Nothing separates us from the [love](#) of Christ; neither affliction, nor distress, nor [persecution](#), nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword [Romans 8:35](#).' Thus, keeping the feast myself, I was desirous that you also, my beloved, should keep it; and being conscious that an announcement like this is due from me, I have not delayed to discharge this duty, fearing to be condemned by the Apostolic counsel; 'Render to every man his due.'

2. While I then committed all my affairs to [God](#), I was anxious to celebrate the feast with you, not taking into account the distance between us. For although place separate us, yet the Lord the Giver of the feast, and Who is Himself our feast, Who is also the Bestower of the Spirit, brings us together in [mind](#), in harmony, and in the bond of peace. For when we mind and think the same things, and offer up the same [prayers](#) on behalf of each other, no place can separate us, but the Lord gathers and unites us together. For if He promises, that 'when two or three are gathered together in His name, He is in the midst of them [Matthew 18:20](#),' it is plain that being in the midst of those who in every place are gathered together, He unites them, and receives the [prayers](#) of all of them, as if they were near, and listens to all of them, as they cry out the same [Amen](#). I have borne affliction like this, and all those trials which I mentioned, my brethren, when I wrote to you.

3. And that we may not distress you at all, I would now (only) briefly remind you of these things, because it is not becoming in a man to forget, when more at ease, the pains he experienced in tribulation; lest, like an unthankful and forgetful person, he should be excluded from the divine assembly. For at no time should a man freely praise [God](#), more than when he has passed through afflictions; nor, again, should he at any time give thanks more than when he finds rest from toil and [temptations](#). As Hezekiah, when the [Assyrians](#) perished, praised the Lord, and, gave thanks, saying, 'The Lord is my [salvation](#); and I will not cease to bless You with harp all the days of my life, before the house of the Lord [Isaiah 38:20](#).' And those valiant and blessed three who were tried in [Babylon](#), Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah, when they were in safety and the fire became to them as dew, gave

thanks, praising and 'saying words of [glory](#) to God.' I too like them have written, my brethren, having these things in mind; for even in our time, God has made possible those things which are impossible to men. And those things which could not be accomplished by man, the Lord has shown to be easy of accomplishment, by bringing us to you. For He does not give us as a prey to those who seek to swallow us up. For it is not so much us, as the [Church](#), and the [faith](#) and godliness which they planned to overwhelm with [wickedness](#).

4. But [God](#), who is [good](#), multiplied His loving-kindness towards us, not only when He granted the common [salvation](#) of us all through His Word, but now also, when enemies have [persecuted](#) us, and have sought to seize upon us. As the [blessed Paul](#) says in a certain place, when describing the incomprehensible riches of Christ: 'But [God](#), being rich in mercy, for the great [love](#) wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in follies and [sins](#), quickened us with Christ [Ephesians 2:4-5](#).' For the might of man and of all creatures, is weak and poor; but the Might which is above man, and uncreated, is rich and incomprehensible, and has no beginning, but is [eternal](#). He does not then possess one method only of healing, but being rich, He works in various manners for our [salvation](#) by means of His Word, Who is not restricted or hindered in His dealings towards us; but since He is rich and manifold, He varies Himself according to the individual capacity of each [soul](#). For He is the Word and the Power and the Wisdom of [God](#), as Solomon testifies concerning Wisdom, that 'being one, it can do all things, and remaining in itself, it makes all things new; and passing upon [holy souls](#), fashions the friends of [God](#) and the [prophets](#).' To those then who have not yet attained to the perfect way He becomes like a sheep giving milk, and this was administered by [Paul](#): 'I have fed you with milk, not with meat [1 Corinthians 3:2](#).' To those who have advanced beyond the full stature of childhood, but still are weak as regards perfection, He is their food, according to their capacity, being again administered by [Paul](#), 'Let him that is weak eat herbs.' But as soon as ever a man begins to walk in the perfect way, he is no longer fed with the things before mentioned, but he has the Word for bread, and flesh for food, for it is written, 'Strong meat is for those who are of full age, for those who, by reason of their capacity, have their senses exercised [Hebrews 5:14](#).' And further, when the word is sown it does not yield a uniform produce of fruit in this human life, but one various and rich; for it brings forth, some an hundred, and some sixty, and some thirty, as the Saviour teaches—that Sower of [grace](#), and Bestower of the Spirit. And this is no doubtful matter, nor one that admits no confirmation; but it is in our power to behold the field which is sown by Him; for in the Church the word is manifold and the produce rich. Not with [virgins](#) alone is such a field adorned; nor with [monks](#) alone, but also with [honourable](#) matrimony and the [chastity](#) of each one. For in sowing, He did not compel the will beyond the power. Nor is mercy confined to the perfect, but it is sent down also among those who occupy the middle and the third ranks, so that He might rescue all [men](#) generally to [salvation](#). To this intent He has prepared many mansions [John 14:2](#) with the [Father](#), so that although the dwelling-place is various in proportion to the advance in moral attainment, yet all of us are within the wall, and all of us enter within the same fence, the adversary being cast out, and all his host expelled thence. For apart from light there is darkness, and apart from blessing there is a curse, the [devil](#) also is apart from the [saints](#), and [sin](#) far from [virtue](#). Therefore the [Gospel](#) rebukes [Satan](#), saying, 'Get behind Me, [Satan Matthew 4:10](#).'

But us it calls to itself, saying, 'Enter in at the strait gate.' And again, 'Come, blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom which is prepared for you.' So also the Spirit cried aforetime in the [Psalms](#), saying, 'Enter into His gates with psalms.' For through [virtue](#) a man enters in unto [God](#), as [Moses](#) did into the thick cloud where God was. But through [vice](#) a man goes out from the presence of the Lord; as Cain [Genesis 4:16](#); [Exodus 19:9](#) when he had slain his brother, went out, as far as his will was concerned, from before the face of [God](#); and the Psalmist enters, saying, 'And I will go in to the altar of [God](#), even to the God that delights my youth.' But of the [devil](#) the [Scripture](#) bears [witness](#), that the [devil](#) went out from before [God](#), and smote Job with sore boils. For this is the characteristic of those who go out from before God—to smite and to injure the men of [God](#). And this is the characteristic of those who fall away from the [faith](#)—to injure and [persecute](#) the [faithful](#). The [saints](#) on the other hand, take such to themselves and look upon them as friends; as also the blessed David, using openness of speech, says, 'My eyes are on the faithful of the earth, that they may dwell with me.' But those that are weak in the [faith](#), [Paul](#) urges that we should especially take to ourselves. For [virtue](#) is philanthropic, just as in men of an opposite character, [sin](#) is misanthropic. So Saul, being a sinner, [persecuted](#) David, whereas David, though he had a good opportunity, did not kill Saul. Esau too [persecuted](#) Jacob, while Jacob overcame his [wickedness](#) by meekness. And those eleven sold Joseph, but Joseph, in his loving-kindness, had pity on them.

5. But what need we many words? Our Lord and Saviour, when He was [persecuted](#) by the [Pharisees](#), wept for their destruction. He was injured, but He threatened not; not when He was afflicted, not even when He was killed. But He grieved for those who dared to do such things. He, the Saviour, suffered for [man](#), but they despised and cast from them life, and light, and [grace](#). All these were theirs through that Saviour Who suffered in our stead. And verily for their darkness and blindness, He wept. For if they had understood the things which are written in the [Psalms](#), they would not have been so vainly daring against the Saviour, the Spirit having said, 'Why do the [heathen](#) rage, and the people [imagine](#) a vain thing?' And if they had considered the [prophecy](#) of [Moses](#), they would not have hanged Him Who was their Life. And if they had examined with their understanding the things which were written, they would not have carefully fulfilled the prophecies which were against themselves, so as for their city to be now desolate, [grace](#) taken from them, and they themselves without the law, being no longer called children, but strangers. For thus in the [Psalms](#) was it before declared, saying, 'The strange children have acted [falsely](#) by Me.' And by [Isaiah](#) the [prophet](#); 'I have begotten and brought up children, and they have rejected Me.' And they are no longer named the people of [God](#), and a [holy](#) nation, but rulers of [Sodom](#), and people of [Gomorrha](#); having exceeded in this even the iniquity of the Sodomites, as the [prophet](#) also says, '[Sodom](#) is justified before you.' For the Sodomites raved against [angels](#), but these against the Lord and God and King of all, and these dared to slay the Lord of [angels](#), not [knowing](#) that [Christ](#), who was slain by them, lives. But those [Jews](#) who had conspired against the Lord died, having rejoiced a very little in these temporal things, and having fallen away from those which are [eternal](#). They were [ignorant](#) of this—that the [immortal](#) promise has not respect to temporal enjoyment, but to the hope of those things which are everlasting. For through many tribulations, and labours, and sorrows, the saint enters into the [kingdom of heaven](#); but when he arrives where sorrow, and distress, and sighing, shall flee away, he shall thenceforward enjoy

rest; as Job, who, when tried here, was afterwards the familiar friend of the Lord. But the lover of pleasures, rejoicing for a little while, afterwards passes a sorrowful life; like Esau, who had temporal food, but afterwards was condemned thereby.

6. We may take as a type of this distinction, the departure of the children of [Israel](#) and the Egyptians from [Egypt](#). For the Egyptians, rejoicing a little while in their [injustice](#) against [Israel](#), when they went forth, were all drowned in the deep; but the people of [God](#), being for a time smitten and injured, by the conduct of the taskmasters, when they came out of [Egypt](#), passed through the sea unharmed, and walked in the wilderness as an inhabited place. For although the place was unfrequented by man and desolate, yet, through the gracious gift of the law, and through converse with [angels](#), it was no longer desert, but far more than an inhabited country. As also Elisha, when he thought he was alone in the wilderness, was with companies of [angels](#); so in this case, though the people were at first afflicted and in the wilderness, yet those who remained faithful afterwards entered the land of promise. In like manner those who suffer temporal afflictions here, finally having endured, attain comfort, while those who here [persecute](#) are trodden under foot, and have no good end. For even the rich man [Luke 16:19](#), as the [Gospel](#) affirms, having indulged in pleasure here for a little while, suffered hunger there, and having drunk largely here, he there thirsted exceedingly. But Lazarus, after being afflicted in worldly things, found rest in heaven, and having hungered for bread ground from corn, he was there satisfied with that which is better than manna, even the Lord who came down and said, 'I am the bread which came down from heaven, and gives life to [mankind](#) [John 6:51](#).'

7. Oh! my dearly beloved, if we shall gain comfort from afflictions, if rest from labours, if health after sickness, if from death [immortality](#), it is not right to be distressed by the temporal ills that lay hold on [mankind](#). It does not become us to be agitated because of the trials which befall us. It is not right to [fear](#) if the gang that contended with Christ, should conspire against godliness; but we should the more please God through these things, and should consider such matters as the probation and exercise of a [virtuous](#) life. For how shall patience be looked for, if there be not previously labours and sorrows? Or how can [fortitude](#) be tested with no assault from enemies? Or how shall magnanimity be exhibited, unless after contumely and [injustice](#)? Or how can long-suffering be [proved](#), unless there has first been the [calumny](#) of [Antichrist](#)? And, finally, how can a man behold [virtue](#) with his eyes, unless the iniquity of the very [wicked](#) has previously appeared? Thus even [our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ](#) comes before us, when He would show men how to suffer, Who when He was smitten bore it patiently, being reviled He reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not, but He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to buffetings, and turned not His face from spitting [1 Peter 2:23](#); [Isaiah 50:6](#); and at last, was willingly led to death, that we might behold in Him the image of all that is [virtuous](#) and [immortal](#), and that we, conducting ourselves after these examples, might [truly](#) tread on serpents and scorpions, and on all the power of the enemy.

8. Thus too [Paul](#), while he conducted himself after the example of the Lord, exhorted us, saying, 'Be followers of me, as I also am of Christ [1 Corinthians 11:1](#).' In this way he prevailed against all the divisions of the [devil](#), writing, 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor [angels](#), nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the [love](#) of God which is in Jesus Christ [Romans 8:38-39](#).' For the enemy draws near to us in afflictions, and trials, and labours, using every endeavour to ruin us. But the man who is in [Christ](#), combating those things that are contrary, and opposing [wrath](#) by long-suffering, contumely by meekness, and [vice](#) by [virtue](#), obtains the victory, and exclaims, 'I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me;' and, 'In all these things we are conquerors through Christ Who loved us.' This is the [grace](#) of the Lord, and these are the Lord's means of restoration for the children of men. For He suffered to prepare freedom from suffering for those who suffer in Him, He descended that He might raise us up, He took on Him the trial of being born, that we might [love](#) Him Who is unbegotten, He went down to corruption, that corruption might put on [immortality](#), He became weak for us, that we might rise with power, He descended to death, that He might bestow on us [immortality](#), and give life to the dead. Finally, He became man, that we who die as men might live again, and that death should no more reign over us; for the Apostolic word proclaims, 'Death shall not have the dominion over us.'

9. Now because they did not thus consider these matters, the Ario-maniacs, being opponents of [Christ](#), and [heretics](#), smite Him who is their Helper with their tongue, and [blaspheme](#) Him who set [them] free, and hold all manner of different opinions against the Saviour. Because of His coming down, which was on behalf of [man](#), they have denied His essential Godhead; and seeing that He came forth from the Virgin, they [doubt](#) His being [truly](#) the [Son of God](#), and considering Him as become incarnate in time, they deny His [eternity](#); and, looking upon Him as having suffered for us, they do not [believe](#) in Him as the incorruptible Son from the incorruptible Father. And finally, because He endured for our sakes, they deny the things which concern His essential [eternity](#); allowing the deed of the unthankful, these despise the Saviour, and offer Him insult instead of acknowledging His [grace](#). To them may these words justly be addressed: Oh! unthankful opponent of [Christ](#), altogether [wicked](#), and the slayer of his Lord, mentally blind, and a Jew in his [mind](#), had you understood the [Scriptures](#), and listened to the [saints](#), who said, 'Cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved;' or again, 'Send out Your light and Your [truth](#);'—then would you have [known](#) that the Lord did not descend for His own sake, but for ours; and for this reason, you would the more have admired His loving kindness. And had you considered what the Father is, and what the [Son](#), you would not have [blasphemed](#) the [Son](#), as of a mutable nature. And had you understood His work of loving-kindness towards us, you would not have alienated the Son from the [Father](#), nor have looked upon Him as a stranger, Who reconciled us to His Father. I [know](#) these [words] are grievous, not only to those who dispute with Christ, but also to the schismatics; for they are united together, as men of kindred feelings. For they have learned to rend the seamless coat of God: they think it not strange to divide the indivisible Son from the Father.

10. I [know](#) indeed, that when these things are spoken, they will gnash their teeth upon us, with the [devil](#) who stirs them up, since they are troubled by the declaration of the [true glory](#) concerning the Redeemer. But the Lord, Who always has scoffed at the [devil](#), does the same even now, saying, 'I am in the [Father](#), and the Father in Me [John 14:11](#).' This is the Lord, Who is manifested in the [Father](#), and in Whom also the Father is manifested;

Who, being [truly](#) the Son of the [Father](#), at last became incarnate for our sakes, that He might offer Himself to the Father in our stead, and redeem us through His oblation and [sacrifice](#). This is He Who once brought the people of old time out of [Egypt](#); but Who afterwards redeemed all of us, or rather the whole race of [men](#), from death, and brought them up from the grave. This is He Who in old time was [sacrificed](#) as a lamb, He being signified in the lamb; but Who afterwards was slain for us, for 'Christ our [Passover](#) is [sacrificed](#) [1 Corinthians 5:7](#).' This is He Who delivered us from the snare of the hunters, from the opponents of [Christ](#), I say, and from the schismatics, and again rescued us His [Church](#). And because we were then victims of deceit, He has now delivered us by His own self.

11. What then is our duty, my brethren, for the sake of these things, but to praise and give thanks to [God](#), the King of all? And let us first exclaim in the words of the [Psalms](#), 'Blessed be the Lord, Who has not given us over as a prey to their teeth.' Let us keep the feast in that way which He has dedicated for us unto [salvation](#)—the [holy](#) day Easter—so that we may celebrate the feast which is in heaven with the [angels](#). Thus anciently, the people of the [Jews](#), when they came out of affliction into a state of ease, kept the feast, staging a song of praise for their victory. So also the people in the time of Esther, because they were delivered from the edict of death, kept a feast to the Lord, reckoning it a feast, returning thanks to the Lord, and praising Him for having changed their condition. Therefore let us, performing our vows to the Lord, and confessing our [sins](#), keep the feast to the Lord, in conversation, moral conduct, and manner of life; praising our Lord, Who has chastened us a little, but has not utterly failed nor forsaken us, nor altogether kept silence from us. For if, having brought us out of the deceitful and famous [Egypt](#) of the opponents of [Christ](#), He has caused us to pass through many trials and afflictions, as it were in the wilderness, to His [holy](#) Church, so that from hence, according to custom, we can send to you, as well as receive letters from you; on this account especially I both give thanks to God myself, and exhort you to thank Him with me and on my behalf, this being the Apostolic custom, which these opponents of [Christ](#), and the schismatics, wished to put an end to, and to break off. The Lord did not permit it, but both renewed and preserved that which was ordained by Him through the Apostle, so that we may keep the feast together, and together keep [holy](#)-day, according to the tradition and commandment of the fathers.

12. We begin the [fast of forty days](#) on the nineteenth of the month Mechir (Feb. 13); and the [holy Easter](#)-fast on the twenty-fourth of the month Phamenoth ([Mar. 20](#)). We cease from the fast on the twenty-ninth of the month Phamenoth ([Mar. 25](#)), late in the evening of the seventh day. And we thus keep the feast on the first day of the week which dawns on the thirtieth of the month Phamenoth ([Mar. 26](#)); from which, to Pentecost, we keep [holy](#)-day, through seven weeks, one after the other. For when we have first meditated properly on these things, we shall attain to be counted worthy of those which are [eternal](#), through [Christ Jesus our Lord](#), through Whom to the Father be [glory](#) and dominion for ever and ever. [Amen](#). Greet one another with a [holy kiss](#), remembering us in your [holy prayers](#). All the brethren who are with me salute you, at all times remembering you. And I [pray](#) that you may have health in the [Lord](#), my beloved brethren, whom we [love](#) above all.

Here ends the tenth Letter of [holy](#) Athanasius.

Letter 11

For 339. Coss. Constantius Augustus II, Constans I; Præfect, Philagrius the Cappadocian, for the second time; Indict. xii; Easter-day xvii Kal. Mai, xx Pharmuthi; Æra Dioclet. 55.

The [blessed Paul](#), being girt about with every [virtue](#), and called faithful of the Lord—for he was conscious of nothing in himself but what was a [virtue](#) and a praise, or what was in harmony with [love](#) and godliness—clave to these things more and more, and was carried up even to heavenly places, and was borne to Paradise [2 Corinthians 12:4](#); to the end that, as he surpassed the conversation of [men](#), he should be exalted above men. And when he descended, he preached to every man; 'We [know](#) in part, and we prophesy in part; here I [know](#) in part; but then shall I [know](#) even as also I am [known](#) [1 Corinthians 13:9, 12](#).' For, in [truth](#), he was [known](#) to those [saints](#) who are in heaven, as their fellow-citizen. And in relation to all that is future and perfect, the things [known](#) by him here were in part; but with respect to those things which were committed and entrusted to him by the Lord, he was perfect; as he said, 'We who are perfect, should be thus minded [Philippians 3:15](#).' For as the [Gospel](#) of Christ is the fulfilment and accomplishment of the ministration which was supplied by the law of [Israel](#), so future things will be the accomplishment of such as now exist, the [Gospel](#) being then fulfilled, and the faithful receiving those things which, not seeing now, they yet hope for, as [Paul](#) says; 'For what a man sees, why does he also hope for? But if we hope for those things we see [not], we then by patience wait for them [Romans 8:24-25](#).' Since then that blessed man was of such a character, and apostolic [grace](#) was committed to him, he wrote, wishing 'that all [men](#) should be as he was [1 Corinthians 7:7](#).' For [virtue](#) is philanthropic, and great is the company of the [kingdom of heaven](#), for thousands of thousands and myriads of myriads there serve the Lord. And though a man enters it through a strait and narrow way, yet having entered, he beholds immeasurable space, and a place greater than any other, as they declare, who were eye-witnesses and heirs of these things. 'You placed afflictions before us.' But afterwards, having related their afflictions, they say, 'You brought us forth into a wide place;' and again, 'In affliction You have enlarged us.' For [truly](#), my brethren, the course of the [saints](#) here is straitened; since they either toil painfully through longing for those things which are to come, as he who said, 'Woe is me that my pilgrimage is prolonged;' or they are distressed and spent for the [salvation](#) of other men, as [Paul](#) wrote to the Corinthians, saying, 'Lest, when I come to you, God should [humble](#) me, and I should bewail many of those who have [sinned](#) already, and not repented for the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed [2 Corinthians 12:21](#).' As Samuel bewailed the destruction of Saul, and Jeremiah wept for the captivity of the people. But after this affliction, and sorrow, and sighing, when they depart from this world, a certain divine [gladness](#), and pleasure, and exultation receives them, from which misery and sorrow, and sighing, flee away.

2. Since we are thus circumstanced, my brethren, let us never loiter in the path of [virtue](#); for hereto he counsels us, saying, 'Be followers of me, as I also am of Christ [1 Corinthians 11:1](#).' For he gave this advice not to the Corinthians only, since he was not their Apostle only, but being 'a teacher of the [Gentiles](#) in [faith](#) and verity [1 Timothy 2:7](#),' he admonished us all through them; and in short, the things he wrote to each particular person are commandments common to all [men](#). On this account in writing to different people, some he exhorted as, for instance, in the Epistles to the Romans, and the Ephesians, and Philemon. Some he reprov'd, and was indignant with them, as in the case of the Corinthians and Galatians. To some he gave advice, as to the Colossians and Thessalonians. The Philippians he approved of, and rejoiced in them. The Hebrews he taught that the law was a shadow to them. But to his elect sons, Timothy and Titus, when they were near, he gave instruction; when far away, he put them in remembrance. For he was all things to all [men](#); and being himself a perfect man, he adapted his teaching to the need of every one, so that by all means he might rescue some of them. Therefore his word was not without fruit; but in every place it is planted and productive even to this day.

3. And wherefore, my beloved? For it is right that we should search into the apostolic mind. Not only in the beginning of the Epistles, but towards their close, and in the middle of them, he used persuasions and admonitions. I hope therefore that, by your [prayers](#), I shall in no respect [falsely](#) represent the plan of that [holy](#) man. As he was well skilled in these divine matters, and [knew](#) the power of the divine teaching, he deemed it necessary, in the first place, to make [known](#) the word concerning Christ, and the [mystery](#) regarding Him; and then afterwards to point to the correction of habits, so that when they had learned to [know](#) the Lord, they might earnestly desire to do those things which He commanded. For when the Guide to the [laws](#) is unknown, one does not readily pass on to the observance of them. Faithful [Moses](#), the minister of [God](#), adopted this method; for when he promulgated the words of the divine dispensation of [laws](#), he first proclaimed the matters relating to the [knowledge](#) of God: 'Hear, O [Israel](#), the Lord your God is one Lord [Deuteronomy 6:4](#).' Afterwards, having shadowed Him forth to the people, and taught of Him in Whom they ought to [believe](#), and informed their minds of Him Who is [truly God](#), he proceeds to lay down the law relating to those things whereby a man may be well-pleasing to Him, saying, 'You shall not commit [adultery](#); you shall not steal;' together with the other commandments. For also, according to the Apostolic teaching, 'He that draws near to God must [believe](#) that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek Him [Hebrews 11:6](#).' Now He is sought by means of [virtuous](#) deeds, as the [prophet](#) says; 'Seek the Lord, and when you have found Him, call upon Him; when He is near to you, let the [wicked](#) forsake his ways, and the lawless man his thoughts [Isaiah 55:6-7](#).'

4. It will also be well if a man is not offended at the testimony of the Shepherd, saying in the beginning of his book, 'Before all things [believe](#) that there is [one God](#), Who created and established all these things, and from non-[existence](#) called them into being.' And, further, the blessed Evangelists—who recorded the words of the Lord—in the beginning of the [Gospels](#), wrote the things concerning our Saviour; so that, having first made [known](#) the Lord, the Creator, they might be [believed](#) when narrating the events that took place. For how could they have been [believed](#), when writing respecting him who [was blind]

from his mother's womb, and those other blind men who recovered their sight, and those who rose from the dead, and the changing of water into wine, and those [lepers](#) who were cleansed; if they had not taught of Him as the Creator, writing, 'In the beginning was the Word [John 1:1](#)?' Or, according to Matthew, that He Who was born of the seed of [David](#), was [Emmanuel](#), and the Son of the living God? He from Whom the [Jews](#), with the [Arians](#), turn away their faces, but Whom we acknowledge and worship. The Apostle therefore, as was meet, sent to different people, but his own son he especially reminded, 'that he should not despise the things in which he had been instructed by him,' and enjoined on him, 'Remember Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead, of the seed of [David](#), according to my [Gospel](#).' And speaking of these things being delivered to him, to be always had in remembrance, he immediately writes to him, saying, 'Meditate on these things: be engaged in them. [1 Timothy 4:15](#)' For constant meditation, and the remembrance of divine words, strengthens [piety](#) towards [God](#), and produces a [love](#) to Him inseparable and not merely formal; as he, being of this [mind](#), speaks about himself and others like-minded, saying boldly, 'Who shall separate us from the [love](#) of God [Romans 8:35](#)?' For such men, being confirmed in the [Lord](#), and possessing an unshaken disposition towards Him, and being one in spirit (for [1 Corinthians 6:17](#) 'he who is joined to the Spirit is one spirit'), are sure 'as the mount Sion;' and although ten thousand trials may rage against them, they are founded upon a rock, which is Christ. In Him the careless take no delight; and having no continuous purpose of good, they are sullied by temporal attacks, and esteem nothing more highly than present things, being unstable and deserving reproof as regards the [faith](#). For 'either the care of this world, or the deceitfulness of riches, chokes them [Matthew 13:22](#);' or, as Jesus said in that [parable](#) which had reference to them, since they have not established the [faith](#) that has been preached to them, but continue only for a time, immediately, in time of [persecution](#), or when affliction arises through the word, they are offended. Now those who meditate [evil](#) we say, [think] not [truth](#), but [falsehood](#) and not righteousness, but iniquity, for their tongue learns to speak lies. They have done [evil](#), and have not ceased that they might repent. For, persevering with delight in [wicked](#) actions, they hasten thereto without turning back, even treading under foot the commandment with regard to neighbours, and, instead of loving them, devise [evil](#) against them, as the saint testifies, saying, 'And those who seek me [evil](#) have spoken vanity, and imagined deceit all the day.' But that the [cause](#) of such meditation is none other than the want of instruction, the divine proverb has already declared; 'The son that forsakes the commandment of his father meditates [evil](#) words.' But such meditation, because it is [evil](#), the [Holy Spirit](#) blames in these words, and reproves too in other terms, saying, 'Your hands are polluted with blood, your fingers with [sins](#); your lips have spoken lawlessness, and your tongue imagines iniquity: no man speaks right things, nor is there [true](#) judgment [Isaiah 59:3-4](#).' But what the end is of such perverse imagining, He immediately declares, saying, 'They trust in vanities and speak [falsehood](#); for they conceive mischief, and bring forth lawlessness. They have hatched the eggs of an asp, and woven a spider's web; and he who is prepared to eat of their eggs, when he breaks them finds gall, and a basilisk therein.' Again, what the hope of such is, He has already announced. 'Because righteousness does not overtake them, when they waited for light, they had darkness; when they waited for brightness, they walked in a thick cloud. They shall grope for the wall like the blind, and as those who have no eyes

shall they grope; they shall fall at noon-day as at midnight; when dead, they shall groan. They shall roar together as a bear, or as a dove.'

This is the fruit of [wickedness](#), these rewards are given to its familiars, for perverseness does not deliver its own. But in [truth](#), against them it sets itself, and it tears them first, and on them especially it summons ruin. Woe to them against whom these are brought; for 'it is sharper than a two-edged sword [Hebrews 4:12](#),' slaying beforehand and very swiftly those who will lay hold of it. For their tongue, according to the testimony of the Psalmist, is a 'sharp sword, and their teeth spears and arrows.' But the wonderful part is that while often he against whom men [imagine](#) [harm] suffers nothing, they are pierced by their own spears: for they possess, even in themselves, before they reach others, [anger](#), [wrath](#), [malice](#), guile, [hatred](#), bitterness. Although they may not be able to bring these upon others, they forthwith return upon and against themselves, as he [prays](#), saying, 'Let their sword enter into their own heart.' There is also such a proverb as this: 'The [wicked](#) is held fast by the chain of his [sins](#).'

5. The [Jews](#) in their imaginings, and in their agreeing to act [unjustly](#) against the Lord, forgot that they were bringing [wrath](#) upon themselves. Therefore does the Word lament for them, saying, 'Why do the people exalt themselves, and the nations [imagine](#) vain things?' For vain indeed was the imagination of the [Jews](#), meditating death against the Life, and devising unreasonable things against the 'Word of the Father.' For who that looks upon their dispersion, and the desolation of their city, may not aptly say, 'Woe unto them, for they have imagined an [evil](#) imagination, saying against their own [soul](#), let us bind the righteous man, because he is not pleasing to us.' And full well is it so, my brethren; for when they erred concerning the [Scriptures](#), they [knew](#) not that 'he who digs a pit for his neighbour falls therein; and he who destroys a hedge, a serpent shall bite him [Ecclesiastes 10:8](#).' And if they had not turned their faces from the Lord, they would have feared what was written before in the divine Psalms: 'The [heathen](#) are caught in the pit which they made; in the snare which they hid is their own foot taken. The Lord is [known](#) when executing judgments: by the works of his hands is the sinner taken.' Let them observe this, and how that 'the snare they [know](#) not shall come upon them, and the net they hid take them.' But they understood not these things, for had they done so, 'they would not have crucified the Lord of [glory 1 Corinthians 2:8](#).'

6. Therefore the righteous and faithful servants of the Lord, who 'are made [disciples](#) for the [kingdom of heaven](#), and bring forth from it things new and old;' and who 'meditate on the words of the Lord, when sitting in the house, when lying down or rising up, and when walking by the way;'—since they are of good hope because of the promise of the Spirit which said, 'Blessed is the man that has not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of corrupters; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law does he meditate day and night;'—being grounded in [faith](#), rejoicing in hope, fervent in spirit, they have boldness to say, 'My mouth shall speak wisdom, and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.' And again, 'I have meditated on all Your works, and on the work of Your hands has been my meditation.' And, 'If I have remembered You on my bed, and in the morning have meditated on You.' Afterwards, advancing in boldness, they say, 'The meditation of my heart is before You at

all times.' And what is the end of such an one? He cites immediately; 'The Lord is my Helper and my Redeemer.' For to those who thus examine themselves, and conform their hearts to the Lord, nothing adverse shall happen; for indeed, their heart is strengthened by confidence in the [Lord](#), as it is written, 'They who trust in the Lord are as mount Sion: he who dwells in Jerusalem shall not be moved for ever.' For if at any time, the crafty one shall be presumptuously bold against them, chiefly that he may break the rank of the [saints](#), and [cause](#) a division among brethren; even in this the Lord is with them, not only as an avenger on their behalf, but also when they have already been beaten, as a deliverer for them. For this is the divine promise; 'The Lord shall fight for you [Exodus 14:14](#).' Henceforth, although afflictions and trials from without overtake them, yet, being fashioned after the apostolic words, and 'being steadfast in tribulations, and persevering in [prayers Romans 12:12](#)' and in meditation on the law, they stand against those things which befall them, are well-pleasing to [God](#), and give utterance to the words which are written, 'Afflictions and distresses are come upon me; but Your commandments are my meditation.'

7. And whereas, not only in action, but also in the thoughts of the [mind](#), men are moved to deeds of [virtue](#), he afterwards adds, saying, 'My eyes prevent the dawn, that I might meditate on Your words.' For it is meet that the spiritual meditations of those who are whole should precede their bodily actions. And does not our Saviour, when intending to teach this very thing begin with the thoughts of the mind? saying, 'Whosoever looks on a [woman](#) to [lust](#) after her, has already committed [adultery](#);' and, 'Whosoever shall be [angry](#) with his brother, is guilty of [murder](#).' For where there is no [wrath](#), [murder](#) is prevented; and where [lust](#) is first removed, there can be no accusation of [adultery](#). Hence meditation on the law is necessary, my beloved, and uninterrupted converse with [virtue](#), 'that the saint may lack nothing, but be perfect to every good work [2 Timothy 3:17](#).' For by these things is the promise of [eternal](#) life, as [Paul](#) wrote to Timothy, calling constant meditation exercise, and saying, 'Exercise yourself unto godliness; for bodily exercise profits little; but godliness is profitable for all things, since it has the promise of the present life, and of that which is [eternal 1 Timothy 4:7-8](#).'

8. Worthy of admiration is the [virtue](#) of that man, my brethren! for through Timothy he enjoins upon all, that they should have regard to nothing more than to godliness, but above everything to adjudge the chief place to [faith](#) in [God](#). For what [grace](#) has the unrighteous man, though he may feign to keep the commandments? Nay rather, the unrighteous man is unable even to keep a portion of the law, for as is his [mind](#), such of necessity must be his actions; as the Spirit says, reproving such; 'The fool has said in his heart, there is no God.' After this the Word, showing that actions correspond with thoughts, says, 'They are corrupt; they are profane in their machinations.' The unrighteous man then, in every respect corrupts his body; stealing, committing [adultery](#), cursing, being drunken, and doing such like things. Even as Jeremiah, the [prophet](#), convicts [Israel](#) of these things, crying out and saying, 'Oh, that I had a lodge far off in the wilderness! then would I leave my people and depart from them: for they are all adulterers, an assembly of oppressors, who draw out their tongue as a bow; lying and not [truth](#) has prevailed upon the earth, and they proceed from iniquities to iniquities; but Me they have not [known](#).' [Thus, for wickedness](#) and [falsehood](#), and for deeds, in which they [proceed]

from iniquity to iniquity, he reproves their practices; but, because they [knew](#) not the Lord, and were faithless, he charges them with unrighteousness.

9. For [faith](#) and godliness are allied to each other, and sisters; and he who believes in Him is godly, and he also who is godly, believes the more. He therefore who is in a state of [wickedness](#), undoubtedly also wanders from the [faith](#); and he who falls from godliness, falls from the [true faith](#). [Paul](#), for instance, bearing testimony to the same point, advises his [disciple](#), saying, 'Avoid profane conversations; for they increase unto more ungodliness, and their word takes hold as does a canker, of whom are Hymenæus and Philetus [2 Timothy 2:16-17](#).' In what their [wickedness](#) consisted he declares, saying, 'Who have erred from the [faith](#), saying that the resurrection is already past.' But again, desirous of showing that [faith](#) is yoked with godliness, the Apostle says, 'And all those who will live godly in Jesus Christ shall suffer [persecution](#).' Afterwards, that no man should renounce godliness through [persecution](#), he counsels them to preserve the [faith](#), adding, 'You, therefore, continue in the things you have learned, and hast been assured of.' And as when brother is helped by brother, they become as a wall to each other; so [faith](#) and godliness, being of like growth, hang together, and he who is practised in the one, of necessity is strengthened by the other. Therefore, wishing the [disciple](#) to be exercised in godliness unto the end, and to contend for the [faith](#), he counsels them, saying, 'Fight the good fight of [faith](#), and lay hold on [eternal](#) life [1 Timothy 4:7](#).' For if a man first put away the [wickedness](#) of [idols](#), and rightly confesses Him Who is [truly God](#), he next fights by [faith](#) with those who [war](#) against Him.

10. For of these two things we speak of—[faith](#) and godliness—the hope is the same, even everlasting life; for he says, 'Fight the good fight of [faith](#); lay hold on [eternal](#) life.' And, 'exercise yourself unto godliness, for it has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come [1 Timothy 4:7-8](#).' For this [cause](#), the Ario-maniacs, who now have gone out from the [Church](#), being opponents of [Christ](#), have dug a pit of unbelief, into which they themselves have been thrust; and, since they have advanced in ungodliness, they 'overthrow the [faith](#) of the simple [Romans 16:18](#);' blaspheming the [Son of God](#), and saying that He is a creature, and has His being from things which are not. But as then against the adherents of Philetus and Hymenæus, so now the Apostle forewarns all [men](#) against ungodliness like theirs, saying, 'The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord [knows](#) them that are His; and, Let every one that names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity [2 Timothy 2:19](#).' For it is well that a man should depart from [wickedness](#) and deeds of iniquity, that he may be able properly to celebrate the feast; for he who is defiled with the pollutions of the [wicked](#) is not able to [sacrifice](#) the [Passover](#) to the Lord our God. Hence, the people who were then in [Egypt](#) said, 'We cannot [sacrifice](#) the [Passover](#) in [Egypt](#) to the Lord our God [Exodus 8:26](#).' For [God](#), Who is over all, willed that they should go far away from the servants of [Pharaoh](#), and from the furnace of iron; so that being set free from [wickedness](#), and having carefully put away from them all strange notions, they might receive the [knowledge](#) of [God](#) and of [virtuous](#) actions. For He says, 'Go far from them: depart from the midst of them, and touch not the unclean things [2 Corinthians 6:17](#).' For a man will not otherwise depart from [sin](#), and lay hold on [virtuous](#) deeds, than by meditation on his acts; and when he has been practised by exercise in godliness, he will lay hold on the confession of [faith](#), which also [Paul](#), after he

had fought the fight, possessed, namely, the crown of righteousness which was laid up; which the righteous Judge will give, not to him alone, but to all who are like him.

11. For such meditation and exercise in godliness, being at all times the [habit](#) of the [saints](#), is urgent on us at the present time, when the divine word desires us to keep the feast with them if we are in this disposition. For what else is the feast, but the constant worship of [God](#), and the recognition of godliness, and unceasing [prayers](#) from the whole heart with agreement? So [Paul](#) wishing us to be ever in this disposition, commands, saying, 'Rejoice evermore; [pray](#) without ceasing; in everything give thanks.' Not therefore separately, but unitedly and collectively, let us all keep the feast together, as the [prophet](#) exhorts, saying, 'O come, let us [rejoice](#) in the Lord; let us make a joyful noise unto God our Saviour.' Who then is so negligent, or who so disobedient to the divine voice, as not to leave everything, and run to the general and common assembly of the feast? which is not in one place only, for not one place alone keeps the feast; but 'into all the earth their song has gone forth, and to the ends of the world their words.' And the [sacrifice](#) is not offered in one place, but 'in every nation, [incense](#) and a pure [sacrifice](#) is offered unto God.' So when in like manner from all in every place, praise and [prayer](#) shall ascend to the gracious and good Father, when the whole [Catholic Church](#) which is in every place, with [gladness](#) and rejoicing, celebrates together the same worship to [God](#), when all [men](#) in common send up a song of praise and say, [Amen](#); how blessed will it not be, my brethren! who will not, at that time, be engaged, [praying](#) rightly? For the walls of every adverse power, yea even of [Jericho](#) especially, falling down, and the gift of the [Holy Spirit](#) being then richly poured upon all [men](#), every man perceiving the coming of the Spirit shall say, 'We are all filled in the morning with Your favour, and we [rejoice](#) and are made glad in our days.'

12. Since this is so, let us make a joyful noise with the [saints](#), and let no one of us fail of his duty in these things; counting as nothing the affliction or the trials which, especially at this time, have been enviously directed against us by the party of Eusebius. Even now they wish to injure us, and by their accusations to compass our death, because of that godliness, whose helper is the Lord. But, as faithful servants of [God](#), [knowing](#) that He is our [salvation](#) in the time of trouble:—for our Lord promised beforehand, saying, 'Blessed are you when men revile you and [persecute](#) you, and say all manner of [evil](#) against you [falsely](#), for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for your reward is great in heaven [Matthew 5:11-12](#).' Again, it is the Redeemer's own word, that affliction shall not befall every man in this world, but only those who have a [holy fear](#) of Him:—on this account, the more the enemies hem us in, the more let us be at liberty; although they revile us, let us come together; and the more they would turn us aside from godliness, let us the more boldly preach it saying, 'All these things are come upon us, yet have we not forgotten You,' and we have not done [evil](#) with the Ario-maniacs, who say that You have [existence](#) from those things that exist not. The Word which is eternally with the [Father](#), is also from Him.

13. Let us therefore keep the feast, my brethren, celebrating it not at all as an occasion of distress and mourning, neither let us mingle with [heretics](#) through temporal trials brought upon us by godliness. But if anything that would promote [joy](#) and [gladness](#) should offer,

let us attend to it; so that our heart may not be sad, like that of Cain; but that, like faithful and good servants of the Lord, we may hear the words, 'Enter into the [joy](#) of your Lord [Matthew 25:21](#).' For we do not institute days of mourning and sorrow, as some may consider these of Easter to be, but we keep the feast, being filled with [joy](#) and [gladness](#). We keep it then, not regarding it after the deceitful [error](#) of the [Jews](#), nor according to the teaching of the [Arians](#), which takes away the Son from the Godhead, and numbers Him among creatures; but we look to the correct doctrine we derive from the Lord. For the guile of the [Jews](#), and the unbounded impiety of the [Arians](#), [cause](#) nothing but sad reflections, for the former at the beginning slew the Lord; but these latter take away His position of having conquered that death to which the [Jews](#) brought Him, in that they say He is not the Creator, but a creature. For if He were a creature, He would have been holden by death; but if He was not holden by death, according to the [Scriptures](#), He is not a creature, but the Lord of the creatures, and the subject of this [immortal](#) feast.

14. For the Lord of death would abolish death, and being Lord, what He would was accomplished; for we have all passed from death unto life. But the imagination of the [Jews](#), and of those who are like them, was vain, since the result was not such as they contemplated, but turned out adverse to themselves; and 'at both of them He that sits in the heaven shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.' Hence, when our Saviour was led to death, He restrained the [women](#) who followed Him weeping, saying, 'Weep not for Me [Luke 23:28](#);' meaning to show that the Lord's death is an event, not of sorrow but of [joy](#), and that He Who dies for us is alive. For He does not derive His being from those things which are not, but from the Father. It is [truly](#) a subject of [joy](#), that we can see the signs of victory against death, even our own incorruptibility, through the body of the Lord. For since He rose gloriously, it is clear that the resurrection of all of us will take place; and since His body remained without corruption, there can be no [doubt](#) regarding our incorruption. For as by one man [Romans 5:12](#), as says [Paul](#) (and it is the [truth](#)), [sin](#) passed upon all [men](#), so by the resurrection of [our Lord Jesus Christ](#), we shall all rise. 'For,' he says, 'this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on [immortality](#) [1 Corinthians 15:53](#).' Now this came to pass in the time of the Passion, in which our Lord died for us, for 'our [Passover](#), Christ, is [sacrificed](#).' Therefore, because He was [sacrificed](#), let each of us feed upon Him, and with alacrity and diligence partake of His sustenance; since He is given to all without grudging, and is in every one 'a well of water flowing to everlasting life [John 4:14](#).'

15. We begin the [fast of forty days](#) on the ninth of the month Phamenoth ([Mar. 5](#)); and having, in these days, served the Lord with abstinence, and first purified ourselves, we commence also the [holy Easter](#) on the fourteenth of the month Pharmuthi (April 9). Afterwards, extending the fast to the seventh day, on the seventeenth of the month, let us rest late in the evening. And the light of the Lord having first dawned upon us, and the [holy](#) Sunday on which our Lord rose shining upon us, we should [rejoice](#) and be glad with the [joy](#) which arises from good works, during the seven weeks which remain—to Pentecost—giving [glory](#) to the [Father](#), and saying, 'This is the day which the Lord has made: we will [rejoice](#) and be glad in it,' through [our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ](#), through Whom to the same, and to His Father, be [glory](#) and dominion for ever and ever.

[Amen](#). Salute one another with a [holy kiss](#). All the brethren who are with me salute you. That you may have health in the [Lord](#), I [pray](#), brethren beloved.

Here ends the eleventh Letter of [holy](#) Athanasius.

Letter 13

(For 341.) Coss. Marcellinus, Probinus; Præf. Longinus; Indict. xiv; Easter-day, xiii Kal. Maii, xxiv Pharmuthi; Æra Dioclet. 57.

Again, my beloved brethren, I am ready to notify to you the saving feast, which will take place according to annual custom. For although the opponents of Christ have oppressed you together with us with afflictions and sorrows; yet, God having comforted us by our mutual [faith](#), behold, I write to you even from [Rome](#). Keeping the feast here with the brethren, still I keep it with you also in will and in spirit, for we send up [prayers](#) in common to [God](#), 'Who has granted us not only to [believe](#) in Him, but also now to suffer for His sake [Philippians 1:29](#).' For troubled as we are, because we are so far from you, He moves us to write, that by a letter we might comfort ourselves, and provoke one another to good. For, indeed, numerous afflictions and bitter [persecutions](#) directed against the Church have been against us. For [heretics](#), corrupt in their [mind](#), untried in the [faith](#), rising against the [truth](#), violently [persecute](#) the [Church](#), and of the brethren, some are scourged and others torn with stripes, and hardest of all, their insults reach even to the Bishops. Nevertheless, it is not becoming, on this account, that we should neglect the feast. But we should especially remember it, and not at all forget its commemoration from time to time. Now the unbelievers do not consider that there is a season for feasts, because they spend all their lives in revelling and follies; and the feasts which they keep are an occasion of grief rather than of [joy](#). But to us in this present life they are above all an uninterrupted passage [to heaven]—it is indeed our season. For such things as these serve for exercise and trial, so that, having approved ourselves [zealous](#) and chosen servants of [Christ](#), we may be fellow-heirs with the [saints](#). For thus Job: 'The whole world is a place of trial to men upon the earth.' Nevertheless, they are [proved](#) in this world by afflictions, labours, and sorrows, to the end that each one may receive of God such reward as is meet for him, as He says by the [prophet](#), 'I am the Lord, Who tries the hearts, and searches the reins, to give to every one according to his ways .'

[2. Not that He first knows](#) the things of a man on his being [proved](#) (for He [knows](#) them all before they come to pass), but because He is [good](#) and philanthropic, He distributes to each a due reward according to his actions, so that every man may exclaim, Righteous is the [judgment of God](#)! As the [prophet](#) says again, 'The Lord tries the just, and discerns the reins.' Again, for this [cause](#) He tries each one of us, either that to those who [know](#) it not, [virtue](#) may be manifested by means of those who are [proved](#), as was said respecting Job; 'Do you think that I was revealed to you for any other [cause](#), than that you should be seen righteous?' or that, when men come to a sense of their deeds, they may be able to [know](#) of what manner they are, and so may either repent of their [wickedness](#), or abide confirmed in the [faith](#). Now the [blessed Paul](#), when troubled by afflictions, and [persecutions](#), and

hunger and thirst, 'in everything was a conqueror, through [Jesus Christ](#), Who loved us [Romans 8:37](#).' Through suffering he was weak indeed in body, yet, believing and hoping, he was made strong in spirit, and his strength was made perfect in weakness [2 Corinthians 12:9](#) .

3. The other [saints](#) also, who had a like confidence in [God](#), accepted a like probation with [gladness](#), as Job said, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord [Job 1:21](#).' But the Psalmist, 'Search me, O Lord, and try me: prove my reins and my heart.' For since, when the strength is [proved](#), it convinces the foolish, they perceiving the cleansing and the advantage resulting from the divine fire, were not discouraged in trials like these, but they rather delighted in them, suffering no injury at all from the things which happened, but being seen to shine more brightly, like gold from the fire, as he said, who was tried in such a school of discipline as this; 'You have tried my heart, You have visited me in the night-season; You have [proved](#) me, and hast not found iniquity in me, so that my mouth shall not speak of the works of men.' But those whose actions are not restrained by law, who [know](#) of nothing beyond eating and drinking and dying, account trials as danger. They soon stumble at them, so that, being untried in the [faith](#), they are given over to a reprobate [mind](#), and do those things which are not seemly [Romans 1:28](#) . Therefore the [blessed Paul](#), when urging us to such exercises as these, and having before measured himself by them, says, 'Therefore I take pleasure in afflictions, in infirmities.' And again, 'Exercise yourself unto godliness.' For since he [knew](#) the [persecutions](#) that befell those who chose to live in godliness, he wished his [disciples](#) to meditate beforehand on the difficulties connected with godliness; that when trials should come, and affliction arise, they might be able to bear them easily, as having been exercised in these things. For in those things wherewith a man has been conversant in [mind](#), he ordinarily experiences a hidden [joy](#). In this way, the blessed [martyrs](#), becoming at first conversant with difficulties, were quickly perfected in [Christ](#), regarding as nought the injury of the body, while they contemplated the expected rest.

4. But all those who 'call their lands by their own names,' and have wood, and hay, and stubble [1 Corinthians 3:12](#) in their thoughts; such as these, since they are strangers to difficulties, become aliens from the [kingdom of heaven](#). Had they however [known](#) that 'tribulation perfects patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope makes not ashamed,' they would have exercised themselves, after the example of [Paul](#), who said, 'I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.' They would easily have borne the afflictions which were brought upon them to prove them from time to time, if the prophetic admonition [Lamentations 3:27](#) had been listened to by them; 'It is [good](#) for a man to take up Your yoke in his youth; he shall sit alone and shall be silent, because he has taken Your yoke upon him. He will give his cheek to him who smites him; he will be filled with reproaches. Because the Lord does not cast away for ever; for when He abases, He is gracious, according to the multitude of His tender mercies.' For though all these things should proceed from the enemies, stripes, insults, reproaches, yet shall they avail nothing against the multitude of God's tender mercies; for we shall quickly recover from them since they are merely temporal, but [God](#) is always gracious, pouring out His tender mercies on those who please [Him]. Therefore, my beloved brethren, we should not look

at these temporal things, but fix our attention on those which are [eternal](#). Though affliction may come, it will have an end, though insult and [persecution](#), yet are they nothing to the hope which is set [before us]. For all present matters are trifling compared with those which are future; the sufferings of this present time not being worthy to be compared with the hope that is to come. For what can be compared with the kingdom? or what is there in comparison with life [eternal](#)? Or what is all we could give here, to that which we shall inherit yonder? For we are 'heirs of [God](#), and joint-heirs with Christ [Romans 8:17](#).' Therefore it is not right, my beloved, to consider afflictions and [persecutions](#), but the hopes which are laid up for us because of [persecutions](#).

5. Now to this the example of Issachar, the patriarch, may persuade, as the [Scripture Genesis 49:14](#) says, 'Issachar desires that which is [good](#), resting between the heritages; and when he saw that the rest was [good](#), and the land fertile, he bowed his shoulder to labour, and became a husbandman.' Being consumed by divine [love](#), like the spouse in the Canticles, he gathered abundance from the [holy Scriptures](#), for his mind was captivated not by the old alone, but by both the heritages. And hence as it were, spreading his wings, he beheld afar off 'the rest' which is in heaven, and,—since this 'land' consists of such beautiful works,—how much more [truly](#) the heavenly [country] must also [consist] of such; for the other is ever new, and grows not old. For this 'land' passes away, as the Lord said; but that which is ready to receive the [saints](#) is [immortal](#). Now when Issachar, the patriarch, saw these things, he joyfully made his boast of afflictions and toils, bowing his shoulders that he might labour. And he did not contend with those who smote him, neither was he disturbed by insults; but like a strong man triumphing the more by these things, and the more earnestly tilling his land, he received profit from it. The Word scattered the seed, but he watchfully cultivated it, so that it brought forth fruit, even a hundred-fold.

6. Now what does this mean, my beloved, but that we also, when the enemies are arrayed against us, should [glory](#) in afflictions [Romans 5:3](#), and that when we are [persecuted](#), we should not be discouraged, but should the rather press after the crown of the high calling in [Christ Jesus our Lord](#)? and that being insulted, we should not be disturbed, but should give our cheek to the smiter, and bow the shoulder? For the lovers of pleasure and the lovers of enmity are tried, as says the blessed Apostle James, 'when they are drawn away by their own [lusts](#) and enticed [James 1:14](#).' But let us, [knowing](#) that we suffer for the [truth](#), and that those who deny the Lord smite and [persecute](#) us, 'count it all [joy](#), my brethren,' according to the words of James, 'when we fall into trials of various [temptations](#), [knowing](#) that the trial of our [faith](#) works patience.' Let us [rejoice](#) as we keep the feast, my brethren, [knowing](#) that our [salvation](#) is ordered in the time of affliction. For our Saviour did not redeem us by inactivity, but by suffering for us He abolished death. And respecting this, He intimidated to us before, saying, 'In the world you shall have tribulation [John 16:33](#).' But He did not say this to every man, but to those who diligently and faithfully perform good service to Him, [knowing](#) beforehand, that they should be [persecuted](#) who would live godly toward Him.

7. 'But [evil](#)-doers and sorcerers will wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived [2 Timothy 3:13](#).' If therefore, like those expounders of dreams and [false prophets](#) who

professed to give signs, these [ignorant](#) men being drunk, not with wine, but with their own [wickedness](#), make a profession of [priesthood](#), and [glory](#) in their threats, [believe](#) them not; but since we are tried, let us [humble](#) ourselves, not being drawn away by them. For so God warned His people by [Moses](#), saying, 'If there shall rise up among you a [prophet](#), or a dreamer of dreams, and shall give signs and tokens, and the sign or the token shall come to pass which he spoke to you, saying, Let us go and serve strange gods, which you have not [known](#); you shall not hearken unto the words of that [prophet](#) or that dreamer of dreams. For the Lord your God tries you, that He may [know](#) whether you will [love](#) the Lord your God with all your heart [Deuteronomy 13:1-3](#).' So we, when we are tried by these things, will not separate ourselves from the [love](#) of [God](#). But let us now keep the feast, my beloved, not as introducing a day of suffering, but of [joy](#) in [Christ](#), by Whom we are fed every day. Let us be mindful of Him Who was [sacrificed](#) in the days of the [Passover](#); for we celebrate this, because Christ the [Passover](#) was [sacrificed](#) [1 Corinthians 5:7](#). He Who once brought His people out of [Egypt](#), and has now abolished death, and him that had the power of death, that is the [devil](#) [Hebrews 2:14](#), will likewise now turn him to shame, and again grant aid to those who are troubled, and cry unto God day and night [Luke 18:7](#).

8. We begin the [fast of forty days](#) on the thirteenth of Phamenoth (9 Mar.), and the [holy](#) week of Easter on the eighteenth of Pharmuthi (Apr. 13); and resting on the seventh day, being the twenty-third (Apr. 18), and the first of the great week having dawned on the twenty-fourth of the same month Pharmuthi (Apr. 19), let us reckon from it till Pentecost. And at all times let us sing praises, calling on Christ, being delivered from our enemies by [Christ Jesus our Lord](#), through Whom to the Father be [glory](#) and dominion for ever and ever. [Amen](#). Greet one another with a [holy kiss](#). All those who are here with me salute you. I [pray](#), my beloved brethren, that you may have health in the Lord.

He wrote this also from [Rome](#). Here ends the thirteenth Letter.

Letter 14

(For 342.) Coss. Augustus Constantius III, Constans II, Præf. the same Longinus; Indict. xv; Easter-day iii Id. Apr., xvi Pharmuthi; Æra Dioclet. 58.

The [gladness](#) of our feast, my brethren, is always near at hand, and never fails those who wish to celebrate it. For the Word is near, Who is all things on our behalf, even [our Lord Jesus Christ](#), Who, having promised that His habitation with us should be perpetual, in [virtue](#) thereof cried, saying, 'Lo, I am with you all the days of the world [Matthew 28:20](#).' For as He is the Shepherd, and the High Priest, and the Way and the Door, and everything at once to us, so again, He is shown to us as the Feast, and the Holy day, according to the blessed Apostle; 'Our [Passover](#), Christ, is [sacrificed](#) [1 Corinthians 5:7](#).' He it was who was expected, He caused a light to shine at the [prayer](#) of the Psalmist, who said, 'My Joy, deliver me from those who surround me;' this being indeed [true](#) rejoicing, this being a [true](#) feast, even deliverance from [wickedness](#), whereto a man attains by thoroughly adopting an upright conversation, and being approved in his mind of godly submission

towards God. For thus the [saints](#) all their lives long were like men rejoicing at a feast. One found rest in [prayer](#) to [God](#), as blessed David, who rose in the night, not once but seven times. Another gave [glory](#) in songs of praise, as great [Moses](#), who sang a song of praise for the victory over [Pharaoh](#), and those task-masters [Exodus xv](#). Others performed worship with unceasing diligence, like great Samuel and blessed Elijah; who have ceased from their course, and now keep the feast in heaven, and [rejoice](#) in what they formerly learned through shadows, and from the types recognise the [truth](#).

2. But what sprinklings shall we now employ, while we celebrate the feast? Who will be our guide, as we haste to this festival? None can do this, my beloved, but Him Whom you will name with me, even [our Lord Jesus Christ](#) Who said, 'I am the Way.' For it is He Who, according to the blessed John, 'takes away the [sin](#) of the world.' He purifies our [souls](#), as [Jeremiah the prophet](#) says in a certain place, 'Stand in the ways and see, and enquire, and look which is the good path, and you shall find in it cleansing for your [souls](#).' [Of old time, the blood of he-goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkled upon those who were unclean, were fit only to purify the flesh Hebrews 9:13](#); but now, through the [grace](#) of [God the Word](#), every man is thoroughly cleansed. Following Him, we may, even here, as on the threshold of the Jerusalem which is above, meditate beforehand on the feast which is [eternal](#), as also the blessed Apostles, together following the Saviour Who was their Leader, have now become teachers of a like [grace](#), saying, 'Behold, we have left all, and followed You [Mark 10:28](#).' For the following of the Lord, and the feast which is of the Lord, is not accomplished by words only, but by deeds, every enactment of [laws](#) and every command involving a distinct performance. For as great [Moses](#), when administering the [holy laws](#), exacted a promise from the people [Exodus 19:8](#), respecting the practice of them, so that having promised, they might not neglect them, and be accused as liars, thus also, the celebration of the least of the [Passover](#) raises no question, and demands no reply; but when the word is given, the performance of it follows, for He says, 'And the children of [Israel](#) shall keep the [Passover](#);' intending that there should be a ready performance of the commandment, while the command should aid its execution. But respecting these matters, I have confidence in your wisdom, and your care for instruction. Such points as these have been touched upon by us often and in various Letters.

3. But now, which is above all things most necessary, I wish to remind you, and myself with you, how that the command would have us come to the Paschal feast not profanely and without preparation, but with sacramental and doctrinal [rites](#), and prescribed observances, as indeed we learn from the historical account, 'A man who is of another nation, or bought with money, or uncircumcised, shall not eat the [Passover](#).' Neither should it be eaten in 'any' house, but He commands it to be done in haste; inasmuch as before we groaned and were made sad by the bondage to [Pharaoh](#), and the commands of the task-masters. For when in former time the children of [Israel](#) acted in this way, they were counted worthy to receive the type, which [existed](#) for the sake of this feast, nor is the feast now introduced on account of the type. As also the [Word of God](#), when desirous of this, said to His [disciples](#), 'With desire I have desired to eat this [Passover](#) with you [Luke 22:15](#).' Now that is a wonderful account, for a man might have seen them at that time girded as for a procession or a dance, and going out with staves, and sandals, and

unleavened bread. These things, which took place before in shadows, were typical. But now the Truth is nigh unto us, 'the Image of the invisible God [Colossians 1:15](#),' [our Lord Jesus Christ](#), the [true](#) Light, Who instead of a staff, is our sceptre, instead of unleavened bread, is the bread which came down from heaven, Who, instead of sandals, has furnished us with the preparation of the [Gospel Ephesians 6:15](#), and Who, to speak briefly, by all these has guided us to His Father. And if enemies afflict us and [persecute](#) us, He again, instead of [Moses](#), will encourage us with better words, saying, 'Be of good cheer; I have overcome the [wicked](#) one.' And if after we have passed over the [Red Sea](#) heat should again vex us or some bitterness of the waters befall us, even thence again the Lord will appear to us, imparting to us of His sweetness, and His life-giving fountain, saying, 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink.'

4. Why therefore do we tarry, and why do we delay, and not come with all eagerness and diligence to the feast, trusting that it is Jesus who calls us? Who is all things for us, and was laden in ten thousand ways for our [salvation](#); Who hungered and thirsted for us, though He gives us food and drink in His saving gifts. For this is His [glory](#), this the [miracle](#) of His divinity, that He changed our sufferings for His [happiness](#). For, being life, He died that He might make us alive, being the Word, He became flesh, that He might instruct the flesh in the Word, and being the fountain of life, He thirsted our thirst, that thereby He might urge us to the feast, saying, 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink [John 7:37](#).' At that time, [Moses](#) proclaimed the beginning of the feast, saying, 'This month is the beginning of months to you [Exodus 12:2](#).' But the Lord, Who came down in the end of the ages [Hebrews 9:26](#), proclaimed a different day, not as though He would abolish the law, far from it, but that He should establish the law, and be the end of the law. 'For Christ is the end of the law to every one that [believes](#) in righteousness;' as the [blessed Paul](#) says, 'Do we make void the law by [faith](#)? far from it: we rather establish the law.' Now these things astonished even the officers who were sent by the [Jews](#), so that wondering they said to the [Pharisees](#), 'No man ever thus spoke [John 7:46](#).' What was it then that astonished those officers, or what was it which so affected the men as to make them marvel? It was nothing but the boldness and authority of [our Saviour](#). For when of old time [prophets](#) and [scribes](#) studied the [Scriptures](#), they perceived that what they read did not refer to themselves, but to others. [Moses](#), for instance, 'A [prophet](#) will the Lord raise up unto you of your brethren, like me; to him hearken in all that he commands you.' Isaiah again, 'Behold, a [virgin](#) shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall call his name [Emmanuel](#).' And others prophesied in different and various ways, concerning the Lord. But by the Lord, of Himself, and of no other, were these things prophesied; to Himself He limited them all, saying, 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me [John 7:37](#)'—not to any other person, but to 'Me.' A man may indeed hear from those concerning My coming, but he must not henceforth drink from others, but from Me.

5. Therefore let us also, when we come to the feast, no longer come as to old shadows, for they are accomplished, neither as to common feasts, but let us hasten as to the Lord, Who is Himself the feast, not looking upon it as an indulgence and delight of the belly, but as a manifestation of [virtue](#). For the feasts of the [heathen](#) are full of greediness, and utter indolence, since they consider they celebrate a feast when they are idle; and they work the works of perdition when they feast. But our feasts consist in the exercise of

[virtue](#) and the practice of [temperance](#); as the prophetic word testifies in a certain place, saying, 'The fast of the fourth, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth [month], shall be to the [house of Judah](#) for [gladness](#), and rejoicing, and for pleasant feasts [Zechariah 8:19](#).' Since therefore this occasion for exercise is set before us, and such a day as this is come, and the prophetic voice has gone forth that the feast shall be celebrated, let us give all diligence to this good proclamation, and like those who contend on the race course, let us vie with each other in observing the purity of the fast [1 Corinthians 9:24-27](#), by watchfulness in [prayers](#), by study of the [Scriptures](#), by distributing to the [poor](#), and let us be at peace with our enemies. Let us bind up those who are scattered abroad, banish [pride](#), and return to lowliness of [mind](#), being at peace with all [men](#), and urging the brethren unto [love](#). Thus also the [blessed Paul](#) was often engaged in [fastings](#) and watchings, and was willing to be accursed for his brethren. Blessed David again, having humbled himself by [fastings](#), used boldness, saying, 'O Lord my [God](#), if I have done this, if there is any iniquity in my hands, if I have repaid those who dealt [evil](#) with me, then may I fall from my enemies as a vain man.' If we do these things, we shall conquer death; and receive an earnest of the [kingdom of heaven](#).

6. We begin the [holy Easter](#) feast on the tenth of Pharmuthi (April 5), desisting from the [holy fasts](#) on the fifteenth of the same month Pharmuthi (April 10), on the evening of the seventh day. And let us keep the [holy](#) feast on the sixteenth of the same month Pharmuthi (April 11); adding one by one [the days] till the [holy](#) Pentecost, passing on to which, as through a succession of feasts, let us keep the festival to the [Spirit](#), Who is even now near us, in [Jesus Christ](#), through Whom and with Whom to the Father be [glory](#) and dominion for ever and ever. [Amen](#).

The fifteenth and sixteenth are wanting.

Letter 17

(For 345.) Coss. Amantius, Albinus; Praef. [Nestorius](#) of Gaza; Indict. iii; Easter-day, vii Id. Apr., xii Pharmuthi; Moon 19; Æra Dioclet. 61.

Athanasius to the Presbyters and Deacons of Alexandria, and to the beloved brethren, greeting in [Christ](#).

According to custom, I give you notice respecting Easter, my beloved, that you also may notify the same to the districts of those who are at a distance, as is usual. Therefore, after this present festival, I mean this which is on the twentieth of the month Pharmuthi, the Easter-day following will be on the vii Id. April, or according to the Alexandrians on the twelfth of Pharmuthi. Give notice therefore in all those districts, that Easter-day will be on the vii Id. April, or according to the [Alexandrian](#) reckoning on the twelfth of Pharmuthi. That you may be in health in [Christ](#), I [pray](#), my beloved brethren.

Letter 18

(For 346.) Coss. Augustus Constantius IV, Constans III; Præf. the same [Nestorius](#); Indict. iv; Easter-day iii Kal. Apr., iv Pharmuthi; Moon 21; Æra Dioclet. 62.

Athanasius, to the Presbyters and Deacons of Alexandria, brethren beloved in the [Lord](#), greeting.

You have done well, dearly beloved brethren, that you have given the customary notice of the [holy Easter](#) in those districts; for I have seen and acknowledged your exactness. By other letters I have also given you notice, that when this year is finished, you may [know](#) concerning the next. Yet now I have thought it necessary to write the same things that, when you have it exactly, you also may write with care. Therefore, after the conclusion of this feast, which is now drawing to its close, on the twelfth of the month Pharmuthi, which is on the vii Id. Apr., Easter-day will be on the iii Kal, April; the fourth of Pharmuthi, according to the Alexandrians. When therefore the feast is finished, give notice again in these districts, according to early custom, thus: Easter Sunday is on the iii Kal. April, which is the fourth of Pharmuthi, according to the [Alexandrian](#) reckoning. And let no man hesitate concerning the day, neither let any one contend, saying, It is requisite that Easter should be held on the twenty-seventh of the month Phamenoth; for it was discussed in the [holy](#) Synod, and all there settled it to be on the iii Kal. April. I say then that it is on the fourth of the month Pharmuthi; for the week before this is much too early. Therefore let there be no dispute, but let us act as becomes us. For I have thus written to the Romans also. Give notice then as it has been notified to you, that it is on the iii Kal. April; the fourth of Pharmuthi, according to the [Alexandrian](#) reckoning.

That you may have health in the [Lord](#), I [pray](#), my dearly beloved brethren.

Letter 19

(For 347.) Coss. Rufinus, Eusebius; Præf. the same [Nestorius](#); Indict. v; Easter-day, Prid. Id. Apr., Pharmuthi xvii; Æra Dioclet. 63; Moon 15.

'Blessed is [God](#), the Father of [our Lord Jesus Christ Ephesians 1:3](#),' for such an introduction is fitting for an Epistle, and more especially now, when it brings thanksgiving to the Lord, in the Apostle's words, because He has brought us from a distance, and granted us again to send openly to you, as usual, the Festal Letters. For this is the season of the feast, my brethren, and it is near; being not now proclaimed by trumpets, as the history records, but being made [known](#) and brought near to us by the Saviour, Who suffered on our behalf and rose again, even as [Paul](#) preached, saying, 'Our [Passover](#), Christ, is [sacrificed](#).' Henceforth the [feast of the Passover](#) is ours, not that of a stranger, nor is it any longer of the [Jews](#). For the time of shadows is abolished, and those former things have ceased, and now the month of new things is at hand, in which every man should keep the feast, in [obedience](#) to Him who said, 'Observe the month of new things, and keep the [Passover](#) to the Lord your God.' Even the [heathen](#) fancy they keep festival, and the [Jews](#) hypo-critically feign to do so. But the feast of the [heathen](#) He reproves, as the bread [Hosea 9:4](#) of mourners, and He turns His face from that of the

[Jews](#), as being outcasts, saying, 'Your new moons and your sabbaths My [soul hates](#) [Isaiah 1:14](#).'

2. For actions not done lawfully and piously, are not of advantage, though they may be reputed to be so, but they rather argue hypocrisy in those who venture upon them. Therefore, although such [persons](#) feign to offer [sacrifices](#), yet they hear from the [Father](#), 'Your whole burnt-offerings are not acceptable, and your [sacrifices](#) do not please Me; and although you bring fine flour, it is vanity, [incense](#) also is an abomination unto Me.' For God does not need anything; and, since nothing is unclean to Him, He is full in regard to them, as He testifies, by [Isaiah](#), saying, 'I am full [Isaiah 1:11](#).' Now there was a law given about these things, for the instruction of the people, and to prefigure things to come, for [Paul](#) says to the Galatians; 'Before [faith](#) came, we were kept guarded under the law, being shut up in the [faith](#) which should afterwards be revealed unto us; wherefore the law was our instructor in [Christ](#), that we might be justified by [faith](#).' But the [Jews knew](#) not, neither did they understand, therefore they walked in the daytime as in darkness, feeling for, but not touching, the [truth](#) we possess, which [was contained] in the law; conforming to the letter, but not submitting to the spirit. And when [Moses](#) was veiled, they looked on him, but turned away their faces from him when he was uncovered. For they [knew](#) not what they read, but erroneously substituted one thing for another. The [prophet](#), therefore, cried against them, saying, 'Falsehood and faithlessness have prevailed among them.' The Lord also therefore said concerning them, 'The strange children have dealt [falsely](#) with Me; the strange children have waxen old.' But how gently does He reprove them, saying, 'Had you [believed Moses](#), you would have [believed](#) Me, for he wrote of Me [John 5:46](#).' But being faithless, they went on to deal [falsely](#) with the law, affirming things after their own pleasure, but not understanding the [Scripture](#); and, further, as they had hypocritically made a pretence of the plain text of Scripture, and had confidence in this, He is [angry](#) with them, saying by [Isaiah](#), 'Who has required these of your hands [Isaiah 1:12](#) ?' And by Jeremiah, since they were very bold, he threatens, 'Gather together your whole burnt-offerings with your [sacrifices](#), and eat flesh, for I spoke not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of [Egypt](#), concerning whole burnt-offerings and [sacrifices](#) .' For they did not act as was right, neither was their [zeal](#) according to law, but they rather sought their own pleasure in such days, as the [prophet](#) accuses them, beating down their bondsmen, and gathering themselves together for strifes and quarrels, and they smote the lowly with the fist, and did all things that tended to their own gratification. For this [cause](#), they continue without a feast until the end, although they make a display now of eating flesh, out of place and out of season. For, instead of the legally-appointed lamb, they have learned to [sacrifice](#) to [Baal](#); instead of the [true](#) unleavened bread, 'they collect the wood, and their fathers kindle the fire, and their wives prepare the dough, that they may make cakes to the host of heaven, and pour out libations to strange gods, that they may provoke Me to [anger](#), says the Lord.' They have the just reward of such devices, since, although they pretend to keep the [Passover](#), yet [joy](#) and [gladness](#) is taken from their mouth, as says Jeremiah, 'There has been taken away from the cities of Judah, and the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of those who are glad, and the voice of those who [rejoice](#); the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride.' Therefore now, 'he who among them [sacrifices](#) an ox, is as he who smites a [man](#), and he who [sacrifices](#) a lamb is as he who kills a dog, he that offers fine flour, is as [if he

offered] swine's blood, he that gives frankincense for a memorial, is as a blasphemer [Isaiah 66:3](#).' Now these things will never please [God](#), neither thus has the word required of them. But He says, 'These have chosen their own ways; and their abominations are what their [soul](#) delights in.'

3. And what does this mean my brethren? For it is right for us to investigate the saying of the [prophet](#), and especially on account of [heretics](#) who have turned their mind against the law. By [Moses](#) then, God gave commandment respecting [sacrifices](#), and all the book called Leviticus is entirely taken up with the arrangement of these matters, so that He might accept the offerer. So through the Prophets, He blames him who despised these things, as disobedient to the commandment saying, 'I have not required these at your hands. Neither did I speak to your fathers respecting [sacrifices](#), nor command them concerning whole burnt-offerings.' Now it is the opinion of some, that the [Scriptures](#) do not agree together, or that [God](#), Who gave the commandment, is false. But there is no disagreement whatever, far from it, neither can the [Father](#), Who is [truth](#), lie; 'for it is impossible that [God](#) should lie [Hebrews 6:18](#),' as [Paul](#) affirms. But all these things are plain to those who rightly consider them, and to those who receive with [faith](#) the writings of the law. Now it appears to me—may God grant, by your [prayers](#), that the remarks I presume to make may not be far from the [truth](#)—that not at first were the commandment and the law concerning [sacrifices](#), neither did the mind of [God](#), Who gave the law, regard whole burnt-offerings, but those things which were pointed out and prefigured by them. 'For the law contained a shadow of [good](#) things to come.' And, 'Those things were appointed until the time of reformation.'

4. Therefore, the whole law did not treat of [sacrifices](#), though there was in the law a commandment concerning [sacrifices](#), that by means of them it might begin to instruct men and might withdraw them from [idols](#), and bring them near to [God](#), teaching them for that present time. Therefore neither at the beginning, when God brought the people out of [Egypt](#), did He command them concerning [sacrifices](#) or whole burnt-offerings, nor even when they came to mount Sinai. For God is not as man, that He should be careful about these things beforehand; but His commandment was given, that they might [know](#) Him Who is [truly God](#), and His Word, and might despise those which are [falsely](#) called gods, which are not, but appear in outward show. So He made Himself [known](#) to them in that He brought them out of [Egypt](#), and caused them to pass through the [Red Sea](#). But when they chose to serve [Baal](#), and dared to offer [sacrifices](#) to those that have no [existence](#), and forgot the [miracles](#) which were wrought in their behalf in [Egypt](#), and thought of returning thither again; then indeed, after the law, that commandment concerning [sacrifices](#) was ordained as law; so that with their [mind](#), which at one time had meditated on those which are not, they might turn to Him Who is [truly God](#), and learn not, in the first place, to [sacrifice](#), but to turn away their faces from [idols](#), and conform to what God commanded. For when He says, 'I have not spoken concerning [sacrifices](#), neither given commandment concerning whole burnt-offerings,' He immediately adds, 'But this is the thing which I commanded them, saying, Obey My voice, and I will be to you a [God](#), and you shall be to Me a people, and you shall walk in all the ways that I command you .' Thus then, being before instructed and taught, they learned not to do service to any one but the Lord. They attained to [know](#) what time the shadow should last, and not to forget the time that was at

hand, in which no longer should the bullock of the herd be a [sacrifice](#) to [God](#), nor the ram of the flock, nor the he-goat [Exodus 12:5](#), but all these things should be fulfilled in a purely spiritual manner, and by constant [prayer](#), and upright conversation, with godly words; as David sings, 'May my meditation be pleasing to Him. Let my [prayer](#) be set forth before You as [incense](#), and the lifting up of my hands as the evening [sacrifice](#).' The Spirit also, who is in him, commands, saying, 'Offer unto God the [sacrifice](#) of praise, and pay to the Lord your vows. Offer the [sacrifice](#) of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.'

5. Samuel, that great man, no less clearly reprov'd Saul, saying, 'Is not the word better than a gift [Sirach 18:17](#)?' For hereby a man fulfils the law, and pleases [God](#), as He says, 'The [sacrifice](#) of praise shall glorify Me.' Let a man 'learn what this means, I will have mercy, and not [sacrifice](#),' and I will not condemn the adversaries. But this wearied them, for they were not anxious to understand, 'for had they [known](#), they would not have crucified the Lord of [glory 1 Corinthians 2:8](#).' And what their end is, the [prophet](#) foretold, crying, 'Woe unto their [soul](#), for they have devised an [evil](#) thought, saying, let us bind the just man, because he is not pleasing to us.' The end of such abandonment as this can be nothing but [error](#), as the Lord, when reprov'ing them, says, 'You do [err](#), not [knowing](#) the [Scriptures Matthew 22:29](#).' Afterwards when, being reprov'd, they should have come to their senses, they rather grew insolent, saying, 'We are [Moses' disciples](#); and we [know](#) that God spoke to [Moses John 9:28-29](#);' dealing the more [falsely](#) by that very expression, and accusing themselves. For had they [believed](#) him to whom they hearkened, they would not have denied the Lord, Who spoke by [Moses](#), when He was present. Not so did the eunuch in the Acts, for when he heard, 'Do you understand what you read?' [Acts 8:30](#) he was not ashamed to confess his [ignorance](#), and implored to be taught. Therefore, to him who became a learner, the [grace](#) of the Spirit was given. But as for those [Jews](#) who persisted in their [ignorance](#); as the proverb says, 'Death came upon them. For the fool dies in his [sins](#).'

6. Like these too, are the [heretics](#), who, having fallen from [true](#) discernment, dare to invent to themselves [atheism](#). 'For the fool says in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, and become abominable in their doings.' Of such as are fools in their thoughts, the actions are [wicked](#), as He says, 'can you, being [evil](#), speak [good](#) things [Matthew 12:34](#);' for they were [evil](#), because they thought [wickedness](#). Or how can those do just acts, whose minds are set upon fraud? Or how shall he [love](#), who is prepared beforehand to [hate](#)? How shall he be merciful, who is bent upon the [love of money](#)? How shall he be chaste, who looks upon a [woman](#) to [lust](#) after her? 'For from the heart proceed [evil](#) thoughts, fornications, adulteries, murders.' By them the fool is wrecked, as by the waves of the sea, being led away and enticed by his fleshly pleasures; for this stands written, 'All flesh of fools is greatly tempest-tossed.' While he associates with folly, he is tossed by a tempest, and perishes, as Solomon says in the Proverbs, 'The fool and he who lacks understanding shall perish together, and shall leave their [wealth](#) to strangers.' Now they suffer such things, because there is not among them one sound of mind to guide them. For where there is sagacity, there the Word, who is the Pilot of [souls](#), is with the vessel; 'for he that has understanding shall possess guidance;' but they who are without guidance fall like the leaves. Who has so completely fallen away as Hymenæus and

Philetus, who held [evil](#) opinions respecting the resurrection, and concerning [faith](#) in it suffered shipwreck? And Judas being a traitor, fell away from the Pilot, and perished with the [Jews](#). But the [disciples](#) since they were wise, and therefore remained with the Lord, although the sea was agitated, and the ship covered with the waves, for there was a storm, and the wind was contrary, yet fell not away. For they awoke the Word, Who was sailing with them, and immediately the sea became smooth at the command of its Lord, and they were saved. They became preachers and teachers at the same time; relating the [miracles](#) of [our Saviour](#), and teaching us also to imitate their example. These things were written on our account and for our profit, so that through these signs we may acknowledge the Lord Who wrought them.

7. Let us, therefore, in the [faith](#) of the [disciples](#), hold frequent converse with our Master. For the world is like the sea to us, my brethren, of which it is written, 'This is the great and wide sea, there go the ships; the Leviathan, which You have created to play therein.' We float on this sea, as with the wind, through our own [free-will](#), for every one directs his course according to his will, and either, under the pilotage of the Word, he enters into rest, or, laid hold on by pleasure, he suffers shipwreck, and is in peril by storm. For as in the ocean there are storms and waves, so in the world there are many afflictions and trials. The unbelieving therefore 'when affliction or [persecution](#) arises is offended [Mark 4:17](#),' as the Lord said. For not being confirmed in the [faith](#), and having his regard towards temporal things, he cannot resist the difficulties which arise from afflictions. But like that house, built on the sand by the foolish man, so he, being without understanding [Luke 6:49](#), falls before the assault of [temptations](#), as it were by the winds. But the [saints](#), having their senses exercised in self-possession [Hebrews 5:14](#), and being strong in [faith](#), and understanding the word, do not faint under trials; but although, from time to time, circumstances of greater trial are set against them, yet they continue faithful, and awaking the Lord Who is with them, they are delivered. So, passing through water and fire, they find relief and duly keep the feast, offering up [prayers](#) with thanksgiving to God Who has redeemed them. For either being tempted they are [known](#), like [Abraham](#), or suffering they are approved, like Job, or being oppressed and deceitfully treated, like Joseph, they patiently endure it, or being [persecuted](#), they are not overtaken; but as it is written, through God they 'leap over the wall' of [wickedness](#), which divides and separates between brethren, and turns them from the [truth](#). In this manner the [blessed Paul](#), when he took pleasure in infirmities, in reproach, in necessities, in [persecutions](#), and in distresses for [Christ](#), rejoiced, and wished all of us to [rejoice](#) saying, 'Rejoice always; in everything give thanks.'

8. For what is so fitting for the feast, a turning from [wickedness](#), and a pure conversation, and [prayer](#) offered without ceasing to [God](#), with thanksgiving? Therefore let us, my brethren, looking forward to celebrate the [eternal joy](#) in heaven, keep the feast here also, rejoicing at all times, [praying](#) incessantly, and in everything giving thanks to the Lord. I give thanks to [God](#), for those other wonders He has done, and for the various helps that have now been granted us, in that though He has chastened us sore, He did not deliver us over to death, but brought us from a distance even as from the ends of the earth, and has united us again with you. I have been mindful while I keep the feast, to give you also notice of the great feast of Easter, that so we may go up together, as it were, to Jerusalem,

and eat the [Passover](#), not separately but as in one house; let us not as sodden in water, water down the word of [God](#); neither let us, as having broken its bones, destroy the commands of the [Gospel](#). But as roasted with fire, with bitterness, being fervent in spirit, in [fastings](#) and watchings, with lying on the ground, let us keep it with penitence and thanksgiving.

9. We begin the [fast of forty days](#) on the sixth day of Phamenoth ([Mar. 2](#)); and having passed through that properly, with [fasting](#) and [prayers](#), we may be able to attain to the [holy](#) day. For he who neglects to observe the [fast of forty days](#), as one who rashly and impurely treads on [holy](#) things, cannot celebrate the Easter festival. Further, let us put one another in remembrance, and stimulate one another not to be negligent, and especially that we should fast those days, so that [fasts](#) may receive us in succession, and we may rightly bring the feast to a close.

10. The [fast of forty days](#) begins then, as was already said, on the sixth of Phamenoth (March 2), and the great week of the Passion on the eleventh of Pharmuthi (April 6). And let us rest from the fast on the sixteenth of it (April 11), on the seventh day, late in the evening. Let us keep the feast when the first of the week dawns upon us, on the seventeenth of the same month Pharmuthi (Apr. 12). Let us then add, one after the other, the seven [holy](#) weeks of Pentecost, rejoicing and praising [God](#), that He has by these things made [known](#) to us beforehand, [joy](#) and rest everlasting, prepared in heaven for us and for those who [truly believe](#) in [Christ Jesus our Lord](#); through Whom, and with Whom, be [glory](#) and dominion to the [Father](#), with the [Holy Ghost](#), for ever and ever. [Amen](#).

Salute one another with a [holy kiss](#). The brethren who are with me salute you.

I have also thought it necessary to inform you of the appointment of Bishops, which has taken place in the stead of our blessed fellow-ministers, that you may [know](#) to whom to write, and from whom you should receive letters. In Syene, therefore, Nilammon, instead of Nilammon of the same name. In Latopolis, Masis, instead of Ammonius. In Coptos, Psenosiris, instead of Theodorus. In Panopolis, because Artemidorus desired it, on account of his old age, and weakness of body, [Arius](#) is appointed coadjutor. In Hypsele, Arsenius, having become reconciled to the [Church](#). In Lycopolis, Eudæmon in the stead of Plusianus. In Antinoöpolis, Arion, instead of Ammonius and Tyrannus. In Oxyrynchus, Theodorus, instead of Pelagius. In Nilopolis, instead of Theon, Amatus, and Isaac, who are reconciled to each other. In Arsenoitis, Andreas, instead of Silvanus. In Prosopitis, Triadelphus, instead of Serapammon. In Diosphacus, on the river side, Theodorus, instead of Serapammon. In Sais, Paphnutius, instead of Nemesion. In Xoïs, Theodorus, instead of Anubion; and there is also with him Isidorus, who is reconciled to the [Church](#). In Sethroitıs, Orion, instead of Potammon. In Clysmā, Tithonas, instead of Jacob; and there is with him Paulus, who has been reconciled to the [Church](#).

Letter 20

(For 348.) *Coss. Philippus, Salia; Præfect the same Nestorius; Indict. vi; Easter-day iii Non. Apr., viii Pharmuthi; Æra Dioclet. 64; Moon 18.*

Let us now keep the feast, my brethren, for as our Lord then gave notice to His [disciples](#), so He now tells us beforehand, that 'after some days is the [Passover Matthew 26:2](#),' in which the [Jews](#) indeed betrayed the Lord, but we celebrate His death as a feast, rejoicing because we then obtained rest from our afflictions. We are diligent in assembling ourselves together, for we were scattered in time past and were lost, and are found. We were far off, and are brought nigh, we were strangers, and have become His, Who suffered for us, and was nailed on the [cross](#), Who bore our [sins](#), as the [prophet Isaiah 53:4](#) says, and was afflicted for us, that He might put away from all of us grief, and sorrow, and sighing. When we thirst, He satisfies us on the feast-day itself; standing and crying, 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink [John 7:37](#).' For such is the [love](#) of the [saints](#) at all times, that they never once leave off, but offer the uninterrupted, constant [sacrifice](#) to the Lord, and continually thirst, and ask of Him to drink; as David sang, 'My [God](#), my [God](#), early will I seek You, my [soul](#) thirsts for You; many times my heart and flesh longs for You in a barren land, without a path, and without water. Thus was I seen by You in the sanctuary.' And Isaiah the [prophet](#) says, 'From the night my spirit seeks You early, O [God](#), because Your commandments are light [Isaiah 26:9](#).' And another says, 'My [soul](#) faints for the longing it has for Your judgments at all times.' And again he says, 'For Your judgments I have hoped, and Your law will I keep at all times.' Another boldly cries out, saying, 'My eye is ever towards the Lord.' And with him one says, 'The meditation of my heart is before You at all times.' And [Paul](#) further advises, 'At all times give thanks; [pray](#) without ceasing.' Those who are thus continually engaged, are waiting entirely on the Lord, and say, 'Let us follow on to [know](#) the Lord: we shall find Him ready as the morning, and He will come to us as the early and the latter rain for the earth [Hosea 6:3](#).' For not only does He satisfy them in the morning; neither does He give them only as much to drink as they ask; but He gives them abundantly according to the multitude of His lovingkindness, vouchsafing to them at all times the [grace](#) of the Spirit. And what it is they thirst for He immediately adds, saying, 'He that [believes](#) in Me.' For, 'as cold waters are pleasant to those who are thirsty [John 7:38](#); [Proverbs 25:25](#),' according to the proverb, so to those who [believe](#) in the [Lord](#), the coming of the Spirit is better than all refreshment and delight.

2. It becomes us then in these days of the [Passover](#), to rise early with the [saints](#), and approach the Lord with all our [soul](#), with purity of body, with confession and godly [faith](#) in Him; so that when we have here first drunk, and are filled with these divine waters which [flow] from Him, we may be able to sit at table with the [saints](#) in heaven, and may share in the one voice of [gladness](#) which is there. From this sinners, because it wearied them, are rightly cast out, and hear the words, 'Friend, how did you come in hither, not having a wedding garment [Matthew 22:12](#)?' Sinners indeed thirst, but not for the [grace](#) of the [Spirit](#); but being inflamed with [wickedness](#), they are wholly set on fire by pleasures, as says the Proverb, 'All day long he desires [evil](#) desires.' But the Prophet cries against them, saying, 'Woe unto those who rise up early, and follow strong drink; who continue until the evening, for wine inflames them.' And since they run wild in wantonness, they dare to thirst for the destruction of others. Having first drunk of lying

and unfaithful waters, those things have come upon them, which are stated by the Prophet; 'My wound,' says he, 'is grievous, whence shall I be healed; it has surely been to me like deceitful waters, in which there is no trust .' [Secondly, while they drink with their companions, they lead astray and disturb the right mind](#), and turn away the simple from it. And what does he cry? 'Woe unto him who causes his neighbour to drink turbid destruction, and makes him drunk, that he may look upon his caverns.' But those who dissemble, and steal away the [truth](#), quench their hearts. Having first drunk of these things, they go on to say those things which the whore says in the Proverbs, 'Lay hold with delight on hidden bread, and sweet stolen waters [Proverbs 9:17](#).' They lay snares secretly, because they have not the freedom of [virtue](#), nor the boldness of Wisdom, who praises herself in the gates, and employs freedom of speech in the broad ways, preaching on high walls. For this reason, they are bidden to 'lay hold with delight,' because, having the choice between [faith](#) and pleasures, they steal the sweetness of [truth](#), and disguise their own bitter waters [to escape] from the blame of their [wickedness](#), which would have been speedy and public. On this account, the wolf puts on the skin of the sheep, sepulchres deceive by their whitened exteriors. [Satan](#), that is...

From Letter 22

(For 350.)

Where [our Lord Jesus Christ](#), who took upon Him to die for all, stretched forth His hands, not somewhere on the earth beneath, but in the air itself, in order that the Salvation effected by the Cross might be shown to be for all [men](#) everywhere: destroying the [devil](#) who was working in the air: and that He might consecrate our road up to [Heaven](#), and make it free.

From Letter 24

(For 352.)

And at that time when they went forth and crossed over [Egypt](#), their enemies were the sport of the sea; but now, when we pass over from earth to [Heaven](#), [Satan](#) himself henceforth falls like lightning from [Heaven](#).

From Letter 27

(For 355.) From the twenty-seventh Festal Letter of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria and Confessor; of which the commencement is, 'Again the season of the day of the living [Passover](#).'

For who is our [joy](#) and boast, but [our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ](#), Who suffered for us, and by Himself made [known](#) to us the Father? For He is no other than He Who of old

time spoke by the Prophets; but now He says to every man, 'I Who speak am near [John 4:26](#).' Right well is this word spoken, for He does not at one time speak, at another keep silence; but continually and at all times, from the beginning without ceasing, He raises up every man, and speaks to every man in his heart.

From Letter 28

(For 356.)

...In order that while He might become a [sacrifice](#) for us all, we, nourished up in the words of [truth](#), and partaking of His living doctrine, might be able with the [saints](#) to receive also the [joy](#) of [Heaven](#). For thither, as He called the [disciples](#) to the upper chamber, so does the Word call us with them to the divine and incorruptible banquet; having suffered for us here, but there, preparing the heavenly tabernacles for those who most readily hearken to the summons, and unceasingly, and [gazing] at the goal, pursue the prize of their high calling; where for them who come to the banquet, and strive with those who hinder them, there is laid up both a crown, and incorruptible [joy](#). For even though, humanly speaking, the labour of such a journey is great, yet the Saviour Himself has rendered even it light and kindly.

From Letter 29

(For 357.) From the twenty-ninth Letter, of which the beginning is, 'Sufficient for this present time is that which we have already written.'

The Lord [proved](#) the [disciples](#), when He was asleep on the pillow, at which time a [miracle](#) was wrought, which is especially calculated to put even the [wicked](#) to shame. For when He arose, and rebuked the sea, and silenced the storm, He plainly showed two things; that the storm of the sea was not from the winds, but from [fear](#) of its Lord Who walked upon it, and that the Lord Who rebuked it was not a creature, but rather its [Creator](#), since a creature is not [obedient](#) to another creature. For although the [Red Sea](#) was divided before by [Moses Exodus 14:21](#), yet it was not [Moses](#) who did it, for it came to pass, not because he spoke, but because God commanded. And if the sun stood still in Gibeon [Joshua 10:12](#), and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, yet this was the work, not of the [son of Nun](#), but of the Lord, Who heard his [prayer](#) He it was Who both rebuked the sea, and on the cross caused the sun to be darkened [Matthew 27:45](#) .

Another Fragment

And whereas what is human comes to an end, what is divine does not. For which reason also when we are dead, and when our nature is tired out, he raises us up, and leads us up [though] born of earth to heaven.

From Letter 39

(For 367.) Of the particular books and their number, which are accepted by the [Church](#). From the thirty-ninth Letter of Holy Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, on the Paschal festival; wherein he defines canonically what are the divine books which are accepted by the [Church](#).

...1. They have fabricated books which they call books of tables, in which they show stars, to which they give the names of Saints. And therein of a [truth](#) they have inflicted on themselves a double reproach: those who have written such books, because they have perfected themselves in a lying and contemptible science; and as to the [ignorant](#) and simple, they have led them astray by [evil](#) thoughts concerning the [right faith](#) established in all [truth](#) and upright in the presence of [God](#).

...2. But since we have made mention of [heretics](#) as dead, but of ourselves as possessing the [Divine Scriptures](#) for [salvation](#); and since I [fear](#) lest, as [Paul](#) wrote to the Corinthians [2 Corinthians 11:3](#), some few of the simple should be beguiled from their simplicity and purity, by the subtlety of certain men, and should henceforth read other books—those called [apocryphal](#)—led astray by the similarity of their names with the [true](#) books; I beseech you to bear patiently, if I also write, by way of remembrance, of matters with which you are acquainted, influenced by the need and advantage of the [Church](#).

3. In proceeding to make mention of these things, I shall adopt, to commend my undertaking, the pattern of Luke the Evangelist, saying on my own account: 'Forasmuch as some have taken in hand [Luke 1:1](#),' to reduce into order for themselves the books termed [apocryphal](#), and to mix them up with the divinely inspired Scripture, concerning which we have been fully persuaded, as they who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word, delivered to the fathers; it seemed good to me also, having been urged thereto by [true](#) brethren, and having learned from the beginning, to set before you the books included in the Canon, and handed down, and accredited as Divine; to the end that any one who has fallen into [error](#) may condemn those who have led him astray; and that he who has continued steadfast in purity may again [rejoice](#), having these things brought to his remembrance.

4. There are, then, of the [Old Testament](#), twenty-two books in number; for, as I have heard, it is handed down that this is the number of the letters among the Hebrews; their respective order and names being as follows. The first is Genesis, then Exodus, next Leviticus, after that Numbers, and then Deuteronomy. Following these there is Joshua, the son of Nun, then Judges, then Ruth. And again, after these four books of Kings, the first and second being reckoned as one book, and so likewise the third and fourth as one book. And again, the first and second of the Chronicles are reckoned as one book. Again Ezra, the first and second are similarly one book. After these there is the book of Psalms, then the Proverbs, next Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. Job follows, then the Prophets, the twelve being reckoned as one book. Then Isaiah, one book, then Jeremiah

with Baruch, Lamentations, and the epistle, one book; afterwards, Ezekiel and Daniel, each one book. Thus far constitutes the [Old Testament](#).

5. Again it is not tedious to speak of the [books] of the [New Testament](#). These are, the four [Gospels](#), according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Afterwards, the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles (called [Catholic](#)), seven, viz. of James, one; of Peter, two; of John, three; after these, one of Jude. In addition, there are fourteen Epistles of [Paul](#), written in this order. The first, to the Romans; then two to the Corinthians; after these, to the Galatians; next, to the Ephesians; then to the Philippians; then to the Colossians; after these, two to the Thessalonians, and that to the Hebrews; and again, two to Timothy; one to Titus; and lastly, that to Philemon. And besides, the Revelation of John.

6. These are fountains of [salvation](#), that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take ought from these. For concerning these the Lord put to shame the [Sadducees](#), and said, 'You [err](#), not [knowing](#) the [Scriptures](#).' And He reproved the [Jews](#), saying, 'Search the [Scriptures](#), for these are they that testify of Me [Matthew 22:29](#); [John 5:39](#).'

7. But for greater exactness I add this also, writing of necessity; that there are other books besides these not indeed included in the Canon, but appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of godliness. The Wisdom of Solomon, and the Wisdom of Sirach, and Esther, and Judith, and Tobit, and that which is called the Teaching of the Apostles, and the Shepherd. But the former, my brethren, are included in the Canon, the latter being [merely] read; nor is there in any place a mention of [apocryphal writings](#). But they are an invention of [heretics](#), who write them when they choose, bestowing upon them their approbation, and assigning to them a date, that so, using them as ancient writings, they may find occasion to lead astray the simple.

From Letter 40

(For 368.)

'You are they that have continued with Me in My [temptations](#); and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father has appointed unto Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom.' Being called, then, to the great and heavenly Supper, in that upper room which has been swept, let us 'cleanse ourselves,' as the Apostle exhorted, 'from all filthiness of the flesh and [spirit](#), perfecting [holiness](#) in the [fear](#) of God [2 Corinthians 7:1](#);' that so, being spotless within and without,—without, clothing ourselves with [temperance](#) and [justice](#); within, by the [Spirit](#), rightly dividing the word of [truth](#)—we may hear, 'Enter into the [joy](#) of your Lord [Matthew 25:21](#).'

From Letter 42

(For 370.)

For we have been called, brethren, and are now called together, by Wisdom, and according to the Evangelical [parable](#), to that great and heavenly Supper, and sufficient for every creature; I mean, to the [Passover](#),—to [Christ](#), Who is [sacrificed](#); for 'Christ our [Passover](#) is [sacrificed](#).' (And afterwards:) They, therefore, that are thus prepared shall hear, 'Enter into the [joy](#) of your [Lord](#).'

From Letter 43

(For 371.)

Of us, then, whose also is the [Passover](#), the calling is from above, and 'our conversation is in heaven,' as [Paul](#) says; 'For we have here no abiding city, but we seek that which is to come,' whereto, also, looking forward, we properly keep the feast. (And again, afterwards:) [Heaven truly](#) is high, and its distance from us [infinite](#); for 'the heaven of heavens,' says he, 'is the Lord's.' But not, on that account, are we to be negligent or fearful, as though the way thereto were impossible; but rather should we be [zealous](#). Yet not, as in the case of those who formerly, removing from the east and finding a plain in Senaar, began [to build a tower], is there need for us to bake bricks with fire, and to seek slime for mortar; for their tongues were confounded, and their work was destroyed. But for us the Lord has [consecrated](#) a way through His blood, and has made it easy. (And again:) For not only has He afforded us consolation respecting the distance, but also in that He has come and opened the door for us which was once shut. For, indeed, it was shut from the time He cast out Adam from the delight of Paradise, and set the Cherubim and the flaming sword, that turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life—now, however, opened wide. And He that sits upon the Cherubim having appeared with greater [grace](#) and loving-kindness, led into Paradise with himself the thief who confessed, and having entered heaven as our forerunner, opened the gates to all. (And again:) [Paul](#) also, 'pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling [Philippians 3:14](#),' by it was taken up to the third heaven, and having seen those things which are above, and then descended, he teaches us, announcing what is written to the Hebrews, and saying, 'For you are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and clouds, and darkness, and a tempest, and to the voice of words. But you have come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living [God](#), the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of [angels](#), and to the general assembly and Church of the [first-born](#), which are written in heaven.' Who would not wish to enjoy the high companionship with these! Who not desire to be enrolled with these, that he may hear with them, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world [Matthew 25:34](#).'

From Letter 44

(For 372.) And again, from the forty-fourth Letter, of which the commencement is, 'All that [our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ](#) did instead of us and for us.'

When therefore the servants of the Chief Priests and the [Scribes](#) saw these things, and heard from Jesus, 'Whosoever is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink [John 7:37](#);' they perceived that this was not a mere man like themselves, but that this was He Who gave water to the [saints](#), and that it was He Who was announced by the [prophet](#) Isaiah. For He was [truly](#) the splendour of the light, and the [Word of God](#). And thus as a river from the fountain he gave drink also of old to Paradise; but now to all [men](#) He gives the same gift of the [Spirit](#), and says, 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink.' Whosoever [believes](#) in Me, as says the [Scripture](#), rivers of living water shall flow out of his belly [John 7:37-38](#).' This was not for man to say, but for the living [God](#), Who [truly](#) vouchsafes life, and gives the [Holy Spirit](#).

From Letter 45

(For 373.)

Let us all take up our [sacrifices](#), observing distribution to the [poor](#), and enter into the [holy](#) place, as it is written; 'whither also our forerunner Jesus is entered for us, having obtained [eternal](#) redemption.'...*(From the same:)*...And this is a great [proof](#) that, whereas we were strangers, we are called friends; from being formerly aliens, we are become fellow-citizens with the [saints](#), and are called children of the Jerusalem which is above, whereof that which Solomon built was a type. For if [Moses](#) made all things according to the pattern showed him in the mount, it is clear that the service performed in the tabernacle was a type of the heavenly [mysteries](#), whereto the Lord, desirous that we should enter, prepared for us the new and abiding way. And as all the old things were a type of the new, so the festival that now is, is a type of the [joy](#) which is above, to which coming with psalms and spiritual songs, let us begin the [fasts](#).

Letter 46

Letter to the Mareotis from Sardica, a.d . 343-4.

Athanasius to the [presbyters](#) and [deacons](#) and the people of the [Catholic Church](#) in the Mareotis, brethren beloved and longed for, greeting in the Lord.

The [holy](#) council has praised your [piety](#) in [Christ](#). They have all acknowledged your spirit and [fortitude](#) in all things, in that you did not [fear](#) threats, and though you had to bear insults and [persecutions](#) against your [piety](#) you held out. Your letters when read out to all produced tears and enlisted universal sympathy. They loved you though absent, and reckoned your [persecutions](#) as their own. Their letter to you is a [proof](#) of their affection: and although it would suffice to include you along with the [holy Church of Alexandria](#), yet the [holy](#) synod has written separately to you in order that you may be encouraged not

to give way on account of your sufferings, but to give thanks to [God](#); because your patience shall have good fruit.

Formerly the character of the [heretics](#) was not evident. But now it is revealed and laid open to all. For the [holy](#) synod has taken cognisance of the [calumnies](#) these men have concocted against you, and has had them in abhorrence, and has deposed Theodore, Valens, Ursacius, in [Alexandria](#) and the Mareotis by consent of all. The same notice has been given to other Churches also. And since the cruelty and tyranny practised by them against the Churches can no longer be borne, they have been cast out from the [episcopate](#) and expelled from the communion of all. Moreover of Gregory they were unwilling even to make mention, for since the man has lacked the very name of [bishop](#), they thought it superfluous to name him. But on account of those who are deceived by him they have mentioned his name; not because he seemed worthy of mention, but that those deceived by him might thereby recognise his [infamy](#) and blush at the kind of man with whom they have communicated. You will learn what has been written about them from the previous document: and though not all of the [bishops](#) came together to sign, yet it was drawn up by all, and they signed for all. Salute one another with a [holy kiss](#). All the brethren salute you.

I, Protogenes, [bishop](#), desire that you may be preserved in the [Lord](#), beloved and longed for.

I, Athenodorus*, [bishop](#), desire that you may be preserved in the [Lord](#), most beloved brethren. [Other signatures] Julian, Ammonius, Aprianus, Marcellus, Gerontius*, Porphyrius*, Zosimus, Asclepius, Appian, Eulogius, Eugenius, Liodorus (26), Martyrius, Eucarpus, Lucius*, Caloes. Maximus: by letters from the Gauls I desire that you may be preserved in the [Lord](#), beloved. We, Arcidamus and Philoxenus, [presbyters](#), and Leo a [deacon](#), from [Rome](#), desire that you may be preserved. I, Gaudentius, [bishop](#) of Naissus, desire that you may be preserved in the Lord. [Also] Florentius of Meria in Pannonia, Ammianus (9), of Castellum in Pannonia, Januarius of Beneventum, Prætextatus of Narcidonum in Pannonia, Hyperneris (48) of Hypata in Thessaly, Castus of Cæsaraugusta, Severus of Calcisus in Thessaly, Julian of Therae Heptapolis, Lucius of Verona, Eugenius (35) of Hecleal Cycbinae, Zosimus (92) of Lychni Sunosion in Apulia, Hermogenes of Syceon, Thryphos of Magara, Paregorius* of Caspi, Caloes (21) of Castromartis, Ireneus of Syconis, Macedonius of Lypianum, Martyrius of Naupacti, Palladius of Dius, Broseus (87) of Lu[g]dunum in [Gaul](#), Ursacius of Brixia, Amantius of Viminacium, by the [presbyter](#) Maximus, Alexander of Gypara in Achaia, Euty chius of Mothona, Aprianus of Petavio in Pannonia, Antigonus of Pallene in Macedonia, Dometius* of Acaria Constantias, Olympius of Enorodope, Zosimus of Oreomarga, Protasius of Milan, Mark of Siscia on the Save, Eucarpus of Opûs in Achaia, Vitalis* of Vertara in Africa, Helianus of Tyrtana, Symphorus of Herapythae in Crete, Mosinius (64) of Heracla, Eucissus of Chisamus, Cydonius of Cydonia.

Letter 47

To the [Church of Alexandria](#) on the same occasion.

Athanasius to all the [presbyters](#) and [deacons](#) of the [holy Catholic Church](#) at Alexandria and the Parembola, brethren most beloved, greeting.

In writing this I must begin my letter, most beloved brethren, by giving thanks to [Christ](#). But now this is especially fitting, since both many things and great, done by the Lord, deserve our thanks, and those who [believe](#) in Him ought not to be ungrateful for His many benefits. We thank the Lord therefore, who always manifests us to all in the [faith](#), who also has at this time done many wonderful things for the [Church](#). For what the [heretical](#) party of Eusebius and heirs of [Arius](#) have maintained and spread abroad, all the [bishops](#) who assembled have pronounced false and fictitious. And the very men who are thought terrible by many, like those who are called giants, were counted as nothing, and rightly so, for just as the darkness is illuminated when light comes, so, iniquity is unveiled by the coming of the just, and when the good are present, the worthless are exposed.

For you yourselves, beloved, are not [ignorant](#) what the successors of the ill-named [heresy](#) of Eusebius did, namely Theodore, Narcissus, Valens, Ursacius, and the worst of them all, George, Stephen, Acacius, Menophantus, and their colleagues, for their [madness](#) is manifest to all; nor has it escaped your observation what they committed against the Churches. For you were the first they injured, your Church the first they tried to corrupt. But they who did so many great things, and were, as I said above, terrible to the minds of all, have been so frightened as to pass all imagination. For not only did they [fear](#) the Roman Synod, not only when invited to it did they excuse themselves, but, now also having arrived at Sardica, so [conscience](#)-stricken were they, that when they had seen the judges, they were astonished. So they fainted in their minds. Verily, one might say to them: 'Death, where is your sting, Death, where is your victory?' For neither did it go as they wished, for them to give judgment as they pleased; this time they could not overreach whom they would. But they saw faithful men, that cared for [justice](#), nay rather, they saw our Lord Himself among them, like the [demons](#) of old from the tombs; for being sons of [falsehood](#), they could not bear to see the [truth](#). So Theodore, Narcissus, and Ursacius, with their friends said as follows: 'Stay, what have we to do with you, men of Christ? We [know](#) that you are [true](#), and [fear](#) to be convicted: we shrink from confessing our [calumnies](#) to your face. We have nothing to do with you; for you are [Christians](#), while we are foes to Christ; and while with you [truth](#) is powerful, we have learned to overreach. We thought our deeds were hid; we did not think that we were now coming to judgment; why do you expose our deeds before their time; and by exposing us vex us before the day?' and although they are of the worst character and walk in darkness, yet they have learned at last that there is no agreement between light and darkness, and no concord between Christ and [Belial](#). Accordingly, beloved brethren, since they [knew](#) what they had done, and saw their victims ready as accusers, and the witnesses before their eyes, they followed the example of Cain and fled like him; in that they greatly wandered, for they imitated his flight, and so have received his condemnation. For the [holy](#) council [knows](#) their works; it has heard our blood crying aloud, heard from themselves the voices of the wounded. All the Bishops [know](#) how they have [sinned](#), and how many things they

have done against our Churches and others; and accordingly they have expelled these men from the Churches like Cain. For who did not weep when your letter was read? who did not groan to see whom those men had exiled? Who did not reckon your tribulations his own? Most beloved brethren, you suffered formerly when they were committing [evil](#) against you, and perhaps it is no long time since the [war](#) has ceased. Now, however, all the Bishops who assembled and heard what you have suffered, grieved and lamented just as you did when you suffered the injuries and they shared your grief at that time....

On account of these deeds then, and all the others which they have committed against the [Churches](#), the [holy](#) general council has deposed them all, and not only has judged them aliens from the [Church](#), but has held them unworthy to be called [Christians](#). For how can men be called [Christians](#) who deny Christ? And how can men be admitted to church who do [evil](#) against the Churches? Accordingly, the [holy](#) council has sent to the Churches everywhere, that they may be marked among all, so that they who were deceived by them may now return to full assurance and [truth](#). Do not therefore fail, beloved brethren; like servants of [God](#), and professors of the [faith](#) of [Christ](#), be tried in the [Lord](#), and let not tribulation cast you down, neither let troubles caused by the [heretics](#) who plot against you make you sad. For you have the sympathy of the whole world in your grief, and what is more, it bears you all in mind. Now I think that those deceived by them will, when they see the severe sentence of the Council, turn aside from them and reject their impiety. If, however, even after this their hand is lifted up, do you not be astonished, nor [fear](#) if they rage; but [pray](#) and raise your hands to [God](#), and be sure that the Lord will not tarry but will perform all things according to your will. I could wish indeed to write you a longer letter with a detailed account of what has taken place, but since the [presbyters](#) and [deacons](#) are competent to tell you in person of all they have seen, I have refrained from writing much. One thing alone I charge you, considering it a necessity, that having the [fear](#) of the Lord before your eyes you will put Him first, and carry on all things with your wonted concord as men of wisdom and understanding. Pray for us, bearing in mind the necessities of the [widows](#), especially since the enemies of [truth](#) have taken away what belongs to them. But let your [love](#) overcome the [malice](#) of the [heretics](#). For we [believe](#) that according to your [prayers](#) the Lord will be gracious and permit me to see you speedily. Meanwhile you will learn the proceedings at the Synod by what all the Bishops have written to you, and from the appended letter you will perceive the deposition of Theodore, Narcissus, Stephen, Acacius, George, Menophantus, Ursacius and Valens. For Gregory they did not wish to mention: since they thought it superfluous to name a man who lacked the very name of [bishop](#). Yet for the sake of those deceived by him they have mentioned his name, not that his name was worthy of mention, but in order that those deceived by him may learn his [infamy](#) and blush for the sort of man they have communicated with....I [pray](#) that you may be preserved in the [Lord](#), brethren most beloved and longed for.

Letter 48

Letter to Amun. Written before 354 a.d.

All things made by God are beautiful and pure, for the [Word of God](#) has made nothing useless or impure. For 'we are a sweet savour of Christ in them that are being saved [2 Corinthians 2:15](#),' as the Apostle says. But since the [devil's](#) darts are varied and subtle, and he contrives to trouble those who are of simpler [mind](#), and tries to hinder the ordinary exercises of the brethren, scattering secretly among them thoughts of uncleanness and defilement; come let us briefly dispel the [error](#) of the [evil](#) one by the [grace](#) of the Saviour, and confirm the mind of the simple. For 'to the pure all things are pure,' but both the [conscience](#) and all that belongs to the unclean are defiled [Titus 1:15](#). I marvel also at the craft of the [devil](#), in that, although he is corruption and mischief itself, he suggests thoughts under the show of purity; but with the result of a snare rather than a test. For with the object, as I said before, of distracting [ascetics](#) from their customary and salutary meditation, and of appearing to overcome them, he stirs some such buzzing thoughts as are of no profit in life, vain questions and frivolities which one ought to put aside. For tell me, beloved and most [pious](#) friend, what [sin](#) or uncleanness there is in any natural secretion,—as though a man were minded to make a culpable matter of the cleanings of the nose or the sputa from the mouth? And we may add also the secretions of the belly, such as are a physical necessity of animal life. Moreover if we [believe](#) man to be, as the [divine Scriptures](#) say, a work of God's hands, how could any defiled work proceed from a pure Power? and if, according to the divine Acts of the Apostles [Acts 17:28](#), 'we are God's offspring,' we have nothing unclean in ourselves. For then only do we incur defilement, when we commit [sin](#), that foulest of things. But when any bodily excretion takes place independently of will, then we experience this, like other things, by a necessity of nature. But since those whose only pleasure is to gainsay what is said aright, or rather what is made by [God](#), pervert even a saying in the [Gospels](#), alleging that 'not that which goes in defiles a [man](#), but that which goes out [Matthew 15:11](#),' we are [obliged](#) to make plain this unreasonableness,—for I cannot call it a question—of theirs. For firstly, like unstable [persons](#), they wrest the [Scriptures 2 Peter 3:16](#) to their own [ignorance](#). Now the sense of the divine oracle is as follows. Certain [persons](#), like these of today, were in [doubt](#) about meats. The Lord Himself, to dispel their [ignorance](#), or it may be to unveil their deceitfulness, lays down that, not what goes in defiles the man, but what goes out. Then he adds exactly whence they go out, namely from the heart. For there, as he [knows](#), are the [evil](#) treasures of profane thoughts and other [sins](#). But the Apostle teaches the same thing more concisely, saying, 'But meat shall not bring us before God [1 Corinthians 8:8](#).' Moreover, one might reasonably say no natural secretion will bring us before him for punishment. But possibly medical men (to put these people to shame even at the hands of outsiders) will support us on this point, telling us that there are certain necessary passages accorded to the animal body, to provide for the dismissal of the superfluity of what is secreted in our several parts; for example, for the superfluity of the head, the hair and the watery discharges from the head, and the purgings of the belly, and that superfluity again of the semenerative channels. What [sin](#) then is there in God's name, elder most beloved of [God](#), if the Master who made the body willed and made these parts to have such passages? But since we must grapple with the objections of [evil persons](#), as they may say, 'If the organs have been severally fashioned by the Creator, then there is no [sin](#) in their genuine use,' let us stop them by asking this question: What do you mean by use? That lawful use which God permitted when He said, 'Increase and multiply, and replenish the earth [Genesis 1:28](#),' and which the Apostle approves in the

words, 'Marriage is [honourable](#) and the bed undefiled [Hebrews 13:4](#),' or that use which is public, yet carried on stealthily and in adulterous fashion? For in other matters also which go to make up life, we shall find differences according to circumstances. For example, it is not right to kill, yet in [war](#) it is lawful and praiseworthy to destroy the enemy; accordingly not only are they who have distinguished themselves in the field held worthy of great honours, but monuments are put up proclaiming their achievements. So that the same act is at one time and under some circumstances unlawful, while under others, and at the right time, it is lawful and permissible. The same reasoning applies to the relation of the sexes. He is blessed who, being freely yoked in his youth, naturally begets children. But if he uses nature licentiously, the punishment of which the Apostle [Hebrews 13:4](#) writes shall await whoremongers and adulterers.

For there are two ways in life, as touching these matters. The one the more moderate and ordinary, I mean marriage; the other angelic and unsurpassed, namely [virginity](#). Now if a man choose the way of the world, namely marriage, he is not indeed to blame; yet he will not receive such great gifts as the other. For he will receive, since he too brings forth fruit, namely thirtyfold. But if a man embrace the [holy](#) and unearthly way, even though, as compared with the former, it be rugged and hard to accomplish, yet it has the more wonderful gifts: for it grows the perfect fruit, namely an hundredfold. So then their unclean and [evil](#) objections had their proper solution long since given in the [divine Scriptures](#). Strengthen then, father, the flocks under you, exhorting them from the Apostolic writings, guiding them from the Evangelical, counselling them from the [Psalms](#), and saying, 'quicken me according to Your Word;' but by 'Your Word,' is meant that we should serve Him with a pure heart. For [knowing](#) this, the Prophet says, as if interpreting himself, 'Make me a clean heart, O God,' lest filthy thoughts trouble me. David again, 'And establish me with Your free spirit,' that even if ever thoughts disturb me, a certain strong power from You may establish me, acting as a support. Giving then this and the like advice, say with regard to those who are slow to [obey](#) the [truth](#), 'I will teach Your ways unto the [wicked](#),' and, confident in the Lord that you will persuade them to desist from such [wickedness](#), sing 'and sinners shall be converted unto You.' And be it granted, that they who raise malicious questions may cease from such vain labour, and that they who [doubt](#) in their simplicity may be strengthened with a 'free spirit;' while as many of you as surely [know](#) the [truth](#), hold it unbroken and unshaken in [Christ Jesus our Lord](#), with whom be to the Father [glory](#) and might, together with the [Holy Spirit](#), for ever and ever. [Amen](#).

Letter 49

Letter to Dracontius. Written a.d. 354 or 355.

I am at a loss how to write. Am I to blame you for your refusal? or for having regard to the trials, and hiding for [fear](#) of the [Jews](#)? In any case, however it may be, what you have done is worthy of blame, beloved Dracontius. For it was not fitting that after receiving the [grace](#) you should hide, nor that, being a wise man, you should furnish others with a pretext for flight. For many are offended when they hear it; not merely that you have

done this, but that you have done it having regard to the times and to the afflictions which are weighing upon the [Church](#). And I [fear](#) lest, in flying for your own sake, you prove to be in peril in the sight of the Lord on account of others. For if 'he that offends one of the little ones, should rather choose that a mill stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea [Matthew 18:6](#),' what can be in store for you, if you prove an offence to so many? For the surprising unanimity about your election in the district of Alexandria will of necessity be broken up by your retirement: and the [episcopate](#) of the district will be grasped at by many,—and many unfit [persons](#), as you are well aware. And many [heathen](#) who were promising to become [Christians](#) upon your election will remain [heathen](#), if your [piety](#) sets at nought the [grace](#) given you.

2. What defence will you offer for such conduct? With what arguments will you be able to wash away and efface such an impeachment? How will you heal those who on your account are fallen and offended? Or how will you be able to restore the broken peace? Beloved Dracontius, you have caused us grief instead of [joy](#), groaning instead of consolation. For we expected to have you with us as a consolation; and now we behold you in flight, and that you will be convicted in judgment, and when upon your trial will repent it. And 'Who shall have pity upon you ['as the Prophet says, who will turn his mind to you for peace, when he sees the brethren for whom Christ died injured on account of your flight? For you must know](#), and not be in [doubt](#), that while before your election you lived to yourself, after it, you live for your flock. And before you had received the [grace](#) of the [episcopate](#), no one [knew](#) you; but after you became one, the [laity](#) expect you to bring them food, namely instruction from the [Scriptures](#). When then they expect, and suffer hunger, and you are feeding yourself [Ezekiel 34:2](#) only, and [our Lord Jesus Christ](#) comes and we stand before Him, what defence will you offer when He sees His own sheep hungering? For had you not taken the money, He would not have blamed you. But He would reasonably do so if upon taking it you dug and buried it,—in the words which God forbid that your [piety](#) should ever hear: 'You ought to have given my money to the bankers, that when I came I might demand it of them.'

3. I beseech you, spare yourself and us. Yourself, lest you run into peril; us, lest we be grieved because of you. Take thought of the [Church](#), lest many of the little ones be injured on your account, and the others be given an occasion of withdrawing. Nay but if you feared the times and acted as you did from timidity, your mind is not manly; for in such a case you ought to manifest [zeal](#) for [Christ](#), and rather meet circumstances boldly, and use the language of [blessed Paul](#): 'in all these things we are more than conquerors [Romans 8:37](#);' and the more so in that we ought to serve not the time, but the Lord. But if the organising of the Churches is distasteful to you, and you do not think the ministry of the [episcopate](#) has its reward, why, then you have brought yourself to despise the Saviour that ordered these things. I beseech you, dismiss such ideas, nor tolerate those who advise you in such a sense, for this is not worthy of Dracontius. For the order the Lord has established by the Apostles abides fair and firm; but the cowardice of the brethren shall cease.

4. For if all were of the same mind as your present advisers, how would you have become a [Christian](#), since there would be no [bishops](#)? Or if our successors are to inherit this state

of [mind](#), how will the Churches be able to hold together? Or do your advisers think that you have received nothing, that they despise it? If so surely they are wrong. For it is time for them to think that the [grace](#) of the Font is nothing, if some are found to despise it. But you have received it, beloved Dracontius; do not tolerate your advisers nor deceive yourself. For this will be required of you by the God who gave it. Have you not heard the Apostle say, 'Neglect not the gift that is in you [1 Timothy 4:14](#) ?' or have you not read how he accepts the man that had doubled his money, while he condemned the one that had hidden it? But may it come to pass that you may quickly return, in order that you too may be one of those who are praised. Or tell me, whom do your advisers wish you to imitate? For we ought to walk by the standard of the [saints](#) and the fathers, and imitate them, and to be sure that if we depart from them we put ourselves also out of their fellowship. Whom then do they wish you to imitate? The one who hesitated, and while wishing to follow, delayed it and took counsel because of his [family Luke 2:61](#), or [blessed Paul](#), who, the moment the stewardship was entrusted to him, 'straightway conferred not with flesh and blood [Galatians 1:16](#) ?' For although he said, 'I am not worthy to be called an Apostle [1 Corinthians 15:9](#),' yet, [knowing](#) what he had received, and being not [ignorant](#) of the giver, he wrote, 'For woe is me if I preach not the gospel.' But, as it was 'woe to me' if he did not preach, so, in teaching and preaching the gospel, he had his converts as his [joy](#) and crown . This explains why the saint was [zealous](#) to preach as far as [Illyricum](#), and not to shrink from proceeding to [Rome Romans 1:15](#), or even going as far as the Spains, in order that the more he laboured, he might receive so much the greater reward for his labour. He boasted then that he had fought the good fight, and was confident that he should receive the great crown [2 Timothy 4:7-8](#) . Therefore, beloved Dracontius, whom are you imitating in your present action? [Paul](#), or men unlike him? For my part, I [pray](#) that you, and myself, may prove an imitator of all the [saints](#).

5. Or possibly there are some who advise you to hide, because you have given your word upon [oath](#) not to accept the office if elected. For I hear that they are buzzing in your ears to this effect, and consider that they are thus acting conscientiously. But if they were [truly](#) conscientious, they would above all have feared [God](#), Who imposed this ministry upon you. Or if they had read the [divine Scriptures](#), they would not have advised you contrary to them. For it is time for them to blame Jeremiah also, and to impeach the great [Moses](#), in that they did not listen to their advice, but fearing God fulfilled their ministry, and prophesying were made perfect. For they also when they had received their mission and the [grace](#) of Prophecy, refused. But afterwards they feared, and did not set at nought Him that sent them. Whether then you be of stammering utterance, and slow of tongue, yet [fear](#) God that made you, or if you call yourself too young to preach, yet reverence Him Who [knew](#) you before you were made. Or if you have given your word (now their word was to the [saints](#) as an [oath](#)), yet read Jeremiah, how he too had said, 'I will not name the Name of the Lord ,'[yet afterwards he feared the fire kindled within him, and did not do as he had said, nor hid himself as if bound by an oath](#), but revered Him that had entrusted to him his office, and fulfilled the prophetic call. Or are you not aware, beloved, that Jonah also fled, but met with the [fate](#) that befell him, after which he returned and prophesied?

6. Do not then entertain counsels opposite to this. For the Lord [knows](#) our case better than we ourselves, and He [knows](#) to whom He is entrusting His Churches. For even if a man be not worthy, yet let him not look at his former life, but let him carry out his ministry, lest, in addition to his life he incur also the curse of negligence. I ask you, beloved Dracontius, whether [knowing](#) this, and being a wise man, you are not pricked in your [soul](#)? Do you not feel anxious lest any of those entrusted to you should perish? Do you not burn, as with a fire in your [conscience](#)? Are you not in [fear](#) of the day of judgment, in which none of your present advisers will be there to aid you? For each shall give account of those entrusted to his hands. For how did his excuse benefit the man who hid the money? Or how did it benefit Adam to say, 'The [woman](#) beguiled me [Genesis 3:12](#)?' Beloved Dracontius, even if you are really weak, yet you ought to take up the charge, lest, the Church being unoccupied, the enemies injure it, taking advantage of your flight. You should gird yourself up, so as not to leave us alone in the struggle; you should labour with us, in order to receive the reward also along with all.

7. Make haste then, beloved, and tarry no longer, nor suffer those who would prevent you: but remember Him that has given, and come hither to us who [love](#) you, who give you Scriptural advice, in order that you may both be installed by ourselves, and, as you minister in the churches make remembrance of us. For you are not the only one who has been elected from among [monks](#), nor the only one to have presided over a monastery, or to have been beloved by [monks](#). But you [know](#) that not only was Serapion a [monk](#), and presided over that number of [monks](#); you were not unaware of how many [monks](#) Apollos was father; you [know](#) Agathon, and are not [ignorant](#) of Ariston. You remember Ammonius who went abroad with Serapion. Perhaps you have also heard of Mutilus in the upper Thebaid, and can learn about [Paul](#) at Latopolis, and many others. And yet these, when elected, did not gainsay; but taking Elisha as an example, and [knowing](#) the story of Elijah, and having learned all about the [disciples](#) and [apostles](#), they grappled with the charge, and did not despise the ministry, and were not inferior to themselves, but rather look for the reward of their labour, advancing themselves, and guiding others onward. For how many have they turned away from the [idols](#)? How many have they caused to cease from their familiarity with [demons](#) by their warning? How many servants have they brought to the Lord, so as to [cause](#) those who saw such wonders to marvel at the sight? Or is it not a great wonder to make a damsel live as a [virgin](#), and a young man live in continence, and an idolater come to [know](#) Christ?

8. Let not [monks](#) then prevent you, as though you alone had been elected from among [monks](#); nor do you make excuses, to the effect that you will deteriorate. For you may even grow better if you imitate [Paul](#), and follow up the actions of the Saints. For you [know](#) that men like those, when appointed stewards of the [mysteries](#), all the more pressed forward to the mark of their high calling [Philippians 3:14](#). When did [Paul](#) meet [martyrdom](#) and expect to receive his crown, if not after being sent to teach? When did Peter make his confession, if not when he was preaching the [Gospel](#), and had become a fisher of men [Matthew 4:19](#)? When was Elijah taken up, if not after completing his prophetic career? When did Elisha gain a double share of the [Spirit](#), if not after leaving all to follow Elijah? Or why did the Saviour choose [disciples](#), if not to send them out as [apostles](#)?

9. So take these as an example, beloved Dracontius, and do not say, or [believe](#) those who say, that the [bishop's](#) office is an occasion of [sin](#), nor that it gives rise to [temptations](#) to [sin](#). For it is possible for you also as a [bishop](#) to hunger and thirst [Philippians 4:12](#), as [Paul](#) did. You can drink no wine, like Timothy [1 Timothy 5:23](#), and fast constantly too, like [Paul 2 Corinthians 11:27](#), in order that thus [fasting](#) after his example you may feast others with your words, and while thirsting for lack of drink, water others by teaching. Let not your advisers, then, allege these things. For we [know](#) both [bishops](#) who fast, and [monks](#) who eat. We [know bishops](#) who drink no wine, as well as [monks](#) who do. We [know bishops](#) who work wonders, as well as [monks](#) who do not. Many also of the [bishops](#) have not even married, while [monks](#) have been fathers of children; just as conversely we [know bishops](#) who are fathers of children and [monks](#) 'of the completest kind.' And again, we [know clergy](#) who suffer hunger, and [monks](#) who fast. For it is possible in the latter way, and not forbidden in the former. But let a [man](#), wherever he is, strive earnestly; for the crown is given not according to position, but according to action.

10. Do not then suffer those who give contrary advice. But rather hasten and delay not; the more so as the [holy](#) festival is approaching; so that the [laity](#) may not keep the feast without you, and you bring great danger upon yourself. For who will in your absence preach them the Easter sermon? Who will announce to them the great day of the Resurrection, if you art in hiding? Who will counsel them, if you are in flight, to keep the feast fittingly? Ah, how many will be the better if you appear, how many be injured if you fly! And who will think well of you for this? and why do they advise you not to take up the [bishop's](#) office, when they themselves wish to have [presbyters](#)? For if you are bad, let them not associate with you. But if they [know](#) that you are good, let them not [envy](#) the others. For if, as they say, teaching and government is an occasion of [sin](#), let them not be taught themselves, nor have [presbyters](#), lest they deteriorate, both they and those who teach them. But do not attend to these human sayings, nor suffer those who give such advice, as I have often already said. But rather make haste and turn to the Lord, in order that, taking thought for his sheep, you may remember us also. But to this end I have bidden our beloved Hierax, the [presbyter](#), and Maximus the reader go, and bid you by word of mouth also, that you may be able thus to learn both with what feelings I have written, and the danger that results from gainsaying the ordinance of the [Church](#).

Letter 50

First Letter to Lucifer.

To our lord, and most beloved brother the Bishop and Confessor Lucifer. Athanasius greeting in the Lord.

Being well in body by God's favour, we have now sent our most beloved [deacon](#) Eutyches, that your most [pious holiness](#), as is much desired by us, may be pleased to inform us of the safety of yourself and those with you. For we [believe](#) it is by the life of you Confessors and servants of God that the state of the [Catholic Church](#) is renewed; and

that what [heretics](#) have assayed to rend in pieces, [our Lord Jesus Christ](#) by your means restores whole.

For although the forerunners of [Antichrist](#) have by the power of this world done everything to put out the lantern of [truth](#), yet the Deity by your confession shows its light all the clearer, so that none can fail to see their deceit. Heretofore perhaps they were able to dissimulate: now they are called Antichrists. For who can but execrate them, and fly from their communion like a taint, or the poison of a serpent? The whole [Church](#) everywhere is mourning, every city groans, aged [bishops](#) are suffering in exile, and [heretics](#) dissembling, who while denying Christ have made themselves [publicans](#), sitting in the Churches and exacting revenue. O new kind of [men](#) and of [persecution](#) which the [devil](#) has devised, namely to use such cruelty, and even ministers as the agents of [evil](#). But although they act thus, and have gone all lengths in [pride](#) and [blasphemy](#), yet your confession, your [piety](#) and wisdom, will be the very greatest comfort and solace to the brotherhood. For it has been reported to us that your [holiness](#) has written to Constantius Augustus; and we wonder more and more that dwelling as it were among scorpions you yet preserve freedom of spirit, in order, by advice or teaching or correction, to bring those in [error](#) to the light of [truth](#). I ask then, and all confessors join me in asking, that you will be good enough to send us a copy; so that all may perceive, not by hearsay only but by letters, the valour of your spirit, and the confidence and firmness of your [faith](#). Those who are with me salute your [holiness](#). I salute all those who are with you. May the deity ever keep you safe and sound and mindful of us, most beloved lord, and [true](#) man of [God](#).

Upon receiving this letter, blessed Lucifer sent the books which he had addressed to Constantius; and when he had read them Athanasius sent [Letter 51](#).

Letter 51

Second Letter to Lucifer.

To the most [glorious](#) lord and deservedly much-desired fellow-Bishop Lucifer, Athanasius greeting in the Lord.

Although I [believe](#) that tidings have reached your [holiness](#) also of the [persecution](#) which the enemies of Christ have just now attempted to raise, seeking our blood, yet our own most beloved messengers can tell your [piety](#) about it. For to such a length did they dare to carry their [madness](#) by means of the soldiers, that they not only banished the Clergy of the city, but also went out to the Hermits, and laid their fatal hands upon Solitaries. Hence I also withdrew far away, lest those who entertained me should suffer trouble at their hands. For whom do [Arians](#) spare, who have spared not even their own [souls](#)? Or how can they give up their [infamous](#) actions while they persist in denying Christ our Lord the only [Son of God](#)? This is the root of their [wickedness](#); on this foundation of sand they build up the perversity of their ways, as we find it written in the thirteenth Psalm, 'The fool said in his heart there is no [God](#);' and presently follows, 'Corrupt are they and become abominable in their works.' Hence the [Jews](#) who denied the [Son of God](#),

deserved to be called 'a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of [evil](#) doers, children without law [Isaiah 1:4](#).' Why 'without law?'—because you have deserted the Lord. And so the most [blessed Paul](#), when he had begun not only to [believe](#) in the [Son of God](#), but also to preach His deity, wrote, 'I [know](#) nothing against myself [1 Corinthians 4:4](#).' Accordingly we too, according to your confession of [faith](#), desire to hold the Apostolic tradition, and to live according to the commands of the divine law, that we may be found along with you in that band in which now Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs are rejoicing. So then, though the [Arian madness](#), aided by external power, was so active that our brethren on account of their fury could not even see the open air with freedom, yet by God's favour, according to your [prayers](#), I have been able, though with trouble and danger, to see the brother who is wont to bring me necessities and the letters of your [holiness](#), along with those of others. And so we have received the books of your most wise and religious [soul](#), in which we have seen the image of an Apostle, the confidence of a Prophet, the teaching of [truth](#), the doctrine of [true faith](#), the way of heaven, the [glory](#) of [martyrdom](#), the triumphs against the [Arian heresy](#), the unimpaired tradition of our Fathers, the right rule of the Church's order. O [truly](#) Lucifer, who according to your name bring the light of [truth](#), and have set it on a candlestick to give light to all. For who, except the [Arians](#), does not clearly see from your teaching the [true faith](#) and the taint of the [Arians](#). Forcibly and admirably, like light from darkness, you have separated the [truth](#) from the subtlety and dishonesty of [heretics](#), defended the [Catholic Church](#), [proved](#) that the arguments of the [Arians](#) are nothing but a kind of hallucination, and taught that the diabolical gnashings of the teeth are to be despised. How good and welcome are your exhortations to [martyrdom](#); how highly to be desired have you shown death to be on behalf of Christ the Son of the living God. What [love](#) you have shown for the world to come and for the heavenly life. You seem to be a [true](#) temple of the Saviour, Who dwells in you and utters these exact words through you, and has given such [grace](#) to your discourses. Beloved as you were before among all, now such passionate affection for you is settled in the minds of all, that they call you the Elijah of our times; and no wonder. For if they who seem to please God are called Sons of [God](#), much more proper is it to give that name to the associates of the Prophets, namely the Confessors, and especially to you. Believe me, Lucifer, it is not you only who has uttered this, but the [Holy Spirit](#) with you. Whence comes so great a memory for the [Scriptures](#)? Whence an unimpaired sense and understanding of them? Whence has such an order of discourse been framed? Whence did you get such exhortations to the way of heaven, whence such confidence against the [devil](#), and such [proofs](#) against [heretics](#), unless the [Holy Spirit](#) had been lodged in you? Rejoice therefore to see that you are already there where also are your predecessors the [martyrs](#), that is, among the band of [angels](#). We also [rejoice](#), having you as an example of valour, and patience, and liberty. For I blush to say anything of what you have written about my name, lest I should appear a flatterer. But I [know](#) and [believe](#) that the Lord Himself, Who has revealed all [knowledge](#) to your [holy](#) and religious spirit, will reward you for this labour also with a reward in the kingdom of the heavens. Since then you are such a [man](#), we ask the Lord in [prayer](#) that you may [pray](#) for us, that in His mercy He may now deign to look down upon the [Catholic Church](#), and deliver all His servants from the hands of persecutors; in order that all they too who have fallen on account of temporal [fear](#) may at length be enabled to raise themselves and return to the way of righteousness, led away from which they are wandering, poor people,

not [knowing](#) in what a pit they are. In particular I ask, if I have said anything amiss, you would be good enough to overlook it, for from so great a fountain my unskilfulness has not been able to draw what it might have done. But as to our brethren, I ask you again to overlook my not having been able to see them. For [truth](#) itself is my [witness](#) that I wished and longed to compass this, and was greatly grieved at being unable. For my eyes ceased not from tears, nor my spirit from groaning, because we are not permitted even to see the brethren. But God is my [witness](#), that on account of their [persecution](#) I have not been able to see even the [parents](#) whom I have. For what is there that the [Arians](#) leave undone? They watch the roads, observe those who enter and leave the city, search the vessels, go round the deserts, ransack houses, harass the brethren, [cause](#) unrest to everybody. But thanks be to [God](#), in so doing they are more and more incurring the execration of all, and coming to be [truly known](#) for what your [holiness](#) has called them: slaves of [Antichrist](#). And, poor wretches, [hated](#) as they are, they persist in their [malice](#), until they shall be condemned to the death of their ancestor [Pharaoh](#). Those with me salute your [piety](#). Pray salute those who are with you. May God's [divine grace](#) preserve you, mindful of us and ever blessed, worthily called man of [God](#), servant of [Christ](#), partner of the Apostles, comfort of the brotherhood, master of [truth](#), and in all things most longed for.

Letter 52

First Letter to Monks. (Written 358-360).

1. To those in every place who are living a monastic life, who are established in the [faith](#) of [God](#), and sanctified in [Christ](#), and who say, 'Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed You [Matthew 19:27](#),' brethren dearly beloved and longed for, heartiest greeting in the Lord.

1. In compliance with your affectionate request, which you have frequently urged upon me, I have written a short account of the sufferings which ourselves and the Church have undergone, refuting, according to my ability, the accursed [heresy](#) of the [Arian](#) madmen, and proving how entirely it is alien from the Truth. And I thought it needful to represent to your Piety what pains the writing of these things has cost me, in order that you may understand thereby how [truly](#) the blessed Apostle has said, 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and [knowledge](#) of God [Romans 11:33](#);' and may kindly bear with a weak man such as I am by nature. For the more I desired to write, and endeavoured to force myself to understand the Divinity of the Word, so much the more did the [knowledge](#) thereof withdraw itself from me; and in proportion as I thought that I apprehended it, in so much I perceived myself to fail of doing so. Moreover also I was unable to express in writing even what I seemed to myself to understand; and that which I wrote was unequal to the imperfect shadow of the [truth](#) which [existed](#) in my conception.

2. Considering therefore how it is written in the Book of Ecclesiastes, 'I said, I will be wise, but it was far from me; That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who shall find it out?' [Ecclesiastes 7:23-24](#) and what is said in the [Psalms](#), 'The [knowledge](#) of You is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it;' and that Solomon says, 'It is the [glory](#)

of God to conceal a thing [Proverbs 25:2](#);' I frequently designed to stop and to cease writing; [believe](#) me, I did. But lest I should be found to disappoint you, or by my silence to lead into impiety those who have made enquiry of you, and are given to disputation, I constrained myself to write briefly, what I have now sent to your [piety](#). For although a perfect apprehension of the [truth](#) is at present far removed from us by reason of the infirmity of the flesh, yet it is possible, as the Preacher himself has said, to perceive the [madness](#) of the impious, and having found it, to say that it is 'more bitter than death [Ecclesiastes 7:26](#).' Wherefore for this reason, as perceiving this and able to find it out, I have written, [knowing](#) that to the faithful the detection of impiety is a sufficient information wherein [piety](#) consists. For although it be impossible to comprehend what God is, yet it is possible to say what He is not. And we [know](#) that He is not as man; and that it is not lawful to conceive of any originated nature as existing in Him. So also respecting the [Son of God](#), although we are by nature very far from being able to comprehend Him; yet is it possible and easy to condemn the assertions of the [heretics](#) concerning Him, and to say, that the [Son of God](#) is not such; nor is it lawful even to conceive in our minds such things as they speak, concerning His Godhead; much less to utter them with the lips.

3. Accordingly I have written as well as I was able; and you, dearly beloved, receive these communications not as containing a perfect exposition of the Godhead of the Word, but as being merely a refutation of the impiety of the enemies of [Christ](#), and as containing and affording to those who desire it, suggestions for arriving at a [pious](#) and sound [faith](#) in [Christ](#). And if in anything they are defective (and I think they are defective in all respects), pardon it with a pure [conscience](#), and only receive favourably the boldness of my good intentions in support of godliness. For an utter condemnation of the [heresy](#) of the [Arians](#), it is sufficient for you to [know](#) the judgment given by the Lord in the death of [Arius](#), of which you have already been informed by others. 'For what the Holy God has purposed, who shall scatter [Isaiah 14:27](#) ?' and whom the Lord condemned who shall justify? After such a sign given, who do not now acknowledge, that the [heresy](#) is [hated](#) of [God](#), however it may have men for its patrons? Now when you have read this account, [pray](#) for me, and exhort one another so to do. And immediately send it back to me, and suffer no one whatever to take a copy of it, nor transcribe it for yourselves. But like good money-changers be satisfied with the reading; but read it repeatedly if you desire to do so. For it is not safe that the writings of us babblers and private [persons](#) should fall into the hands of them that shall come after. Salute one another in [love](#), and also all that come unto you in [piety](#) and [faith](#). For 'if any man' as the Apostle has said, '[love](#) not the Lord, let him be [anathema](#). The [grace](#) of [our Lord Jesus Christ](#) be with you [1 Corinthians 16:22-23](#) . [Amen](#).'

Letter 53

Second Letter to Monks.

Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria, to the Solitaries.

Athanasius to those who practise a solitary life, and are settled in [faith](#) in [God](#), most beloved brethren, greeting in the Lord.

I thank the Lord who has given to you to [believe](#) in Him, that you too may have with the [saints eternal](#) life. But because there are certain [persons](#) who hold with [Arius](#) and go about the monasteries with no other object save that under colour of visiting you, and returning from us they may deceive the simple; whereas there are certain who, while they affirm that they do not hold with [Arius](#), yet compromise themselves and worship with his party; I have been compelled, at the instance of certain most sincere brethren, to write at once in order that keeping faithfully and without guile the [pious faith](#) which God's [grace](#) works in you, you may not give occasion of scandal to the brethren. For when any sees you, the faithful in [Christ](#), associate and communicate with such people, [or worshipping along with them], certainly they will think it a matter of indifference and will fall into the mire of irreligion. Lest, then, this should happen, be pleased, beloved, to shun those who hold the impiety [of [Arius](#)], and moreover to avoid those who, while they pretend not to hold with [Arius](#), yet worship with the impious. And we are specially bound to fly from the communion of men whose opinions we hold in execration. [If then any come to you, and, as blessed John [2 John 10](#) says, brings with him right doctrine, say to him, All hail, and receive such an one as a brother.] But if any pretend that he confesses the [right faith](#), but appear to communicate with those others, exhort him to abstain from such communion, and if he promise to do so, treat him as a brother, but if he persist in a contentious spirit, him avoid. [I might greatly lengthen my letter, adding from the [divine Scriptures](#) the outline of this teaching. But since, being wise men, you can anticipate those who write, and rather, being intent upon self-denial, are fit to instruct others also, I have dictated a short letter, as from one loving friend to others, in the confidence] that living as you do you will preserve a pure and sincere [faith](#), and that those [persons](#), seeing that you do not join with them in worship, will derive benefit, fearing lest they be accounted as impious, and as those who hold with them.

Letter 54

To Serapion, concerning the death of [Arius](#).

Athanasius to Serapion, a brother and fellow-minister, health in the Lord.

I have read the letters of your [piety](#), in which you have requested me to make [known](#) to you the events of my times relating to myself, and to give an account of that most impious [heresy](#) of the [Arians](#), in consequence of which I have endured these sufferings, and also of the manner of the death of [Arius](#). With two out of your three demands I have readily undertaken to comply, and have sent to your Godliness what I wrote to the Monks; from which you will be able to learn my own history as well as that of the [heresy](#). But with respect to the other matter, I mean the death, I debated with myself for a long time, fearing lest any one should suppose that I was exulting in the death of that man. But yet, since a disputation which has taken place amongst you concerning the [heresy](#), has issued in this question, whether [Arius](#) died after previously communicating with the

Church; I therefore was necessarily desirous of giving an account of his death, as thinking that the question would thus be set at rest, considering also that by making this [known](#) I should at the same time silence those who are fond of contention. For I conceive that when the wonderful circumstances connected with his death become [known](#), even those who before questioned it will no longer venture to [doubt](#) that the [Arian heresy](#) is hateful in the sight of [God](#).

2. I was not at Constantinople when he died, but Macarius the Presbyter was, and I heard the account of it from him. [Arius](#) had been invited by the Emperor Constantine, through the interest of Eusebius and his fellows; and when he entered the presence the Emperor enquired of him, whether he held the Faith of the [Catholic Church](#)? And he declared upon [oath](#) that he held the right Faith, and gave in an account of his Faith in writing, suppressing the points for which he had been cast out of the Church by the Bishop Alexander, and speciously alleging expressions out of the [Scriptures](#). When therefore he swore that he did not profess the opinions for which Alexander had [excommunicated](#) him, [the Emperor] dismissed him, saying, 'If your Faith be right, you have done well to [swear](#); but if your Faith be impious, and you have [sworn](#), God judge of you according to your [oath](#).' When he thus came forth from the presence of the Emperor, Eusebius and his fellows, with their accustomed [violence](#), desired to bring him into the [Church](#). But Alexander, the Bishop of Constantinople of blessed memory, resisted them, saying that the inventor of the [heresy](#) ought not to be admitted to communion; whereupon Eusebius and his fellows threatened, declaring, 'As we have caused him to be invited by the Emperor, in opposition to your wishes, so tomorrow, though it be contrary to your desire, [Arius](#) shall have communion with us in this Church.' It was the [Sabbath](#) when they said this.

3. When the Bishop Alexander heard this, he was greatly distressed, and entering into the church, he stretched forth his hands unto [God](#), and bewailed himself; and casting himself upon his face in the [chancel](#), he [prayed](#), lying upon the pavement. Macarius also was present, and [prayed](#) with him, and heard his words. And he besought these two things, saying, 'If [Arius](#) is brought to communion tomorrow, let me Your servant depart, and destroy not the [pious](#) with the impious; but if You will spare Your Church (and I [know](#) that You will spare), look upon the words of Eusebius and his fellows, and give not your inheritance to destruction and reproach [Joel 2:17](#), and take off [Arius](#), lest if he enter into the [Church](#), the [heresy](#) also may seem to enter with him, and henceforward impiety be accounted for [piety](#).' When the Bishop had thus [prayed](#), he retired in great anxiety; and a wonderful and extraordinary circumstance took place. While Eusebius and his fellows threatened, the Bishop [prayed](#); but [Arius](#), who had great confidence in Eusebius and his fellows, and talked very wildly, urged by the necessities of nature withdrew, and suddenly, in the language of Scripture, 'falling headlong he burst asunder in the midst [Acts 1:18](#),' and immediately expired as he lay, and was deprived both of communion and of his life together.

4. Such has been the end of [Arius](#): and Eusebius and his fellows, overwhelmed with shame, buried their accomplice, while the blessed Alexander, amidst the rejoicings of the [Church](#), celebrated the Communion with [piety](#) and [orthodoxy](#), [praying](#) with all the

brethren, and greatly glorifying [God](#), not as exulting in his death (God forbid!), for 'it is appointed unto all [men](#) once to die [Hebrews 9:27](#),' but because this thing had been shown forth in a manner transcending human judgments. For the Lord Himself judging between the threats of Eusebius and his fellows, and the [prayer](#) of Alexander, condemned the [Arian heresy](#), showing it to be unworthy of communion with the [Church](#), and making manifest to all, that although it receive the support of the Emperor and of all [mankind](#), yet it was condemned by the Church herself. So the antichristian gang of the [Arian](#) madmen has been shown to be unpleasing to [God](#) and impious; and many of those who before were deceived by it changed their opinions. For none other than the Lord Himself who was [blasphemed](#) by them condemned the [heresy](#) which rose up against Him, and again showed that howsoever the Emperor Constantius may now use [violence](#) to the Bishops in behalf of it, yet it is excluded from the communion of the [Church](#), and alien from the [kingdom of heaven](#). Wherefore also let the question which has arisen among you be henceforth set at rest; (for this was the agreement made among you), and let no one join himself to the [heresy](#), but let even those who have been deceived repent. For who shall receive what the Lord condemned? And will not he who takes up the support of that which He has made excommunicate, be guilty of great impiety, and manifestly an enemy of Christ?

5. Now this is sufficient to confound the contentious; read it therefore to those who before raised this question, as well as what was briefly addressed to the Monks against the [heresy](#), in order that they may be led thereby more strongly to condemn the impiety and [wickedness](#) of the [Arian](#) madmen. Do not however consent to give a copy of these to any one, neither transcribe them for yourself (I have signified the same to the Monks also); but as a sincere friend, if anything is wanting in what I have written, add it, and immediately send them back to me. For you will be able to learn from the letter which I have written to the Brethren, what pains it has cost me to write it, and also to perceive that it is not safe for the writings of a private person to be published (especially if they relate to the highest and chief doctrines), for this reason;—lest what is imperfectly expressed through infirmity or the obscurity of language, do hurt to the reader. For the majority of men do not consider the [faith](#), or the aim of the writer, but either through [envy](#) or a spirit of contention, receive what is written as themselves choose, according to an opinion which they have previously formed, and misinterpret it to suit their pleasure. But the Lord grant that the Truth and a sound [faith](#) in [our Lord Jesus Christ](#) may prevail among all, and especially among those to whom you read this. [Amen](#).

Letter 55

Letter to Rufinianus.

To our lord, son, and most desired fellow-minister Rufinianus. Athanasius greeting in the Lord.

You write what is proper for a beloved son to write to a father: accordingly, I embraced you when you came near me in writing, most desired Rufinianus. And I, though I might

write to you as a son both in the opening and the middle and the close, refrained, lest my commendation and testimony should be made [known](#) by writing. For you are my letter, as it is written [2 Corinthians 3:2](#), [known](#) and read in the heart. That you then are in such case, [believe](#), yea [believe](#). I address you, and invite you to write. For by doing so you afford me the highest gratification. But since in an [honourable](#) and church-like spirit, such as becomes your [piety](#), you ask me about those who were drawn away by necessity but not corrupted by [error](#), and wish me to write what resolution has been come to about them, whether in synods or elsewhere; [know](#), most desired Lord, that to begin with, when [violence](#) was ceased, a synod has been held, [bishops](#) from foreign parts being present; while others have been held by our fellow-ministers resident in Greece, as well as by those in [Spain](#) and [Gaul](#): and the same decision was come to here and everywhere, namely, in the case of those who had fallen and been leaders of impiety, to pardon them upon their repentance, but not to give them the position of [clergy](#): but in the case of men not deliberate in impiety, but drawn away by necessity and [violence](#), that they should not only receive pardon, but should occupy the position of [clergy](#): the more so, in that they offered a plausible defence, and what had happened seemed due to a certain special purpose. For they assured us that they had not gone over to impiety; but lest certain most impious [persons](#) should be elected and ruin the Churches they elected rather to acquiesce in the [violence](#) and to bear the burden, than to lose the people. But in saying this, they appeared to us to say what was plausible; for they alleged in excuse [Aaron](#) the brother of [Moses](#), who in the wilderness acquiesced in the people's transgression; and that he had had as his excuse the danger of the people returning to [Egypt](#) and abiding in [idolatry](#). For there was reason in the view, that if they remained in the wilderness they might cease from their impiety: but if they went into [Egypt](#) they would become ruined and increase the impiety in their midst. For this reason, then, they have been allowed to rank as [clergy](#), those who had been deceived and suffered [violence](#) being pardoned. I give this information to your [piety](#) in the confidence that you will both accept what has been resolved upon, and not charge those who assembled, as I have said, with remissness. But be good enough to read it to the [clergy](#) and [laity](#) under you, that they may be informed, and may not blame you for being thus minded about such [persons](#). For it would not be fitting for me to write, when your [piety](#) is able to do so, and to announce our mind with regard to them, and carry out all that remains to be done. Thanks to the Lord that filled you [1 Corinthians 1:5](#) with all utterance and with all [knowledge](#). Let then those that repent openly anathematise by name the [error](#) of Eudoxius and Euzoius. For they [blasphemed](#) still, and wrote that He was a creature, ringleaders of the [Arian heresy](#). But let them confess the [faith](#) confessed by the fathers at Nicæa, and that they put no other synod before that one. Greet the brotherhood with you. That with us greets you in the Lord.

Letter 56

To the Emperor Jovian.

Copy of a letter of the Emperor Jovian, sent to Athanasius, the most [holy](#) Archbishop of Alexandria.

To the most religious and friend of [God](#), Athanasius, Jovian.

Admiring exceedingly the achievements of your most [honourable](#) life, and of your likeness to the [God](#) of all, and of your affection toward our Saviour Christ, we accept you, most honoured [bishop](#). And inasmuch as you have not flinched from all labour, nor from the [fear](#) of your persecutors, and, regarding dangers and threats of the sword as dung, holding the rudder of the [orthodox faith](#) which is dear to you, are contending even until now for the [truth](#), and continue to exhibit yourself as a pattern to all the people of the faithful, and an example of [virtue](#):—our imperial Majesty recalls you, and desires that you should return to the office of the teaching of [salvation](#). Return then to the [holy](#) Churches, and tend the people of [God](#), and send up to God with [zeal](#) your [prayers](#) for our clemency. For we [know](#) that by your supplication we, and all who hold with us [[the Christian faith](#)], shall have great assistance from the supreme God.

Letter 58

Second Letter to Orsisius.

'But the most [holy](#) Archbishop Athanasius, when he heard about our father Theodorus, was grieved, and sent this letter to the Abbat Orsisius and the brethren to console them for his decease, as follows:'—

Athanasius to Orsisius, Abbat, father of [monks](#), and to all with him who practise the solitary life, and are settled in [faith](#) in [God](#), beloved brethren most longed for in the [Lord](#), greeting.

I have heard about the decease of the blessed Theodorus, and the tidings caused me great anxiety, [knowing](#) as I did his value to you. Now if it had not been Theodorus, I should have used many words to you, with tears, considering what follows after death. But since it is Theodorus whom you and I have [known](#), what need I say in my letter save 'Blessed is' Theodorus, 'who has not walked in the council of the ungodly?' But if 'he is blessed that fears the Lord,' we may now confidently call him blessed, having the firm assurance that he has reached as it were a haven, and has a life without care. Would that the same had also befallen each one of us; would that each of us in his running might thus arrive; would that each of us, on his voyage, might moor his own bark there in the stormless haven, so that, at rest with the fathers, he might say, 'here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein.' Wherefore, brethren beloved and most longed-for, weep not for Theodorus, for he 'is not dead, but sleeps [Matthew 9:24](#).' Let none weep when he remembers him, but imitate his life. For one must not grieve over one that is gone to the place where grief is not. This I write to you all in common; but especially to you, beloved and most longed for Orsisius, in order that now that he is fallen asleep, you may take up the whole charge, and take his place among the brethren. For while he survived, you two were as one, and when one was away, the work of both was carried on: and when both were there you were as one, discoursing to the beloved ones what made for their good. Thus act, then, and so doing write and tell me of the safety of yourself and of the brotherhood. And I

exhort you all to [pray](#) together that the Lord may grant further peace to the Churches. For we now kept festival with [joy](#), both Easter and Pentecost, and we [rejoice](#) in the benefits of the Lord. I write to you all. Greet all who [fear](#) the Lord. Those with me greet you. I [pray](#) that you may be well in the [Lord](#), beloved and much-longed-for brethren.

Letter 59

To Epictetus.

To my Lord, beloved brother, and most-longed-for fellow-minister Epictetus, Athanasius greeting in the Lord. I thought that all vain talk of all [heretics](#), many as they may be, had been stopped by the Synod which was held at Nicæa. For the Faith there confessed by the Fathers according to the [divine Scriptures](#) is enough by itself at once to overthrow all impiety, and to establish the religious belief in [Christ](#). For this reason at the present time, at the assembling of diverse synods, both in [Gaul](#) and [Spain](#), and great Rome, all who came together, as though moved by one spirit, unanimously anathematised those who still were secretly holding with [Arius](#), namely [Auxentius of Milan](#), Ursacius, Valens, and Gaius of Pannonia. And they wrote everywhere, that, whereas the above-said were devising the names of synods to cite on their side, no synod should be cited in the [Catholic Church](#) save only that which was held at Nicæa, which was a monument of victory over all [heresy](#), but especially the [Arian](#), which was the main reason of the synod assembling when it did. How then, after all this, are some attempting to raise doubts or questions? If they belong to the [Arians](#), this is not to be wondered at, that they find fault with what was drawn up against themselves, just as the [Gentiles](#) when they hear that 'the [idols](#) of the [heathen](#) are silver and gold, the work of men's hands,' think the doctrine of the divine Cross folly. But if those who desire to reopen everything by raising questions belong to those who think they [believe](#) aright, and [love](#) what the fathers have declared, they are simply doing what the [prophet](#) describes, giving their neighbour turbid confusion to drink, and fighting about words to no good purpose, save to the subversion of the simple.

2. I write this after reading the memoranda submitted by your [piety](#), which I could wish had not been written at all, so that not even any record of these things should go down to posterity. For who ever yet heard the like? Who ever taught or learned it? For 'from Sion shall come forth the law of [God](#), and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem [Isaiah 2:3](#); [Micah 4:2](#);' but whence came forth this? What lower region has vomited the statement that the Body born of [Mary](#) is coessential with the Godhead of the Word? or that the Word has been changed into flesh, bones, hair, and the whole body, and altered from its own nature? Or who ever heard in a Church, or even from [Christians](#), that the Lord wore a body putatively, not in nature; or who ever went so far in impiety as to say and hold, that this Godhead, which is coessential with the [Father](#), was [circumcised](#) and became imperfect instead of perfect; and that what hung upon the tree was not the body, but the very creative Essence and Wisdom? Or who that hears that the Word transformed for Himself a passible body, not of [Mary](#), but of His own Essence, could call him who said this a [Christian](#)? Or who devised this abominable impiety, for it to enter even his

imagination, and for him to say that to pronounce the Lord's Body to be of [Mary](#) is to hold a Tetrad instead of a Triad in the Godhead? Those who think thus, saying that the Body of the Saviour which He put on from [Mary](#), is of the Essence of the Triad. Or whence again have certain vomited an impiety as great as those already mentioned; saying namely, that the body is not newer than the Godhead of the Word, but was coeternal with it always, since it was compounded of the Essence of Wisdom. Or how did men called [Christians](#) venture even to [doubt](#) whether the Lord, Who proceeded from [Mary](#), while [Son of God](#) by Essence and Nature, is of the seed of [David](#) according to the flesh [Romans 1:3](#), and of the flesh of the [Holy Mary](#)? Or who have been so venturesome as to say that Christ Who suffered in the flesh and was crucified is not Lord, Saviour, [God](#), and Son of the Father? Or how can they wish to be called [Christians](#) who say that the Word has descended upon a [holy](#) man as upon one of the [prophets](#), and has not Himself become man, taking the body from [Mary](#); but that [Christ](#) is one person, while the [Word of God](#), Who before [Mary](#) and before the ages was Son of the [Father](#), is another? Or how can they be [Christians](#) who say that the Son is one, and the [Word of God](#) another?

3. Such were the contents of the memoranda; diverse statements, but one in their sense and in their meaning; tending to impiety. It was for these things that men who make their boast in the confession of the fathers drawn up at Nicæa were disputing and quarrelling with one another. But I marvel that your [piety](#) suffered it, and that you did not stop those who said such things, and propound to them the [right faith](#), so that upon hearing it they might hold their peace, or if they opposed it might be counted as [heretics](#). For the statements are not fit for [Christians](#) to make or to hear, on the contrary they are in every way alien from the Apostolic teaching. For this reason, as I said above, I have caused what they say to be baldly inserted in my letter, so that one who merely hears may perceive the shame and impiety therein contained. And although it would be right to denounce and expose in full the folly of those who have had such ideas, yet it would be a good thing to close my letter here and write no more. For what is so manifestly shown to be [evil](#), it is not necessary to waste time in exposing further, lest contentious [persons](#) think the matter doubtful. It is enough merely to answer such things as follows: we are content with the fact that this is not the teaching of the [Catholic Church](#), nor did the fathers hold this. But lest the 'inventors of [evil](#) things [Romans 1:30](#)' make entire silence on our part a pretext for shamelessness, it will be well to mention a few points from [Holy Scripture](#), in case they may even thus be put to shame, and cease from these foul devices.

4. Whence did it occur to you, sirs, to say that the Body is of one Essence with the Godhead of the Word? For it is well to begin at this point, in order that by showing this opinion to be unsound, all the others too may be [proved](#) to be the same. Now from the [divine Scriptures](#) we discover nothing of the kind. For they say that God came in a [human](#) body. But the fathers who also assembled at Nicæa say that, not the body, but the Son Himself is coessential with the [Father](#), and that while He is of the Essence of the [Father](#), the body, as they admitted according to the [Scriptures](#), is of [Mary](#). Either then deny the Synod of Nicæa, and as [heretics](#) bring in your doctrine from the side; or, if you wish to be children of the fathers, do not hold the contrary of what they wrote. For here again you may see how monstrous it is: If the Word is coessential with the body which is of earthly

nature, while the Word is, by your own confession, coessential with the [Father](#), it will follow that even the Father Himself is coessential with the body produced from the earth. And why any longer blame the [Arians](#) for calling the Son a creature, when you go off to another form of impiety, saying that the Word was changed into flesh and bones and hair and muscles and all the body, and was altered from its own nature? For it is time for you to say openly that He was born of earth; for from earth is the [nature](#) of the bones and of all the body. What then is this great folly of yours, that you fight even with one another? For in saying that the Word is coessential with the Body, you distinguish the one from the other, while in saying that He has been changed into flesh, you [imagine](#) a change of the [Word](#) Himself. And who will tolerate you any longer if you so much as utter these opinions? For you have gone further in impiety than any [heresy](#). For if the Word is coessential with the Body, the commemoration and the work of [Mary](#) are superfluous, inasmuch as the body could have [existed](#) before [Mary](#), just as the Word also is [eternal](#): if, that is, it is as you say co-essential with the Body. Or what need was there even of the Word coming among us, to put on what was coessential with Himself, or to change His own nature and become a body? For the Deity does not take hold [Hebrews 2:16](#) of itself, so as to put on what is of its own Essence, any more than the Word [sinned](#), in that it ransoms the [sins](#) of others, in order that changing into a body it should offer itself a [sacrifice](#) for itself, and ransom itself.

5. But this is not so, far be the thought. For he 'takes hold of the seed of [Abraham Hebrews 2:16](#),' as the apostle said; whence it behoved Him to be made like His brethren in all things, and to take a Body like us. This is why [Mary](#) is [truly](#) presupposed, in order that He may take it from her, and offer it for us as His own. And this Isaiah pointed to in his [prophecy](#), in the words: 'Behold the Virgin [Isaiah 7:14](#),' while Gabriel is sent to her—not simply to a [virgin](#), but 'to a [virgin betrothed](#) to a man [Luke 1:27](#),' in order that by means of the [betrothed](#) man he might show that [Mary](#) was really a human being. And for this reason Scripture also mentions her bringing forth, and tells of her wrapping Him in swaddling clothes; and therefore, too, the paps which He sucked were called blessed. And He was offered as a [sacrifice](#), in that He Who was born had opened the womb. Now all these things are [proofs](#) that the [Virgin](#) brought forth. And Gabriel preached the [Gospel](#) to her without uncertainty, saying not merely 'what is born in you,' lest the body should be thought to be extraneously induced upon her, but 'of you,' that what was born might be [believed](#) to be naturally from her, inasmuch as Nature clearly shows that it is impossible for a [virgin](#) to produce milk unless she has brought forth, and impossible for a body to be nourished with milk and wrapped in swaddling clothes unless it has previously been naturally brought forth. This is the meaning of His being [circumcised](#) on the eighth day: of Symeon taking Him in his arms, of His becoming a young child, and growing when He was twelve years old, and of His coming to His thirtieth year. For it was not, as some suppose, the very Essence of the Word that was changed, and was [circumcised](#), because it is incapable of alteration or change. For the Saviour Himself says, 'Behold, behold, it is I, and I change not [Malachi 3:6](#),' while [Paul](#) writes: '[Jesus Christ](#), the same yesterday, and today, and for ever [Hebrews 13:8](#).' But in the Body which was [circumcised](#), and carried, and ate and drank, and was weary, and was nailed on the tree and suffered, there was the impassible and incorporeal [Word of God](#). This Body it was that was laid in a grave, when

the Word had left it, yet was not parted from it, to preach, as Peter says, also to the spirits in prison [1 Peter 3:19](#) .

6. And this above all shows the foolishness of those who say that the Word was changed into bones and flesh. For if this had been so, there were no need of a tomb. For the Body would have gone by itself to preach to the spirits in Hades. But as it was, He Himself went to preach, while the Body Joseph wrapped in a linen cloth, and laid it away at Golgotha [Mark 15:46](#) . And so it is shown to all that the Body was not the Word, but Body of the Word. And it was this that Thomas handled when it had risen from the dead, and saw in it the print of the nails, which the [Word](#) Himself had undergone, seeing them fixed in His own Body, and though able to prevent it, did not do so. On the contrary, the incorporeal Word made His own the properties of the Body, as being His own Body. Why, when the Body was struck by the attendant, as suffering Himself He asked, 'Why do you smite Me [John 18:23](#) ?' And being by nature intangible, the Word yet said, 'I gave My back to the stripes, and My cheeks to blows, and hid not My face from shame and spitting [Isaiah 50:6](#).' For what the human Body of the Word suffered, this the Word, dwelling in the body, ascribed to Himself, in order that we might be enabled to be partakers of the Godhead of the Word. And verily it is strange that He it was Who suffered and yet suffered not. Suffered, because His own Body suffered, and He was in it, which thus suffered; suffered not, because the Word, being by Nature [God](#), is impassible. And while He, the incorporeal, was in the passible Body, the Body had in it the impassible Word, which was destroying the infirmities inherent in the Body. But this He did, and so it was, in order that Himself taking what was ours and offering it as a [sacrifice](#), He might do away with it, and conversely might invest us with what was His, and [cause](#) the Apostle to say: 'This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on [immortality 1 Corinthians 15:53](#).'

7. Now this did not come to pass putatively, as some have supposed: far be the thought: but the Saviour having in very [truth](#) become Man, the [salvation](#) of the whole man was brought about. For if the Word were in the Body putatively, as they say, and by putative is meant imaginary, it follows that both the [salvation](#) and the resurrection of man is apparent only, as the most impious Manichæus held. But [truly](#) our [salvation](#) is not merely apparent, nor does it extend to the body only, but the whole man, body and [soul](#) alike, has [truly](#) obtained [salvation](#) in the [Word](#) Himself. That then which was born of [Mary](#) was according to the [divine Scriptures](#) human by nature, and the Body of the Lord was a [true](#) one; but it was this, because it was the same as our body, for [Mary](#) was our sister inasmuch as we all are from Adam. And no one can [doubt](#) of this when he remembers what Luke wrote. For after He had risen from the dead, when some thought that they did not see the Lord in the body derived from [Mary](#), but were beholding a spirit instead, He said, 'See My hands and My feet, and the prints of the nails, that it is I Myself: handle Me and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see Me to have. And when He had said thus, He showed them His hands and His feet [Luke 24:39](#).' Whence they can be refuted who have ventured to say that the Lord was transformed into flesh and bones. For He did not say, 'As you see Me to be flesh and bone,' but 'as you see Me to have,' in order that it might not be thought that the [Word](#) Himself was changed into these things, but that He might be [believed](#) to have them after His [resurrection](#) as well as before His death.

8. These things being thus demonstrated, it is superfluous to touch upon the other points, or to enter upon any discussion relating to them, since the body in which the Word was is not coessential with the Godhead, but was [truly](#) born of [Mary](#), while the [Word](#) Himself was not changed into bones and flesh, but came in the flesh. For what John said, 'The [Word](#) was [made flesh John 1:14](#),' has this meaning, as we may see by a similar passage; for it is written in [Paul](#): 'Christ has become a curse for us [Galatians 3:13](#).' And just as He has not Himself become a curse, but is said to have done so because He took upon Him the curse on our behalf, so also He has become flesh not by being changed into flesh, but because He assumed on our behalf living flesh, and has become Man. For to say 'the Word became flesh,' is equivalent to saying 'the Word has become man;' according to what is said in Joel: 'I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all flesh [Joel 2:28](#);' for the promise did not extend to the irrational animals, but is for men, on whose account the Lord is become Man. As then this is the sense of the above text, they all will reasonably condemn themselves who have thought that the flesh derived from Mary [existed](#) before her, and that the Word, prior to her, had a human [soul](#), and [existed](#) in it always even before His coming. And they too will cease who have said that the Flesh was not accessible to death, but belonged to the [immortal](#) Nature. For if it did not die, how could [Paul](#) deliver to the Corinthians 'that Christ died for our [sins](#), according to the [Scriptures 1 Corinthians 15:3](#),' or how did He rise at all if He did not also die? Again, they will blush deeply who have even entertained the possibility of a Tetrads instead of a Triad resulting, if it were said that the Body was derived from Mary. For if (they argue) we say the Body is of one Essence with the Word, the Triad remains a Triad; for then the Word imports no foreign element into it; but if we admit that the Body derived from Mary is human, it follows, since the Body is foreign in Essence, and the Word is in it, that the addition of the Body causes a Tetrads instead of a Triad.

9. When they argue thus, they fail to perceive the contradiction in which they involve themselves. For even though they say that the Body is not from Mary, but is coessential with the Word, yet none the less (the very point they dissemble, to avoid being credited with their real opinion) this on their own premises can be [proved](#) to involve a Tetrads. For as the [Son](#), according to the Fathers, is coessential with the [Father](#), but is not the Father Himself, but is called coessential, as Son with Father, so the Body, which they call coessential with the Word, is not the [Word](#) Himself, but a distinct entity. But if so, on their own showing, their Triad will be a Tetrads. For the [true](#), really perfect and indivisible Triad is not accessible to addition as is the Triad imagined by these [persons](#). And how do these remain [Christians](#) who [imagine](#) another God in addition to the [true](#) one? For, once again, in their other fallacy one can see how great is their folly. For if they think because it is contained and stated in the [Scriptures](#), that the Body of the Saviour is human and derived from Mary, that a Tetrads is substituted for a Triad, as though the Body created an addition, they go very far wrong, so much so as to make the creature equal to the Creator, and suppose that the Godhead can receive an addition. And they have failed to perceive that the Word is become Flesh, not by reason of an addition to the Godhead, but in order that the flesh may rise again. Nor did the Word proceed from Mary that He might be bettered, but that He might ransom the [human race](#). How then can they think that the Body, ransomed and quickened by the Word, made an addition in respect of Godhead to the Word that had quickened it? For on the contrary, a great addition has accrued to the

human Body itself from the fellowship and union of the Word with it. For instead of mortal it is become [immortal](#); and, though an animal body, it is become spiritual, and though made from earth it entered the heavenly gates. The Triad, then, although the Word took a body from Mary, is a Triad, being inaccessible to addition or diminution; but it is always perfect, and in the Triad one Godhead is recognised, and so in the Church one God is preached, the Father of the Word.

10. For this reason they also will henceforth keep silence, who once said that He who proceeded from Mary is not very Christ, or Lord, or God. For if He were not God in the Body, how came He, upon proceeding from Mary, straightway to be called '[Emmanuel](#)', which is being interpreted God with us [Matthew 1:23](#) ?' Why again, if the Word was not in the flesh, did [Paul](#) write to the Romans 'of whom is Christ after the flesh, Who is above all God blessed for ever. [Amen Romans 9:5](#) ?' Let them therefore confess, even they who previously denied that the Crucified was [God](#), that they have erred; for the [divine Scriptures](#) bid them, and especially Thomas, who, after seeing upon Him the print of the nails, cried out 'My Lord and my God [John 20:28](#) !' For the [Son](#), being [God](#), and Lord of [glory 1 Corinthians 2:8](#), was in the Body which was ingloriously nailed and dishonoured; but the Body, while it suffered, being pierced on the tree, and water and blood flowed from its side, yet because it was a temple of the Word was filled full of the Godhead. For this reason it was that the sun, seeing its creator suffering in His outraged body, withdrew its rays and darkened the earth. But the body itself being of mortal nature, beyond its own nature rose again by reason of the Word which was in it; and it has ceased from natural corruption, and, having put on the Word which is above man, has become incorruptible.

11. But with regard to the imagination of some, who say that the Word came upon one particular man, the Son of [Mary](#), just as it came upon each of the Prophets, it is superfluous to discuss it, since their [madness](#) carries its own condemnation manifestly with it. For if He came thus, why was that man born of a [virgin](#), and not like others of a man and [woman](#)? For in this way each of the [saints](#) also was begotten. Or why, if the Word came thus, is not the death of each one said to have taken place on our behalf, but only this man's death? Or why, if the Word sojourned among us in the case of each one of the [prophets](#), is it said only in the case of Him born of Mary that He sojourned here 'once at the consummation of the ages [Hebrews 9:26](#) ?' Or why, if He came as He had come in the [saints](#) of former times, did the Son of Mary alone, while all the rest had died without rising as yet, rise again on the third day? Or why, if the Word had come in like manner as He had done in the other cases, is the Son of Mary alone called [Emmanuel](#), as though a Body filled full of the Godhead were born of her? For [Emmanuel](#) is interpreted 'God with us.' Or why, if He came thus, is it not said that when each of the [saints](#) ate, drank, laboured, and died, that He (the Word) ate, drank, laboured, and died, but only in the case of the Son of Mary. For what that Body suffered is said to have been suffered by the Word. And while we are merely told of the others that they were born, and begotten, it is said in the case of the Son of Mary alone that 'The Word was made Flesh.'

12. This proves that while to all the others the Word came, in order that they might prophesy, from [Mary](#) the [Word](#) Himself took flesh, and proceeded forth as man; being by nature and [essence](#) the [Word of God](#), but after the flesh man of the seed of [David](#), and

made of the flesh of [Mary](#), as [Paul](#) said. Him the Father pointed out both in Jordan and on the Mount, saying, 'This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' Him the [Arians](#) denied, but we recognising worship, not dividing the Son and the Word, but [knowing](#) that the Son is the [Word](#) Himself, by Whom all things are made, and by Whom we were redeemed. And for this reason we wonder how any contention at all has arisen among you about things so clear. But thanks to the Lord, much as we were grieved at reading your memoranda, we were equally glad at their conclusion. For they departed with concord, and peacefully agreed in the confession of the [pious](#) and [orthodox faith](#). This fact has induced me, after much previous consideration, to write these few words; for I am anxious lest by my silence this matter should [cause](#) pain rather than [joy](#) to those whose concord occasions [joy](#) to ourselves. I therefore ask your [piety](#) in the first place, and secondly those who hear, to take my letter in good part, and if anything is lacking in it in respect of [piety](#), to set that right, and inform me. But if it is written, as from one unpractised in speech, below the subject and imperfectly, let all allow for my feebleness in speaking. Greet all the brethren with you. All those with us greet you; may you live in good health in the [Lord](#), beloved and [truly](#) longed for.

Letter 60

To Adelphius, Bishop and Confessor: against the [Arians](#).

We have read what your [piety](#) has written to us, and genuinely approve your [piety](#) toward [Christ](#). And above all we glorify [God](#), Who has given you such [grace](#) as not only to have right opinions, but also, so far as that is possible, not to be [ignorant](#) of the devices [2 Corinthians 2:11](#) of the [devil](#). But we marvel at the perversity of the [heretics](#), seeing that they have fallen into such a pit of impiety that they no longer retain even their senses, but have their understanding corrupted on all sides. But this attempt is a plot of the [devil](#), and an imitation of the disobedient [Jews](#). For as the latter, when refuted on all sides, kept devising excuses to their own hurt, if only they could deny the Lord and bring upon themselves what was prophesied against them, in like manner these men, seeing themselves proscribed on all hands, and perceiving that their [heresy](#) has become abominable to all, prove themselves 'inventors of [evil](#) things [Romans 1:30](#),' in order that, not ceasing their fightings against the [truth](#), they may remain consistent and genuine adversaries of [Christ](#). For whence has this new mischief of theirs sprung forth? How have they even ventured to utter this new [blasphemy](#) against the Saviour? But the impious man, it seems, is a worthless object, and [truly](#) 'reprobate concerning the Faith [2 Timothy 3:8](#).' For formerly, while denying the Godhead of the only-begotten [Son of God](#), they pretended at any rate to acknowledge His coming in the Flesh. But now, gradually going from bad to worse, they have fallen from this opinion of theirs, and become Godless on all hands, so as neither to acknowledge Him as [God](#), nor to [believe](#) that He has become man. For if they [believed](#) this they would not have uttered such things as your [piety](#) has reported against them.

2. You, however, beloved and most [truly](#) longed-for, have done what befitted the tradition of the Church and your [piety](#) toward the Lord, in refuting, admonishing, and

rebuking such men. But since, instigated by their father the [devil](#), 'they [knew](#) not nor understood,' as it is written, 'but go on still in darkness,' let them learn from your [piety](#) that this [error](#) of theirs belongs to [Valentinus](#) and [Marcion](#), and to Manichæus, of whom some substituted [the idea of] Appearance for Reality, while the others, dividing what is indivisible, denied the [truth](#) that 'the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us [John 1:14](#).' Why then, as they hold with those people, do they not also take up the heritage of their names? For it is reasonable, as they hold their [error](#), to have their names as well, and for the future to be called [Valentinians](#), [Marcionists](#), and [Manichæans](#). Perhaps even thus, being put to shame by the ill savour of the names, they may be enabled to perceive into what a depth of impiety they have fallen. And it would be within our rights not to answer them at all, according to the apostolic advice [Titus 3:10-11](#) : 'A man that is [heretical](#), after a first and second admonition refuse, [knowing](#) that such an one is perverted, and [being self-condemned](#);' [the more so, in that the Prophet says about such men: 'The fool shall utter foolishness, and his heart shall imagine](#) vain things.' But since, like their leader, they too go about like lions seeking whom among the simple they shall devour [1 Peter 5:8](#), we are compelled to write in reply to your [piety](#), that the brethren being once again instructed by your admonition may still further reprobate the vain teaching of those men.

3. We do not worship a creature. Far be the thought. For such an [error](#) belongs to [heathens](#) and [Arians](#). But we worship the Lord of Creation, Incarnate, the [Word of God](#). For if the flesh also is in itself a part of the created world, yet it has become God's body. And we neither divide the body, being such, from the Word, and worship it by itself, nor when we wish to worship the Word do we set Him far apart from the Flesh, but [knowing](#), as we said above, that 'the [Word](#) was [made flesh](#),' we recognise Him as God also, after having come in the flesh. Who, accordingly, is so senseless as to say to the Lord: 'Leave the Body that I may worship You;' or so impious as to join the senseless [Jews](#) in saying, on account of the Body, 'Why do You, being a [man](#), make Yourself God [John 10:33](#) ?' But the [leper](#) was not one of this sort, for he worshipped God in the Body, and recognised that He was [God](#), saying, 'Lord, if You will You can make me clean [Matthew 8:2](#).' Neither by reason of the Flesh did he think the [Word of God](#) a creature: nor because the Word was the maker of all creation did he despise the Flesh which He had put on. But he worshipped the Creator of the [universe](#) as dwelling in a created temple, and was cleansed. So also the [woman](#) with an issue of blood, who [believed](#), and only touched the hem of His garment, was healed [Matthew 9:20](#), and the sea with its foaming waves heard the incarnate Word, and ceased its storm, while the man blind from birth was healed by the fleshly spitting of the Word [John 9:6](#) . And, what is greater and more startling (for perhaps this even offended those most impious men), even when the Lord was hanging upon the actual cross (for it was His Body and the Word was in it), the sun was darkened and the earth shook, the rocks were rent, and the veil of the temple rent, and many bodies of the [saints](#) which slept arose.

4. These things then happened, and no one [doubted](#), as the [Arians](#) now venture to [doubt](#), whether one is to [believe](#) the incarnate Word; but even from beholding the man, they recognised that He was their maker, and when they heard a human voice, they did not, because it was human, say that the Word was a creature. On the contrary, they trembled,

and recognised nothing less than that it was being uttered from a [holy](#) Temple. How then can the impious fail to [fear](#) lest 'as they refused to have God in their [knowledge](#), they may be given up to a reprobate [mind](#), to do those things which are not fitting [Romans 1:28](#)?' For Creation does not worship a creature. Nor again did she on account of His Flesh refuse to worship her Lord. But she beheld her maker in the Body, and 'in the Name of Jesus every knee' bowed, yea and 'shall bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and every tongue shall confess,' whether the [Arians](#) approve or no, 'that Jesus is Lord, to the Glory of [God](#) the Father [Philippians 2:10-11](#).' For the Flesh did not diminish the [glory](#) of the Word; far be the thought: on the contrary, it was [glorified](#) by Him. Nor, because the Son that was in the form of God took upon Him the form of a servant was He deprived of His Godhead. On the contrary, He is thus become the Deliverer of all flesh and of all creation. And if God sent His Son brought forth from a [woman](#), the fact causes us no shame but contrariwise [glory](#) and great [grace](#). For He has become Man, that He might deify us in Himself, and He has been born of a [woman](#), and begotten of a Virgin, in order to transfer to Himself our erring generation, and that we may become henceforth a [holy](#) race, and 'partakers of the Divine Nature,' as blessed Peter wrote [2 Peter 1:4](#). And 'what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for [sin](#), condemned [sin](#) in the flesh [Romans 8:3](#).'

5. Seeing then that Flesh was taken by the Word to deliver all [men](#), raise all from the dead, and make redemption for [sins](#), must not they appear ungrateful, and be worthy of all [hatred](#), who make light of the Flesh, as well as those who on account of it charge the [Son of God](#) with being a thing created or made? For they as good as cry to [God](#) and say: 'Send not Your Only-begotten Son in the Flesh, [cause](#) Him not to take flesh of a [virgin](#), lest He redeem us from death and [sin](#). We do not wish Him to come in the body, lest He should undergo death on our behalf: we do not desire the Word to be made flesh, lest in it He should become our Mediator to gain access to you, and we so inhabit the heavenly mansions. Let the gates of the heavens be shut lest Your Word consecrate for us the road thither through the veil, namely His Flesh [Hebrews 10:20](#).' These are their utterances, vented with diabolical daring, by the [error](#) they have devised. For they who do not wish to worship the Word made flesh, are ungrateful for His becoming man. And they who divide the Word from the Flesh do not hold that one redemption from [sin](#) has taken place, or one destruction of death. But where at all will these impious men find the Flesh which the Saviour took, apart from Him, that they should even venture to say 'we do not worship the Lord with the Flesh, but we separate the Body, and worship Him alone.' Why, the blessed Stephen saw in the heavens the Lord standing on [God's] right hand [Acts 7:55](#), while the Angels said to the [disciples](#), 'He shall so come in like manner as you beheld Him going into heaven:' and the Lord Himself says, addressing the [Father](#), 'I will that where I am, they also may be with Me [John 17:24](#).' And surely if the Flesh is inseparable from the Word, does it not follow that these men must either lay aside their [error](#), and for the future worship the Father in the name of [our Lord Jesus Christ](#), or, if they do not worship or serve the Word Who came in the Flesh, be cast out on all sides, and count no longer as [Christians](#) but either as [heathens](#), or among the [Jews](#).

6. Such then, as we have above described, is the [madness](#) and daring of those men. But our [faith](#) is right, and starts from the teaching of the Apostles and tradition of the fathers, being confirmed both by the [New Testament](#) and the [Old](#). For the Prophets say: 'Send out Your Word and Your Truth,' and 'Behold the Virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call His name [Emmanuel](#), which is being interpreted God with us.' But what does that mean, if not that God has come in the Flesh? While the Apostolic tradition teaches in the words of blessed Peter, 'Forasmuch then as [Christ](#) suffered for us in the Flesh;' and in what [Paul](#) writes, 'Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of [our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ](#), Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, and [zealous](#) of good works [Titus 2:13-14](#).' How then has He given Himself, if He had not worn flesh? For flesh He offered, and gave Himself for us, in order that undergoing death in it, 'He might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the [devil Hebrews 2:14](#).' Hence also we always give thanks in the name of [Jesus Christ](#), and we do not set at nought the [grace](#) which came to us through Him. For the coming of the Saviour in the flesh has been the ransom and [salvation](#) of all creation. So then, beloved and most longed-for, let what I have said put in mind those who [love](#) the Lord, while as to those who have imitated the behaviour of [Judas](#), and deserted the Lord to join [Caiaphas](#), let them by these things be taught better, if maybe they are willing, if maybe they are ashamed. And let them [know](#) that in worshipping the Lord in the flesh we do not worship a creature, but, as we said above, the Creator Who has put on the created body.

7. But we should like your [piety](#) to ask them this. When [Israel](#) was ordered to go up to Jerusalem to worship at the temple of the Lord, where was the ark, 'and above it the Cherubim of [glory](#) overshadowing the Mercy-seat [Hebrews 9:5](#),' did they do well or the opposite? If they did ill, how came it that they who despised this law were liable to punishment? for it is written that if a man make light of it and go not up, he shall perish from among the people. But if they did well, and in this proved well-pleasing to [God](#), are not the [Arians](#), abominable and most shameful of any [heresy](#), many times worthy of destruction, in that while they approve the former People for the [honour](#) paid by them to the Temple, they will not worship the Lord Who is in the flesh as in a temple? And yet the former temple was constructed of stones and gold, as a shadow. But when the reality came, the type ceased from thenceforth, and there did not remain, according to the Lord's utterance, one stone upon another that was not broken down [Matthew 24:2](#). And they did not, when they saw the temple of stones, suppose that the Lord who spoke in the temple was a creature; nor did they set the Temple at nought and retire far off to worship. But they came to it according to the Law, and worshipped the God who uttered His oracles from the Temple. Since then this was so, how can it be other than right to worship the Body of the Lord, all-[holy](#) and all-reverend as it is, announced as it was by the archangel Gabriel, formed by the [Holy Spirit](#), and made the Vesture of the Word? It was at any rate a bodily hand that the Word stretched out to raise her that was sick of a fever [Mark 1:31](#): a human voice that He uttered to raise Lazarus from the dead [John 11:43](#); and, once again, stretching out His hands upon the Cross, He overthrew the prince of the power of the air, that now works in the sons of disobedience, and made the way clear for us into the heavens.

8. Therefore he that dishonours the Temple dishonours the Lord in the Temple; and he that separates the Word from the Body sets at nought the [grace](#) given to us in Him. And let not the most impious [Arian](#) madmen suppose that, since the Body is created, the Word also is a creature, nor let them, because the Word is not a creature, disparage His Body. For their [error](#) is matter for wonder, in that they at once confuse and disturb everything, and devise pretexts only in order to number the Creator among the creatures.

But let them listen. If the Word were a creature, He would not assume the created body to quicken it. For what help can creatures derive from a creature that itself needs [salvation](#)? But since the Word being Creator has Himself made the creatures, therefore also at the consummation of the ages [Hebrews 9:26](#) He put on the creature, that He as creator might once more consecrate it, and be able to recover it. But a creature could never be saved by a creature, any more than the creatures were created by a creature, if the Word was not creator. Accordingly let them not lie against the [divine Scriptures](#) nor give offence to simple brethren; but if they are willing let them change their mind in their turn, and no longer worship the creature instead of [God](#), Who made all things. But if they wish to abide by their impieties, let them alone take their fill of them, and let them gnash their teeth like their father the [devil](#), because the Faith of the [Catholic Church knows](#) that the [Word of God](#) is creator and maker of all things; and we [know](#) that while 'in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God [John 1:1](#),' now that He has become also man for our [salvation](#) we worship Him, not as though He had come in the body equalising Himself with it, but as Master, assuming the form of the servant, and Maker and Creator coming in a creature in order that, in it delivering all things, He might bring the world nigh to the [Father](#), and make all things to be at peace, things in heaven and things on the earth. For thus also we recognise His Godhead, even the Father's, and worship His Incarnate Presence, even if the [Arian](#) madmen burst themselves in sunder.

Greet all that [love](#) the [Lord Jesus Christ](#). We [pray](#) that you may be well, and remember us to the [Lord](#), beloved and [truly](#) most longed-for. If need be this is to be read to Hieracas the [presbyter](#).

Letter 61

Letter to Maximus. (Written about 371 a.d.)

To our beloved and most [truly](#) longed-for son, Maximus, [philosopher](#), Athanasius greeting in the Lord.

Having read the letter now come from you, I approve your [piety](#): but, marvelling at the rashness of those 'who understand neither what they say nor whereof they confidently affirm [1 Timothy 1:7](#),' I had really decided to say nothing. For to reply upon matters which are so plain and which are clearer than light, is simply to give an excuse for shamelessness to such lawless men. And this we have learned from the [Saviour](#). For when [Pilate](#) had washed his hands, and acquiesced in the false accusation of the [Jews](#) of that day, the Lord answered him no more, but rather warned his wife in a [dream](#), so that

He that was being judged might be [believed](#) to be God not in word, but in power. While after vouchsafing [Caiaphas](#) no reply to his folly, He Himself by his promise brought all over to [knowledge](#). Accordingly for some time I delayed, and have reluctantly yielded to your [zeal](#) for the [truth](#), in view of the argumentativeness of men without shame. And I have dictated nothing beyond what your letter contains, in order that the adversary may from henceforth be convinced on the points to which he has objected, and may 'keep his tongue from [evil](#) and his lips that they speak no guile.' And would that they would no longer join the [Jews](#) who passed by of old in reproaching Him that hung upon the Tree: 'If you be the [Son of God](#) save Yourself [Matthew 27:40](#); [Luke 28:37](#).' But if even after this they will not give in, yet do you remember the apostolic injunction, and 'a man that is [heretical](#) after a first and second admonition refuse, [knowing](#) that such an one is perverted and [being self-condemned Titus 3:10-11](#).' For if they are [Gentiles](#), or of the [Judaizers](#), who are thus daring, let them, as [Jews](#), think the Cross of Christ a stumbling-block, or as [Gentiles](#), foolishness [1 Corinthians 1:23](#) . But if they pretend to be [Christians](#) let them learn that the crucified Christ is at once Lord of Glory, and the Power of [God](#) and Wisdom of God.

2. But if they are in [doubt](#) whether He is God at all, let them reverence Thomas, who handled the Crucified and pronounced Him Lord and God [John 20:28](#) . Or let them [fear](#) the Lord Himself, who said, after [washing the feet](#) of the [disciples](#): 'You call Me Lord and Master, and you say well, for so I am.' But in the same body in which He was when he washed their feet, He also carried up our [sins](#) to the Tree [1 Peter 2:24](#) . And He was witnessed to as Master of Creation, in that the Sun withdrew his beams and the earth trembled and the rocks were rent, and the executioners recognised that the Crucified was [truly Son of God](#). For the Body they beheld was not that of some man, but of [God](#), being in which, even when being crucified, He raised the dead. Accordingly it is no good venture of theirs to say that the [Word of God](#) came into a certain [holy](#) man; for this was [true](#) of each of the [prophets](#) and of the other [saints](#), and on that assumption He would clearly be born and die in the case of each one of them. But this is not so, far be the thought. But once for all 'at the consummation of the ages [Hebrews 9:26](#), to put away [sin](#)' 'the [Word](#) was [made flesh John 1:14](#) ' and proceeded forth from [Mary the Virgin](#), Man after our likeness, as also He said to the [Jews](#), 'Wherefore do you seek to kill Me, a man that has told you the [truth](#)?' And we are deified not by partaking of the body of some man, but by receiving the Body of the [Word](#) Himself.

3. And at this also I am much surprised, how they have ventured to entertain such an idea as that the Word became man in consequence of His Nature. For if this were so, the commemoration of [Mary](#) would be superfluous. For neither does Nature [know](#) of a Virgin bearing apart from a [man](#). Whence by the good pleasure of the [Father](#), being [true God](#), and Word and Wisdom of the Father by nature, He became man in the body for our [salvation](#), in order that having somewhat to offer for us He might save us all, 'as many as through [fear](#) of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.' For it was not some man that gave Himself up for us; since every man is under sentence of death, according to what was said to all in Adam, 'earth you are and unto earth you shall return.' Nor yet was it any other of the creatures, since every creature is liable to change. But the [Word](#) Himself offered His own Body on our behalf that our [faith](#) and hope might not be in man,

but that we might have our [faith](#) in God the [Word](#) Himself. Why, even now that He is become man we behold His Glory, '[glory](#) as of one only-begotten of His Father—full of [grace](#) and [truth](#).' For what He endured by means of the Body, He magnified as [God](#). And while He hungered in the flesh, as God He fed the hungry. And if anyone is offended by reason of the bodily conditions, let him [believe](#) by reason of what God works. For humanly He enquires where Lazarus is laid, but raises him up divinely. Let none then laugh, calling Him a child, and citing His age, His growth, His eating, drinking and suffering, lest while denying what is proper for the body, he deny utterly also His sojourn among us. And just as He has not become Man in consequence of His nature, in like manner it was consistent that when He had taken a body He should exhibit what was proper to it, lest the imaginary theory of Manichæus should prevail. Again it was consistent that when He went about in the body, He should not hide what belonged to the Godhead, lest he of Samosata should find an excuse to call Him man, as distinct in person from [God the Word](#).

4. Let then the unbelievers perceive this, and learn that while as a Babe He lay in a manger, He subjected the [Magi](#) and was worshipped by them; and while as a Child He came down to [Egypt](#), He brought to nought the hand-made objects of its [idolatry](#): and crucified in the flesh, He raised the dead long since turned to corruption. And it has been made plain to all that not for His own sake but for ours He underwent all things, that we by His sufferings might put on freedom from suffering and incorruption [1 Corinthians 15:53](#), and abide unto life [eternal](#).

5. This then I have concisely dictated, following, as I said above, the lines of your own letter, without working out any point any further but only mentioning what relates to the [Holy Cross](#) in order that the despisers may be taught better upon the points where they were offended, and may worship the Crucified. But do you thoroughly persuade the unbelievers; perhaps somehow they may come from [ignorance](#) to [knowledge](#), and [believe](#) aright. And even though what your own letter contains is sufficient, yet it is as well to have added what I have for the sake of reminder in view of contentious [persons](#); not so much in order that being refuted in their venturesome statements they may be put to shame, as that being reminded they may not forget the [truth](#). For let what was confessed by the [Fathers](#) at Nicæa prevail. For it is correct, and enough to overthrow every [heresy](#) however impious, and especially that of the [Arians](#) which speaks against the [Word of God](#), and as a [logical](#) consequence profanes His [Holy Spirit](#). Greet all who hold aright. All that are with us greet you.

Letter 62

To John and Antiochus.

Athanasius to John and Antiochus, our beloved sons and fellow-[presbyters](#) in the [Lord](#), greeting.

I was glad to receive your letter just now, the more so as you wrote from Jerusalem. I thank you for informing me about the brethren that there assembled, and about those who wish, on account of disputed points, to disturb the simple. But about these things let the Apostle charge them not to give heed to those who contend about words, and seek nothing else than to tell and hear some new thing. But do you, having your foundation sure, even [Jesus Christ our Lord](#), and the confession of the fathers concerning the [faith](#), avoid those who wish to say anything more or less than that, and rather aim at the profit of the brethren, that they may [fear](#) God and keep His commandments, in order that both by the teaching of the fathers, and by the keeping of the commandments, they may be able to appear well-pleasing to the Lord in the day of judgment. But I have been utterly astonished at the boldness of those who venture to speak against our beloved Basil the [bishop](#), a [true](#) servant of [God](#). For from such vain talk they can be convicted of not loving even the confession of the fathers.

Greet the brethren. They that are with me greet you. I [pray](#) that you may be well in the [Lord](#), beloved and much-desired sons.

Letter 63

Letter to the Presbyter Palladius.

To our beloved son Palladius, [presbyter](#), Athanasius the Bishop greeting in the Lord.

I was glad to receive also the letter written by you alone, the more so that you breathe [orthodoxy](#) in it, as is your wont. And having learned not for the first time, but long ago, the reason of your staying at present with our beloved Innocent, I am pleased with your [piety](#). Since then you are acting as you are, write and let me [know](#) how are the brethren there, and what the enemies of the [truth](#) think about us. But whereas you have also told me of the [monks](#) at Cæsarea, and I have learned from our beloved Dianius that they are vexed, and are opposing our beloved [bishop](#) Basil, I am glad you have informed me, and I have pointed out to them what is fitting, namely that as children they should [obey](#) their father, and not oppose what he approves. For if he were suspected as touching the [truth](#), they would do well to combat him. But if they are confident, as we all are, that he is a [glory](#) to the [Church](#), contending rather on behalf of the [truth](#) and teaching those who require it, it is not right to combat such an one, but rather to accept with thanks his good [conscience](#). For from what the beloved Dianius has related, they appear to be vexed without [cause](#). For he, as I am confident, to the weak becomes weak to gain the weak [1 Corinthians 9:22](#). But let our beloved friends look at the scope of his [truth](#), and at his special purpose, and glorify the Lord Who has given such a [bishop](#) to Cappadocia as any district must [pray](#) to have. And do you, beloved, be good enough to point out to them the duty of [obeying](#), as I write. For this is at once calculated to render them well disposed toward their father, and will preserve peace to the churches. I [pray](#) that you may be well in the [Lord](#), beloved son.

Letter 64

To Diodorus (fragment).

To my lord, son, and most beloved fellow-minister Diodorus [[bishop](#) of [Tyre](#)],
Athanasius greeting in the Lord.

I thank my Lord, Who is everywhere establishing His doctrine, and chiefly so by means of His own sons, such as actual fact shows you to be. For before your Reverence wrote, we [knew](#) how great [grace](#) has been brought to pass in [Tyre](#) by means of your perseverance. And we [rejoice](#) with you that by your means [Tyre](#) also has learned the right word of [piety](#). And I indeed took an opportunity of writing to you, longed-for and beloved: but I marvel at your not having replied to my letter. Be not then slow to write at once, [knowing](#) that you give me refreshment, as a son to his father, and make me exceeding glad, as a herald of [truth](#). And enter upon no controversy with the [heretics](#), but overcome their argumentativeness with silence, their ill-will with courtesy. For thus your speech shall be 'with [grace](#), seasoned with [salt Colossians 4:6](#),' while they [will be judged] by the [conscience](#) of all.