SAINT HILARY OF POITIERS

To Constantius Augustus

Ad Constantium Augustum libri duo

SABBATISMUS

Saint Hilary of Poitiers (c. 310–367)
Ad Constantium Augustum libri duo · To Constantius Augustus

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Liber primus

1

Ecclesiae ne a fratribus affligantur. Judices saeculares ne cognoscant causas clericorum.

Benignifica natura tua, domine beatissime Auguste, cum benigna voluntate concordat. Et quoniam de fonte paternae pietatis tuae misericordia largiter profluit; quod rogamus, facile nos impetrare posse confidimus. Non solum verbis, sed etiam lacrymis deprecamur, ne diutius catholicae Ecclesiae gravissimis injuriis afficiantur, et intolerabiles sustineant persecutiones et contumelias, et quod est nefarium, a fratribus nostris. Provideat et decernat clementia tua, ut omnes se ubique judices, quibus provinciarum administrationes creditae sunt, ad quos sola cura et sollicitudo publicorum negotiorum pertinere debet, a religiosa se observantia abstineant: neque posthac praesumant atque usurpent, et putent se causas cognoscere clericorum, et innocentes homines variis afflictationibus, minis, violentia, terroribus frangere atque vexare.

2

Ne inviti vi subjiciantur heterodoxis. Catholicorum oppressorum vox, ne rectores locorum haereticis favorem praestent. Mysteriorum solemnia, et preces pro rege.

Intelligit singularis et admirabilis sapientia tua, non decere, non oportere cogi et compelli invitos et repugnantes, ut se his subjiciant et addicant vi oppressi, qui non cessant adulterinae doctrinae corrupta semina adspergere. Idcirco laboratis, et salutaribus consiliis rempublicam regitis; excubatis etiam, et vigilatis: ut omnes quibus imperatis, dulcissima libertate potiantur. Non alia ratione quae turbata sunt componi, quae divulsa sunt coerceri possunt; nisi unusquisque nulla servitutis necessitate adstrictus, integrum habeat vivendi arbitrium. Certe vox exclamantium a tua mansuetudine exaudiri debet: Catholicus sum, nolo esse haereticus; Christianus sum, non Arianus: et melius mihi in hoc saeculo mori, quam alicujus privati potentia dominante castam veritatis virginitatem corrumpere. Aequumque debet videri sanctitati tuae, gloriosissime Auguste, ut qui timent Dominum Deum et divinum judicium, non polluantur aut contaminentur exsecrandis blasphemiis; sed habeant potestatem, ut eos sequantur episcopos et praepositos, qui et inviolata conservant foedera charitatis, et cupiunt perpetuam et sinceram habere pacem.

Book One

1

That the churches may not be afflicted by their brothers. That secular judges should not take cognisance of the causes of clerics.

Your beneficent nature, most blessed lord Augustus, accords with a kindly will. And since mercy flows abundantly from the fount of your fatherly piety, we trust that we can easily obtain what we ask. Not with words only, but with tears too, we beseech that the Catholic churches be no longer afflicted with most grievous injuries, nor endure intolerable persecutions and dishonour, and, what is wicked, from our own brothers. Let your Clemency provide and decree that all judges everywhere, to whom the administration of the provinces has been entrusted, and to whom the care and solicitude of public business alone ought to belong, hold themselves aloof from matters of religious observance; and that henceforth they do not presume and usurp, and think that they may take cognisance of the causes of clerics, and break and harass innocent men with various afflictions, threats, violence and terrors.

2

That the unwilling may not be subjected by force to the heterodox. The cry of the oppressed Catholics, that the governors of places should not show favour to heretics. The solemn rites of the mysteries, and prayers for the king.

Your singular and admirable Wisdom understands that it is not fitting, it is not right, that the unwilling and resisting should be forced and compelled, crushed by violence, to subject and hand themselves over to those who do not cease to scatter the corrupt seeds of an adulterous doctrine. For this you labour, and govern the commonwealth with saving counsels; you also keep watch and stay vigilant: that all over whom you rule may enjoy the sweetest liberty. In no other way can what is disturbed be set in order, and what is torn apart be held together, unless each man, bound by no necessity of servitude, has his free choice of life entire. Surely the cry of those who call out ought to be heard by your Gentleness: "I am a Catholic, I do not want to be a heretic; I am a Christian, not an Arian: and it is better for me to die in this world than, under the domination of some private man's power, to corrupt the chaste virginity of the truth." And it ought to seem just to your Holiness, most glorious Augustus, that those who fear the Lord God and the divine judgement should not be polluted or defiled by execrable blasphemies, but should have the power to follow those bishops and superiors who both keep the bonds of charity inviolate and desire to have a perpetual and sincere peace.

Nec fieri potest, nec ratio patitur, ut repugnantia congruant, dissimilia conglutinentur, vera et falsa misceantur, lux et tenebrae confundantur, dies quoque et nox habeant aliquam conjunctionem. Si igitur, quod sine dubitatione et speramus et credimus, haec permovent non insitam, sed ingenitam tuam bonitatem; praecipe ut non studium, non gratiam, non favorem, locorum Rectores gravissimis haereticis praestent. Permittat lenitas tua populis, ut quos voluerint, quos putaverint, quos delegerint, audiant docentes, et divina mysteriorum solemnia concelebrent, et pro incolumitate et beatitudine tua offerant preces.

3

Suspicio seditionis eximitur. Arianorum astus.

Non quisquam perversus aut invidus maligna loquatur: nulla quidem suspicio est non modo seditionis, sed nec asperae obmurmurationis. Quieta sunt omnia, et verecunda. Et nunc, qui Ariana et pestifera contagione inquinati sunt, non cessant ore impio et sacrilego animo evangeliorum sinceritatem corrumpere, et rectam apostolorum regulam depravare. Divinos prophetas non intelligunt. Callidi et astuti artificio quodam utuntur, ut inclusam perniciosam corruptelam inquisitorum verborum velamine contegant, et non prius venenatum virus effundant, quam simplices et innocentes sub praetextu nominis Christiani raptos atque irretitos, ne soli pereant, participes horrendi criminis sui reos faciant.

4

Sacerdotes pii ad suas sedes remeent.

Et hoc obsecramus pietatem tuam, ut eos, qui adhuc (egregii videlicet sacerdotes, qui tanti nominis praepollent dignitate), aut in exsilio, aut in desertis locis tenentur, jubeas ad sedes suas remeare: ut ubique grata libertas sit, et jucunda laetitia.

5

Ariana haeresis novella.

Quis non videt, quis non intelligit? Post quadringentos fere annos, post quam Dei unigenitus Filius humano generi pereunti subvenire dignatus est, quasi ante non apostoli, non post eorum martyria et excessus fuerint Christiani, novella nunc et teterrima lues, non corrupti aeris, sed exsecrandorum blasphemorum, Ariana effusa est. Ita illi, qui ante crediderunt, inanem spem immortalitatis habuerunt?

Nor can it be done, nor does reason allow, that things repugnant should agree, things unlike be glued together, true and false be mixed, light and darkness be confounded, and day and night have any union. If, then, as we both hope and believe without doubt, these things move your goodness, which is not grafted on but inborn, command that the governors of places show neither support, nor favour, nor partiality to the most grievous heretics. Let your Mildness allow the peoples to hear as teachers those whom they will, whom they think fit, whom they choose, and to celebrate together the divine solemn rites of the mysteries, and to offer prayers for your safety and happiness.

3

The suspicion of sedition is removed. The cunning of the Arians.

Let no perverse or envious man speak maliciously: there is in fact no suspicion, not only of sedition, but even of harsh murmuring. All is quiet, and modest. And now those who are defiled by the Arian and pestilent contagion do not cease, with impious mouth and sacrilegious mind, to corrupt the purity of the Gospels and to deprave the right rule of the apostles. They do not understand the divine prophets. Crafty and cunning, they use a certain artifice, so as to cover the pernicious corruption they hold within under a veil of studied words, and not to pour out their poisoned venom until they have seized and ensnared the simple and innocent under the pretext of the Christian name and made them guilty sharers in their horrible crime, that they may not perish alone.

4

That the pious priests may return to their sees.

And this too we beseech of your Piety: that you would command those who are still (excellent priests, namely, who are pre-eminent in the dignity of so great a name) held either in exile or in desert places, to return to their sees; that everywhere there may be welcome liberty and pleasant joy.

5

The Arian heresy is a novelty.

Who does not see, who does not understand? After nearly four hundred years since the only-begotten Son of God deigned to come to the help of the perishing human race, as though neither the apostles before, nor those after their martyrdoms and departure, had been Christians, a new and most foul plague has now been poured out, not of corrupted air but of execrable blasphemers: the Arian. Did those, then, who believed before have a vain hope of immortality?

Nuper didicimus commenta haec fuisse inventa et a duobus Eusebiis et a Narcisso et a Theodoro et ab Stephano et Acacio et Menophanto, et imperitis atque improbis duobus adolescentibus Ursacio et Valente: quorum epistolae proferuntur, et idoneis testibus etiam convincuntur, qui eos magis oblatrantes quam disputantes audierunt. Quibus qui communionem suam imprudenter et incaute commiscent, quia sunt socii scelerum, participes criminum necesse est etiam eos, qui jam in hoc saeculo abjecti sunt et abdicati, cum advenerit dies judicii, pati supplicia sempiterna.

6

Litterae et legatio post absolutionem Athanasii. Arianorum crudelitas.

Jam nemini dubium est, cujuscemodi curam in absolutionem Athanasii, sancti illi viri receperint: ut post synodi sententias, quas, pro sacerdotalis judicii reverentia, fas fuerat sacerdotali vel ecclesiastica conscientia contineri, scribi ad regem, legationemque instrui oportuerit. Sed quid aliud his litteris, quam libertatem fidei et contagionem Ariani nominis deprecantur, orantque vincula, carceres, tribunalia, et omnem illum feralem habitum, novas etiam in reos quaestiones inhiberi? Deus cognitionem sui docuit potius, quam exegit: et operationum coelestium admiratione praeceptis suis concilians auctoritatem, coactam confitendi se adspernatus est voluntatem. Si ad fidem veram istius modi vis adhiberetur; episcopalis doctrina obviam pergeret, diceretque: Deus universitatis est Dominus, obsequio non eget necessario, non requirit coactam confessionem. Non fallendus est, sed promerendus. Nostra potius, non sua causa venerandus est. Non possum nisi volentem recipere, nisi orantem audire, nisi profitentem signare. Simplicitate quaerendus est, confessione discendus est, charitate amandus est, timore venerandus est, voluntatis probitate retinendus est. At vero quid istud est, quod sacerdotes timere Deum vinculis coguntur, poenis jubentur? Sacerdotes carceribus continentur, plebs in custodia catenati ordinis constricta disponitur, virgines nudantur ad poenam, et sacrata Deo corpora, publico exposita conspectui, ad fructum spectaculi et quaestionis aptantur. Cogunt nempe, non ut Christiani omnes sint, sed ut Ariani: et confessam in Deo fidem ad consortium piaculi sui scelere compellunt.

We have lately learned that these inventions were devised by the two Eusebiuses, and by Narcissus and by Theodore and by Stephen and Acacius and Menophantus, and by two ignorant and wicked young men, Ursacius and Valens: whose letters are brought forward, and who are also convicted by suitable witnesses, who heard them barking rather than disputing. Those who imprudently and incautiously mingle their communion with them, since they are partners in their crimes and sharers in their offences, must also suffer everlasting punishment when the day of judgement comes, they who have already in this world been cast down and disowned.

6

The letter and the legation after the acquittal of Athanasius. The cruelty of the Arians.

No one now doubts what kind of care those holy men undertook for the acquittal of Athanasius: such that, after the sentences of the synod, which, out of reverence for the priestly judgement, ought by right to have been kept within the conscience of the priests or of the Church, it was necessary to write to the king and to furnish a legation. But what else do they entreat in this letter but liberty of faith, and what else do they pray to be spared but the contagion of the Arian name? and they beg that chains, prisons, tribunals, and all that deadly array, new interrogations too against the accused, be checked. God taught the knowledge of himself rather than exacted it; and, winning authority for his precepts by wonder at his heavenly workings, he spurned a will forced to confess him. If force of this kind were applied for the true faith, the teaching of the bishops would go out to meet it and say: "God is the Lord of the universe; he has no need of a compelled homage, he does not require a forced confession. He is not to be deceived, but to be won. He is to be worshipped for our sake rather than for his own. I cannot receive any but the willing, hear any but one who prays, sign any but one who professes. He is to be sought with simplicity, learned by confession, loved with charity, revered with fear, held fast by uprightness of will." But what is this, that priests are forced by chains to fear God, are commanded to by punishments? Priests are held in prisons; the people, held fast in custody in a chained line, is set in order; virgins are stripped for punishment, and bodies consecrated to God, exposed to public view, are made ready for the enjoyment of the spectacle and of the torture. They compel, indeed, not that all should be Christians, but that all should be Arians: and by crime they drive the faith confessed in God into partnership in their own sacrilege.

Auctoritate etiam nominis sui in errorem Imperatorem transducunt: rectum affirmantes, ut sub specie timoris Dei, in hac perversitate subditos sibi tradant. Quaestiones poscunt, judiciorum subsidia desiderant, auctoritatem regiam implorant: et nec sic perversitatem sceleris sui erubescunt, extorquere conniventiam plebium nec cogendi jure potuerunt.

7

Judicialis forma in causa Athanasii non servata.

Haec si de veteribus chartulis prolata aetatis nostrae tempus instruerent; ambigendum, ut opinor, tantis de rebus fuisset. Et cum ab aliis quibusque pronuntiari posceretur reus; quaereretur in fidem litterarum, in judicum vitam, in accusatorum fidem, in ipsius quoque hominis mores atque actus. Moveret enim absolutionem ejus Arianorum juncta damnatio: magnique periculi esset, judicium simul cum reatus et innocentiae non suscepta rursum inquisitione dissolvere: totaque in patrocinium suum, cum fidei doctrina, auctoritas sibi antiquitatis assisteret. At cum ipsi, qui tunc Ariani haeretici damnati sunt, rem exagitent, turbent omnia, omnesque ex potestate et ambitione corrumpant, et Athanasius si fuit, esse adhuc reus potest; testes loquantur, videant judices, fidei doctrina praeceptis evangelicis atque apostolicis eluceat: quae obtusio intelligentiae est? quae cordis hebetudo? quae oblivio spei? qui amor scelerum? quod odium veritatis? in damnatorum favorem, Dei amorem transducunt.

8

Eusebii Vercellensis injusta damnatio.

Venio nunc ad id, quod recens gestum est, in quo se etiam professio sceleris in secreto artis suae dedignata est continere. Eusebius Vercellensis episcopus est vir omni vita Deo serviens. Hic post Arelatensem synodum, cum Paulinus episcopus tantis istorum sceleribus contraisset, venire Mediolanum praecipitur. Collecta jam illic malignantium synagoga, decem diebus ad Ecclesiam est vetitus accedere, dum adversus tam sanctum virum malitia se perversa consumit. Suppuratis deinde consiliis omnibus, ubi libitum est, advocatur. Adest una cum Romanis clericis, et Lucifero Sardiniae episcopo.

By the authority of his name, too, they lead the emperor into error, affirming that it is right that, under the appearance of the fear of God, they should hand his subjects over to themselves in this perversity. They demand interrogations, they desire the support of the courts, they implore the royal authority: and not even so do they blush for the perversity of their crime, they who could not extort the connivance of the peoples even by the right of coercion.

7

The form of judgement was not kept in the case of Athanasius.

If these things, brought forward from old papers, were informing the time of our age, there would, I think, have been room for hesitation about such great matters. And when it was demanded that the accused be pronounced guilty by any others whatever, inquiry would be made into the credit of the documents, into the lives of the judges, into the good faith of the accusers, into the conduct and acts of the man himself as well. For the condemnation of the Arians, joined to his acquittal, would weigh with them; and it would be a matter of great danger to undo the judgement without taking up again the inquiry into guilt and innocence together; and the whole authority of antiquity, together with the teaching of the faith, would stand by him in his defence. But since those very men who were then condemned as Arian heretics are stirring up the commonwealth, throwing everything into confusion and corrupting everyone through power and ambition, and Athanasius, if he was guilty, can still be guilty: let the witnesses speak, let the judges see, let the teaching of the faith shine out by the precepts of the Gospel and the apostles. What dullness of understanding is this? what sluggishness of heart? what forgetfulness of hope? what love of crimes? what hatred of truth? they turn the love of God into favour for the condemned.

8

The unjust condemnation of Eusebius of Vercelli.

I come now to what was done lately, in which the profession of crime disdained to keep itself even within the secrecy of its art. Eusebius, bishop of Vercelli, is a man who serves God with his whole life. After the synod of Arles, when Bishop Paulinus had stood against such great crimes of theirs, this man is ordered to come to Milan. There, a synagogue of the malignant being already gathered, he was forbidden for ten days to approach the church, while perverse malice wore itself out against so holy a man. Then, when all their counsels had festered, he is summoned when it pleased them. He appears together with the Roman clerics, and with Lucifer, bishop of Sardinia.

Conventus ut in Athanasium subscriberet, ait, De sacerdotali fide prius debere constare; compertos sibi quosdam ex his, qui adessent, haeretica labe pollutos. Expositam fidem apud Nicaeam, cujus superius meminimus, posuit in medio: spondens omnia se, quae postularent esse facturum, si fidei professionem scripsissent. Dionysius Mediolanensis Episcopus chartam primus accepit: ubi profiteri scribendo coepit, Valens calamum et chartam e manibus ejus violenter extorsit, clamans non posse fieri, ut aliquid inde gereretur. Res post clamorem multum deducta in conscientiam plebis est: gravis omnium dolor ortus est, impugnata est a sacerdotibus fides. Verentes igitur illi populi judicium, e Dominico ad palatium transeunt. Cujusmodi sententiam in Eusebium longe ante, quam ecclesiam ingrederetur, scripserint: de se loquitur ipsa sententia.

Liber secundus

1

Hilarius in regis praesentia.

Non sum nescius, piissime imperator, ea quae de nonnullis negotiis ad conscientiae publicae audientiam proferantur, pro dignitate eorum qui eloquuntur, vel gravia existimari solere, vel levia: dum distantibus opinionibus, ambiguam sententiam ad studium intelligentiae promovet hominis contemptus, aut gratia. Sed mihi apud te de divina re pia dicturo, nullus vulgatae consuetudinis metus est: quia, cum sis bonus ac religiosus, nec vitium judicii apud prudentes religionum, quid a quo audiat, sed an quae audiat sint religiosa, dijudicet. Et quia mihi a Deo praesentiae tuae opportunitas praestita est, nec erga haec quidem conscientiae meae cessavit officium: ut in eum, quem apud te habeo de religione sermonem, indignitas forte aliqua tecum loquentis offendat.

2

Galliae Ecclesiis communicat. Exsulat factione. De sua innocentia securus.

Called upon to subscribe against Athanasius, he said that the faith of the priests must first be established; that he had found out that some of those present were polluted with the stain of heresy. He laid the faith set out at Nicaea, which we have mentioned above, before them all, promising that he would do everything they asked if they wrote out the profession of faith. Dionysius, bishop of Milan, took the paper first: when he began to make his profession in writing, Valens violently wrenched pen and paper from his hands, shouting that it could not be that anything should be done on that basis. After much shouting the matter was brought to the knowledge of the people: a heavy grief arose among all; the faith was attacked by the priests. Fearing, therefore, the judgement of the people, they pass from the Lord's house to the palace. What kind of sentence they wrote against Eusebius long before he entered the church, the sentence itself declares.

Book Two

1

Hilary in the presence of the king.

I am not unaware, most pious emperor, that what is brought forward on certain matters to the hearing of the public conscience is usually reckoned weighty or light according to the standing of those who speak it: since, when opinions differ, contempt for a man or favour towards him pushes a doubtful judgement towards the will to understand. But I, who am about to speak to you piously of a divine matter, have no fear of this common custom: because, since you are good and religious, that fault of judgement is not found among those who are wise in religion: one does not weigh what one hears and from whom, but whether what one hears is religious. And since God has granted me the opportunity of your presence, the duty of my conscience has not ceased even towards these things, lest perhaps some unworthiness in the one speaking with you should give offence to the discourse on religion that I hold before you.

2

He is in communion with the churches of Gaul. He is an exile through faction. Secure of his innocence.

Episcopus ego sum in omnium Gallicarum ecclesiarum atque episcoporum communione, licet in exsilio, permanens, et Ecclesiae adhuc per presbyteros meos communionem distribuens. Exsulo autem non crimine, sed factione; et falsis nuntiis synodi ad te imperatorem pium, non ob aliquam criminum meorum conscientiam, per impios homines delatus. Nec levem habeo querelae meae testem dominum meum religiosum Caesarem tuum Julianum: qui plus in exsilio meo contumeliae a malis, quam ego injuriae, pertulit. In promptu enim sunt pietatis vestrae litterae: falsa autem eorum omnia, quae in exsilium meum procuraverunt, non in obscuro sunt. Ipse quoque vel minister, vel auctor gestorum omnium, intra hanc urbem est. Circumventum te Augustum, illusumque Caesarem tuum ea confidens conscientiae meae conditione patefaciam, ut si indignum aliquid non modo episcopi sanctitate, sed etiam laici integritate gessisse docear, non jam sacerdotium per veniam exspectem, sed intra poenitentiam laici consenescam.

3

Audiri rogat exsilii sui auctore praesente. Libelli hujus causae.

Haec autem nunc, dignantissime imperator, arbitrio tuo derelinquo, quatenus et quomodo me jubes loqui, et ea quae maxime tecum in tempore hoc agenda sunt prosequor. Dabis quidem id in praesens instructionis ad causam, ut praesentem eum, cujus ministerio exsulo, usque ad confessionem falsorum quae gessit adducam. Sed nihil de eo, nisi cum jusseris, loquar. Nunc autem, quia mihi metus est de mundi periculo, de silentii mei reatu, de judicio Dei, cura autem est de spe, de vita, de immortalitate non tam mea, quam tua, universorumque. Quae quia mihi cum plurimis communis est, haec a me communis spei exspectatio est.

4

Constantius optat fidem audire ab episcopis et non audit. Fides in baptismo jurata. Fides subinde nova et ideo nulla.

I am a bishop, remaining in the communion of all the churches and bishops of Gaul, though in exile, and still distributing communion to the church through my presbyters. And I am an exile, not for a crime, but through faction; denounced to you, the pious emperor, by impious men, through false reports of a synod, not because of any consciousness of crimes of mine. And I have no light witness to my complaint in my lord, your religious Caesar Julian, who in my exile suffered more insult from the wicked than I suffered injury. For the letters of your Piety are at hand: and the falsehood of everything they procured for my exile is not in the dark. He too who was either the agent or the author of all that was done is within this city. That you, the Augustus, were deceived, and your Caesar mocked, I will make plain, trusting my conscience on this condition: that if I am shown to have done anything unworthy, not only of the holiness of a bishop but even of the integrity of a layman, I will no longer look for the priesthood by pardon, but will grow old in the penance of a layman.

3

He asks to be heard in the presence of the author of his exile. The reasons for this petition.

But these things I now leave to your judgement, most gracious emperor, how far and in what way you bid me speak, and I go on to the things that must above all be dealt with with you at this time. You will grant me, indeed, this much instruction for my cause at present: that I may bring him, by whose agency I am an exile, face to face with me, to the point of confessing the falsehoods he has wrought. But I will say nothing about him, except when you have bidden me. But now, because I have fear for the peril of the world, for the guilt of my silence, for the judgement of God, and care for the hope, the life, the immortality not so much of myself as of you and of all men. And since this care I share with very many, this is what the common hope expects of me.

4

Constantius wishes to hear the faith from the bishops, and does not hear it. The faith sworn in baptism. A faith new each time, and therefore none.

Recognosce fidem, quam olim, optime ac religiosissime imperator, ab episcopis optas audire, et non audis. Dum enim a quibus ea requiritur, sua scribunt, et non quae Dei sunt praedicant; orbem aeternum erroris et redeuntis in se semper certaminis circumtulerunt. Oportuerat enim, humanae infirmitatis modestia, omne cognitionis divinae sacramentum illis tantum conscientiae suae finibus contineri quibus credidit, neque post confessam et juratam in baptismo fidem in nomine Patris et filii et Spiritus sancti, quidquam aliud vel ambigere, vel innovare. Sed quorumdam aut praesumptio, aut facilitas, aut error, apostolicae doctrinae indemutabilem constitutionem partim fraudulenter confessa est, partim audacter egressa: dum in confessione Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti veritatem naturalis significationis eludit, ne id maneret in sensu, quod in regenerationis sacramento est confitendum. Ob hoc penes quorumdam conscientiam nec Pater pater, nec Filius filius, nec Spiritus sanctus spiritus sanctus est. Sub cujus necessitatis tamquam improbabili occasione, scribendae atque innovandae fidei exinde usus inolevit. Qui post quam nova potius coepit condere, quam accepta retinere; nec veterata defendit, nec innovata firmavit: et facta est fides temporum potius quam Evangeliorum, dum et secundum annos describitur, et secundum confessionem baptismi non tenetur. Periculosum nobis admodum atque etiam miserabile est, tot nunc fides exsistere, quot voluntates; et tot nobis doctrinas esse, quot mores; et tot causas blasphemiarum pullulare, quot vitia sunt: dum aut ita fides scribuntur ut volumus, aut ita ut nolumus intelliguntur. Et cum, secundum unum Deum et unum Dominum et unum baptisma, etiam fides una sit, excedimus ab ea fide quae sola est: et dum plures fiunt, ad id coeperunt esse, ne ulla sit.

5

Unde tot fides scribantur. Fides quater mutata.

Conscii enim nobis invicem sumus, post Nicaeni conventus synodum, nihil aliud quam fidem scribi. Dum in verbis pugna est, dum de novitatibus quaestio est, dum de ambiguis occasio est, dum de auctoribus querela est, dum de studiis certamen est, dum in consensu difficultas est, dum alter alteri anathema esse coepit: prope jam nemo Christi est. Incerto enim doctrinarum vento vagamur: et aut dum docemus, perturbamus; aut dum docemur, erramus. Jam vero proximi anni fides, quid jam de immutatione in se habet?

Recognise the faith, most excellent and most religious emperor, which you have long wished to hear from the bishops, and do not hear. For while those from whom it is sought write their own things, and do not proclaim the things that are God's, they have carried round an endless circle of error and of a conflict ever returning on itself. For it would have been right, in the modesty of human weakness, that every mystery of the knowledge of God should be kept only within those bounds of one's conscience within which one believed; and, after the faith confessed and sworn in baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, neither to doubt nor to innovate anything else. But the presumption, or the levity, or the error of some has partly confessed with fraud, partly overstepped with audacity, the unchangeable constitution of the apostolic teaching: while in the confession of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit it eludes the truth of their natural meaning, lest that should remain in the sense which is to be confessed in the sacrament of regeneration. On this account, in the conscience of some, neither is the Father a father, nor the Son a son, nor the Holy Spirit a holy spirit. Under the occasion of this necessity, as though it could not be disallowed, the practice of writing and renewing faith has since grown up. And once this practice began to found new things rather than to keep what had been received, it neither defended the old nor confirmed the new; and faith has become a thing of the times rather than of the Gospels, while it is both written down according to the years, and not kept according to the confession of baptism. It is most dangerous for us, and wretched too, that there should now exist as many faiths as there are wills; and that we should have as many doctrines as there are ways of life; and that as many causes of blasphemies should spring up as there are vices: while faiths are either written as we wish, or understood as we do not wish. And whereas, according to one God and one Lord and one baptism, there is also one faith, we depart from that faith which alone exists: and while faiths become many, they have come to this, that there is none.

5

Whence so many faiths are written. The faith changed four times.

For we are conscious, each of us with the other, that since the synod of the assembly of Nicaea nothing else has been done but the writing of faith. While there is fighting over words, while there is questioning about novelties, while there is occasion taken from things ambiguous, while there is complaint about authors, while there is contention about partisanship, while there is difficulty in agreement, while one has begun to be anathema to another: by now almost no one is Christ's. For we wander in an uncertain wind of doctrines: and either we trouble others while we teach, or we go astray while we are taught. And now the faith of the last year: how much change does it already hold within it?

Primum, quae homousion decernit taceri: sequens rursum, quae homousion decernit et praedicat: tertium deinceps, quae usiam simpliciter a patribus praesumptam, per indulgentiam excusat: postremum quartum, quae non excusat, sed condemnat. Et quo tandem processum est? ut neque penes nos, neque penes quemquam ante nos, sanctum exinde aliquid atque inviolabile perseveret. De similitudine autem Dei filii ad Deum patrem quod si miserabilis nostri temporis fides est, ne non aut ex toto, aut tantum ex portione sit similis; egregii scilicet arbitri coelestium sacramentorum, conquisitores invisibilium mysteriorum, professionibus de fide Dei calumniamur. Annuas atque menstruas de Deo fides decernimus, decretis poenitemus, poenitentes defendimus, defensos anathematizamus; aut in nostris aliena, aut in alienis nostra damnamus; et mordentes invicem, jam absumpti sumus ab invicem.

6

Fides evangelica corrumpitur.

Fides deinde quaeritur: quasi fides nulla sit. Fides scribenda est: quasi in corde non sit. Regenerati per fidem, nunc ad fidem docemur, quasi regeneratio illa sine fide sit. Christum post baptisma discimus; quasi baptisma aliquod esse possit sine Christi fide. Emendamus, quasi in Spiritum sanctum peccasse sit venia. Sed impietatis ipsius hinc vel praecipue causa perpetua est, quod fidem apostolicam septuplo proferentes, ipsi tamen fidem evangelicam nolumus confiteri: dum impietates nostras nobis in populis multiloquiis defendimus, et magniloquentiae vanitate aures simplicium verbis fallentibus illudimus; dum evitamus de Domino Christo ea credere, quae de se docuit credenda, et per speciosum pacis nomen in unitatem perfidiae subrepimus, et sub rejiciendis novitatibus rursum ipsi novis ad Deum vocibus rebellamus, et sub Scripturarum vocabulo non scripta mentimur: vagi, prodigi, impii, dum et manentia demutamus, et accepta perdimus, et irreligiosa praesumimus.

7

Ad fidem in baptismo confessam redeundum.

The first, which decrees that the homoousion be passed over in silence; the next, again, which decrees and proclaims the homoousion; the third, after that, which excuses through indulgence the ousia simply taken up by the Fathers; the last, the fourth, which does not excuse but condemns. And where at last has it come to? to this, that neither with us, nor with anyone before us, does anything holy and inviolable remain from now on. And as for the likeness of the Son of God to God the Father, if this is the wretched faith of our time, the question whether he is like wholly or only in part, then, fine arbiters of the heavenly mysteries indeed, searchers out of invisible mysteries, we bring calumny against the faith of God with professions. We decree yearly and monthly faiths about God; we repent of what we have decreed; we defend those who repent; we anathematise those we have defended; we condemn either what is others' in what is ours, or what is ours in what is others'; and, biting one another, we are already consumed by one another (Gal 5:15).

6

The faith of the Gospel is corrupted.

Then faith is sought: as though there were no faith. Faith must be written: as though it were not in the heart. Regenerated through faith, we are now taught to faith, as though that regeneration were without faith. We learn Christ after baptism; as though there could be any baptism without the faith of Christ. We amend, as though there were pardon for having sinned against the Holy Spirit. But hence above all comes the perpetual cause of impiety itself: that, bringing forth the apostolic faith sevenfold, we ourselves nevertheless will not confess the faith of the Gospel; while we defend our impieties before the peoples with much talking, and with the vanity of grandiloquence mock the ears of the simple with deceiving words; while we avoid believing of the Lord Christ what he taught must be believed of him, and under the specious name of peace creep into a unity of unbelief, and under pretext of rejecting novelties rebel again against God ourselves with new words, and under the name of the Scriptures lie with things not written: wandering, prodigal, impious, while we both change what remains, and lose what we received, and presume what is irreligious.

7

One must return to the faith confessed in baptism.

Quod hieme undoso mari observari a navigantibus maxime tutum est, ut naufragio desaeviente, in portum ex quo solverant revertantur; vel incautis adolescentibus convenit, ut cum in tuenda domo sua, mores paternae observantiae transgressi, profusa libertate sua usi sunt, jam sub ipso amittendi patrimonii metu solus illis ad paternam consuetudinem necessarius et tutus recursus sit: ita inter haec fidei naufragia, coelestis patrimonii jam pene profligata haereditate, tutissimum nobis est, primam et solam evangelicam fidem confessam in baptismo intellectamque retinere, nec demutare quod solum acceptum atque auditum habeo bene credere: non ut ea, quae synodo patrum nostrorum continentur, tamquam irreligiose et impie scripta damnanda sint, sed quia per temeritatem humanam usurpantur ad contradictionem, quod ob hoc sub nomine novitatis Evangelium negaretur, ut periculose tamquam sub emendatione innovetur. Quod emendatum est, semper proficit, ut dum omnis emendatio displicet, emendationem omnem emendatio consecuta condemnet: ac si jam, quidquid illud est, non emendatio aliqua sit emendationis, sed coeperit esse damnatio.

8

Audientiam rogat Hilarius, fidem e Scripturis ostensurus.

In quantum ego nunc beatae religiosaeque voluntatis vere te, domine Constanti Imperator, admiror, fidem tantum secundum ea quae scripta sunt desiderantem: et merito plane ad illa ipsa unigeniti Dei eloquia quia festinans, ut imperatoriae sollicitudinis capax pectus etiam divinorum dictorum conscientia plenum sit. Hoc qui repudiat, antichristus est, et qui simulat, anathema est. Sed unum hoc ego per hanc dignationis tuae sinceram audientiam rogo, ut praesente synodo, quae nunc de fide litigat, pauca me de Scripturis evangelicis digneris audire, et loquar tecum verbis Domini mei Jesu Christi, cujus vel exsul sum, vel sacerdos. Habent enim vasa testea non ignobiles thesauros: et infirmiora corporum magis reverenda sunt: et apud nos modo Deum indocti piscatores locuti sunt. Super humilem et trementem verba sua, secundum prophetam, Deus respicit. Fidem imperator quaeris: audi eam, non de novis chartulis, sed de Dei libris.

What sailors on a stormy sea in winter find safest to observe, namely that, when shipwreck rages, they should return to the harbour from which they set sail; or what befits heedless young men, that when, in looking after their house, they have transgressed the ways of paternal observance and used their liberty prodigally, now, under the very fear of losing their patrimony, the only necessary and safe recourse for them is to their father's custom: so, amid these shipwrecks of the faith, the inheritance of the heavenly patrimony being now almost squandered, it is safest for us to hold fast to the first and only faith of the Gospel, confessed and understood in baptism, and not to change what alone I have received and heard and hold as right belief: not that what is contained in the synod of our Fathers is to be condemned as written irreligiously and impiously, but because it is being usurped by human rashness for contradiction, so that on this account the Gospel would be denied under the name of novelty, so that it is dangerously made new under the pretext of amendment. What is amended always goes further, so that, while every amendment displeases, the amendment that follows condemns every amendment; as though now, whatever it is, it were no longer an amendment of an amendment but had begun to be a condemnation.

8

Hilary asks for a hearing, to show the faith from the Scriptures.

How truly I now admire you, lord Constantius, emperor, for your blessed and religious will, desiring the faith only according to what is written: and rightly indeed, since you hasten to those very sayings of the only-begotten God, so that a breast able to hold the solicitude of an emperor may be filled also with the knowledge of the divine sayings. He who rejects this is antichrist, and he who feigns it is anathema. But this one thing I ask, through this sincere hearing granted by your graciousness: that, in the presence of the synod which is now disputing about the faith, you would deign to hear a few words from me out of the Scriptures of the Gospel, and that I may speak with you in the words of my Lord Jesus Christ, of whom I am either an exile or a priest. For vessels of clay hold no ignoble treasures; and the weaker members of the body are the more to be honoured; and with us, unlearned fishermen once spoke of God. God looks upon the humble and upon him who trembles at his words, according to the prophet (Isa 66:2). You seek the faith, emperor: hear it, not from new papers, but from the books of God.

Scito et posse eam in Occidente donari, unde venientes in regno Dei cum Abraham et Isaac et Jacob recumbent. Memento eam non quaestionem philosophiae esse, sed Evangelii doctrinam. Non tam mihi autem rogo audientiam, quam tibi atque ecclesiis Dei. Ego enim penes me habeo fidem, exteriore non egeo: quod accepi teneo, nec demuto quod Dei est.

9

Scripturas haeretici suas ad partes trahunt.

Sed memento tamen, neminem haereticorum esse, qui se nunc non secundum Scripturas praedicare ea, quibus blasphemat, mentiatur. Hinc enim Marcellus Verbum Dei cum legit nescit. Hinc Photinus hominem Jesum Christum cum loquitur ignorat. Hinc et Sabellius, dum quod ego et Pater unum sumus non intelligit, sine Deo patre et sine Deo filio est. Hinc et Montanus per insanas feminas suas paracletum alium defendit. Hinc et Manichaeus et Marcion legem odit: quia littera occidit, et mundi princeps diabolus est. Omnes Scripturas sine Scripturae sensu loquuntur, et fidem sine fide praetendunt. Scripturae enim non in legendo sunt, sed in intelligendo; neque in praevaricatione sunt, sed in charitate.

10

Sermonis, cujus copia rogatur, modus.

Audi, rogo, ea quae de Christo sunt scripta: ne sub eis ea quae non scripta sunt praedicentur. Submitte ad ea, quae de libris locuturus sum, aures tuas: fidem tuam ad Deum erigas. Audi quod proficit ad fidem, ad unitatem, ad aeternitatem. Locuturus tecum sum cum honore regni et fidei tuae, omnia ad Orientis et Occidentis pacem proficientia, sub publica conscientia, sub synodo dissidenti, sub lite famosa.

11

Pignus futuri sermonis.

Know that it can be given in the West as well, whence those who come will recline in the kingdom of God with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob (Matt 8:11). Remember that it is not a question of philosophy, but the teaching of the Gospel. And I ask a hearing not so much for myself as for you and for the churches of God. For I have the faith within me; I have no need of one from outside: what I have received I hold, and I do not change what is God's.

9

The heretics drag the Scriptures to their own side.

But remember, nonetheless, that there is none of the heretics who does not now falsely claim to be preaching according to the Scriptures the things with which he blasphemes. Hence Marcellus, when he reads "the Word of God", does not know it. Hence Photinus, when he speaks of "the man Jesus Christ", is ignorant of him. Hence Sabellius too, while he does not understand I and the Father are one (John 10:30), is without God the Father and without God the Son. Hence Montanus too, through his mad women, defends another Paraclete. Hence Manichaeus and Marcion too hate the Law: because the letter kills (2 Cor 3:6), and the prince of the world is the devil. They all speak the Scriptures without the sense of Scripture, and hold out a faith without faith. For the Scriptures are not in the reading but in the understanding; nor are they in transgression, but in charity.

10

The manner of the discourse for which leave is asked.

Hear, I pray, the things that are written of Christ, lest under cover of them things that are not written be preached. Lend your ears to what I am going to say out of the books: lift up your faith to God. Hear what advances faith, unity, eternity. I am going to speak with you, with honour for your reign and your faith, of all that serves the peace of East and West, before the public conscience, before the synod in dissension, in the hearing of a notorious dispute.

11

A pledge of the discourse to come.

Praemitto interim pignus futuri apud te sermonis mei. Non aliqua ad scandalum, neque quae extra Evangelium sunt, defendam: sed intelliges a me in sacramento solius Dei veri, et quem misit Jesum Christum, praedicari unum Deum patrem ex quo omnia, et unum Dominum Jesum Christum per quem omnia, natum ex Deo, qui est ante tempora aeterna, et erat in principio apud Deum Deus Verbum: qui est imago Dei invisibilis, in quo habitat omnis plenitudo divinitatis corporaliter qui cum in forma Dei esset, humilians se salutis nostrae causa, formam servi ex conceptu Spiritus sancti de virgine accepit, factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis: et post resurrectionem mortis deinde in coelestibus sedens, aderit judex vivorum et mortuorum, et rex omnium aeternorum saeculorum. Est enim unigenitus Deus, et Deus verus, et Deus magnus, et super omnia Deus: et omnis lingua confitebitur, quia Dominus Jesus Christus in gloria Dei patris est. Haec ego in Spiritu sancto ita credidi, ut ultra hanc de Domino Jesu Christo fidem non possim doceri: non per haec adimens patrum fidei religionem, sed secundum regenerationis meae symbolum, et doctrinae evangelicae scientiam, ab ea juxta ista non dissonans.

Meanwhile I send ahead a pledge of the discourse I am to hold before you. I will defend nothing that gives offence, nor anything that is outside the Gospel: but you will understand that I proclaim, in the mystery of the only true God and of Jesus Christ whom he sent (John 17:3), one God the Father, from whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things (1 Cor 8:6), born of God, who is before eternal times (2 Tim 1:9), and was in the beginning with God, God the Word (John 1:1); who is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15), in whom dwells all the fullness of the divinity bodily (Col 2:9); who, being in the form of God, humbling himself for the sake of our salvation, took the form of a servant from the Virgin, conceived of the Holy Spirit, becoming obedient even to death, and death on a cross (Phil 2:6–8); and after the resurrection from death, seated thereafter in the heavens (Eph 1:20), he will come as judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42), and king of all eternal ages. For he is the only-begotten God (John 1:18), and true God, and great God, and God over all (Rom 9:5): and every tongue will confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:11). This I have believed in the Holy Spirit in such a way that I cannot be taught beyond this faith concerning the Lord Jesus Christ: not taking away by this the reverence due to the faith of the Fathers, but, according to the Creed of my regeneration and the knowledge of the Gospel's teaching, not differing from it on these points.