

## Harmony 1.5 - The Meletians

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Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
<b>306 - Origin of the Meletian Schism</b>		
1.6.36b The Meletians mingled with the Arians, who a little while before had been separated from the Church—but who these <b>[Meletians]</b> are must now be stated.		
1.6.37 Peter, bishop of Alexandria, who suffered martyrdom in the reign of Diocletian, deposed a certain Meletius, bishop of one of the cities in Egypt. He was deposed on account of many charges, but especially because during the persecution he had denied the faith and sacrificed to foreign gods.	1.15.1 Although, as we have seen, our religion flourished during this time, some contentious issues troubled the churches. While pretending to pursue piety and a more precise understanding of God, certain questions were raised that had not previously been explored. A priest of the church at Alexandria in Egypt, Arius, was the one who initiated these ideas. 1.15.2 At first he was an enthusiastic thinker about doctrine and supported the innovations of Meletius. Eventually he abandoned the position of Meletius and was ordained a deacon by Peter, bishop of Alexandria. Later, however, Peter threw him out of the church. For when Peter anathematized those who zealously supported Meletius and rejected the baptisms they had performed, Arius attacked him for these actions and would not remain quiet on the issue. After Peter was martyred, Arius asked forgiveness of Achillas, was restored to his office as deacon, and later elevated to the priesthood. Afterwards Alexander also thought highly of him.	1.9.1a After Meletius had been ordained bishop, which was not long before the Arian controversy, he was convicted of certain crimes by the most holy Peter, bishop of Alexandria, who also received the crown of martyrdom. After Peter deposed him, he did not accept his deposition. Instead, he filled the Thebaid and the adjacent part of Egypt with tumult and disturbance and rebelled against the episcopal authority Alexandria.
1.6.38 Even though he had been removed from his office, this man continued to have many followers. He became the leader of the heresy of those who, throughout Egypt, are to this day called Meletians, name after Meletius. Since he had no rational excuse for his separation from the Church, he pretended that he had simply been wronged and loaded Peter with slanderous rebukes. Now Peter died the death of a martyr during the persecution, and so Meletius transferred		

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his abuse first to Achillas, who succeeded Peter as bishop, and after that again to Alexander, the successor of Achillas.		
<b>Meletians and others join forces against Alexander</b>		
<p>1.6.39 While this was the state of affairs among them, the controversy over Arius arose, and Meletius, together with his followers, worked with Arius, conspiring with him against the bishop.</p> <p>1.6.40 But just as many people regarded the opinion of Arius as untenable. They defended Alexander's decision against him and thought that condemnation was appropriate for those who favored his views. Meanwhile Eusebius of Nicomedia and his party, men who favored the sentiments of Arius, demanded by letter that the sentence of excommunication which had been pronounced against him should be repealed, and that those who had been excluded should be readmitted to the Church, since they held no false doctrine.</p> <p>1.6.41 Thus letters from the opposite parties were sent to the bishop of Alexandria. Arius gathered those which were favorable to himself while Alexander did the same with those which were opposed to Arius. This became a plausible opportunity for the sects to defend themselves. At present the prevalent sects are the Arians, Eunomians, and those named after Macedonius. Each of them makes use of these letters to defend their heresies.</p>		
<b>325 - The council allows Meletians to continue but takes away bishop-status</b>		
<p>1.8.55b At the same time the Council itself was in complete agreement and wrote the following letter to the church of Alexandria and to believers in Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis.</p>	<p>1.24.1 After an investigation had been made into the conduct of Meletius while he was in Egypt, the Council sentenced him to reside in Lycus and to retain only the name of bishop. They prohibited him from ordaining any one either in a city or a village. This law permitted those who had previously been ordained by him to remain in fellowship and in ministry. However, they were to rank in honor below the other clergy in church and parish.</p> <p>1.24.2 When by death a position became vacant, they were allowed to succeed to it, if deemed worthy by the vote of the multitude. Yet in such a case they were to be</p>	<p>1.9.1b A letter was written by the council to the Church of Alexandria, stating what had been decreed against Meletius' revolutionary practices. It was as follows:</p>

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	<p>ordained by the bishop of the Church of Alexandria, for they were prohibited from exercising any power or influence themselves in elections.</p> <p>1.24.3 This regulation appeared just to the Council because Meletius and his followers had manifested great rashness and boldness in administering ordination. The regulation also nullified the ordinations of every type which differed from those of Peter. Peter, when he conducted the Alexandrian Church, fled on account of the persecution then raging, but afterward suffered martyrdom.</p>	
<p><b>[This section is also found in Socrates 1.9.1-14]</b></p>		<p>1.9.2 To the great church of the Alexandrians, which is holy by the grace of God, and to our beloved brothers throughout Egypt, Libya, and the Pentapolis. We bishops assembled at Nicaea, constituting the great and holy council, send greetings in the Lord.</p> <p>1.9.3 Since, by the grace of God, a great and holy council has been convened at Nicaea, after our most pious sovereign Constantine summoned us out of various cities and provinces for that purpose, we at the sacred council thought it most necessary to write you a letter, in order that you may know what subjects were considered and examined, and what was eventually decided on and decreed.</p> <p>1.9.4 In the first place, the impiety and guilt of Arius and his adherents was examined in the presence of our most pious emperor Constantine. We unanimously decided that his impious opinion should be anathematized, with all the blasphemous expressions he has uttered, namely that “the Son of God came to be out of nothing,” that “there was a time when he was not,” and even that “the Son of God, because he possessed free will, was capable of either both evil and good.” They also call him a creature (ktisma) and a work (poiēma).</p> <p>1.9.5 The holy Council has anathematized all these ideas, barely able to endure it as we listened to such impious opinions (or rather madnesses) and such</p>

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		<p>blasphemous words. You must either have been informed of the verdict of our proceedings against him already, or you will soon learn. We will omit relating our actions here, for we would not trample on a man who has already received the punishment which his crime deserved.</p> <p>1.9.6 Yet his deadly error has proved so contagious that it has dragged Theonas of Marmarica, and Secundus of Ptolemais, into destruction; for they have suffered the same condemnation as Arius.</p> <p>But after the grace of God delivered us from those detestable heresies, with all their impiety and blasphemy, and from those persons, who had dared to cause such conflict and division among a people previously at peace, the rash actions of Meletius and those who had been ordained by him still remained to be dealt with. We now state to you, beloved brothers, what resolution the Council came to on this point.</p> <p>1.9.7 The Council was moved with compassion towards Meletius, although strictly speaking he was wholly undeserving of favor, and decreed that he remain in office in his own city but exercise no authority either to ordain or nominate for ordination; and that he appear in no other district or city on this pretense, retaining no more than the normal level of authority. The Council also decided that those who had been appointed by him, after having been confirmed by a more legitimate ordination, should be admitted to communion on these conditions: that they should continue to hold their rank and ministry, but regard themselves as inferior in every respect to all those who have been ordained and established in each place and church by our most-honored fellow-minister, Alexander. Thus they will have no authority to propose or nominate whom they please, or to do anything at all without the agreement of some bishop of the catholic church who is one of Alexander's subordinates.</p> <p>1.9.8 On the other hand, those who by the grace of God and your prayers have not been found in schism, but have</p>

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		<p>continued blameless in the catholic church, shall have authority to nominate and ordain those who are worthy of the sacred office, and to act in all things according to ecclesiastical law and custom.</p> <p>1.9.9 When it happens that those holding offices in the church die, then these who have been recently admitted will be advanced to the office of the deceased, provided that they are found worthy, that they are duly elected, and that the bishop of Alexandria ratifies the decision.</p> <p>1.9.10 This right is allowed for all the others indeed, but to Meletius personally we by no means grant the same permission, on account of his former disorderly conduct, and because of the rashness and fickleness of his character. We want no authority or jurisdiction to be given to him, for he is a man liable again to create similar disturbances.</p> <p>1.9.11 These are the things which specifically affect Egypt, and the most holy church of the Alexandrians. If any other canon or ordinance has been established, our Lord and most-honored fellow-minister and brother Alexander, who is present with us, will explain the more specific details when he returns to you, since he has participated in all we have done, and has in fact been the leader.</p> <p>1.9.12 We also have good news for you that we have harmonized our opinions on the subject of the most holy feast of Easter, which has been happily settled through your prayers. All the brothers in the east who have previously kept this festival when the Jews did have agreed with the Romans, with us, and with all of you who have kept Easter with us from the beginning, to follow the same custom as we.</p> <p>1.9.13 So rejoice in these results and in the general agreement and peace, as well as in the cleansing of all heresy. Receive our fellow-minister and your bishop Alexander with great honor and abundant love, because he has greatly delighted us by his presence. Even at his</p>

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		advanced age, he has undergone extraordinary efforts in order that peace might be re-established among you. Pray on behalf of us all, that the things we decided were appropriate may be maintained without violation through Almighty God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Spirit, to whom be glory forever. Amen. <sup>1</sup>
1.9.15 This letter of the Council makes it clear that they not only condemned Arius and his adherents, but also the very expressions of his beliefs. It also shows that after they agreed among themselves respecting the celebration of Easter, they readmitted the arch-heretic Meletius into communion, allowing him to retain his episcopal rank but depriving him of all authority to act as a bishop. It is for this reason, I suppose, that even at the present time the Meletians in Egypt are separated from the church, because the Synod removed all power from Meletius.		
<b>8 June 328 - Athanasius replaces Alexander in Alexandria</b>		
	2.17.4 This is the account given by Apolinarius concerning Athanasius [ <b>'s election</b> ]. The Arians assert that after the death of Alexander the respective followers of that bishop and of Meletius held communion together. Fifty-four bishops from Thebes and other parts of Egypt assembled together. They supposedly agreed by oath to choose, by a common vote, the man who could advantageously administer the Church of Alexandria, but seven of the bishops, in violation of their oath and against everyone's wishes, secretly ordained Athanasius. They say that this is why many of the people and many of the Egyptian clergy seceded from communion with him.	
1.15.1a After this Alexander bishop of Alexandria died and Athanasius was set over that church.	2.17.5 For my part I am convinced that it was by Divine appointment that Athanasius succeeded to the high-priesthood; for he was eloquent, intelligent, and capable of opposing plots—of such a man the times had the greatest need. He displayed great aptitude in the exercise of the ecclesiastical functions and fitness for the priesthood and	1.26.1 Alexander, that admirable bishop, who had successfully withstood the blasphemies of Arius, died five months after the council of Nicaea. He was succeeded in the episcopate of the church of Alexandria by Athanasius. Trained from his youth in sacred studies, Athanasius had attracted general admiration in each

<sup>1</sup> Translation from NPNF2 vol. 2, pp. 12-3, adapted by AJW, <http://www.fourthcentury.com/index.php/urkunde-23>.

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	was, so to speak, from his earliest years, self-taught.	ecclesiastical office that he filled. 1.26.2 He had at the general council so defended the doctrines of the apostles that, while he won the admiration of all the champions of the truth, its opponents learned to look on their antagonist as a personal foe and public enemy. 1.26.3a He had attended the council as one of the retinue of Alexander. Although he as a very young man, he was the principal deacon.
<b>Meletius ordains his successor, re-kindling the Meletian Schism</b>		
	2.21.1 In the meantime the controversy which had been stirred in the beginning among the Egyptians could not be quelled. The Arian heresy had been soundly condemned by the council of Nicaea, while the followers of Meletius had been admitted into communion under the stipulations above stated. When Alexander returned to Egypt, Meletius delivered up to him the churches whose government he had unlawfully usurped and returned to Lycus. 2.21.2 Not long after, when he realized his end was approaching, he nominated John, one of his most intimate friends, as his successor, contrary to the decree of the Nicaean Council. And so he produced a fresh cause of discord in the churches.	
<b>The manner in which the Arians and Meletians joined forces</b>		
	2.21.3 When the Arians perceived that the Meletians were introducing additional teachings, they also harassed the churches. For, as frequently occurs in similar disturbances, some applauded the opinion of Arius, while others contended that those who had been ordained by Meletius ought to govern the churches. These two bodies of sectarians had until this time been opposed to each other. But when they saw that the priests of the Catholic Church were popular with the masses, they became jealous. 2.21.4 So they formed an alliance together and manifested a common enmity toward the clergy of	

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	<p>Alexandria. Their measures of attack and defense were carried on in concert for so long that eventually in Egypt the Meletians were generally called Arians, even though they only cause dissent on questions of the leadership of the churches, while the Arians hold the same opinions concerning God as Arius.</p> <p>2.21.5 Although they individually denied one another's tenets, they concealed the contradictions between their own views in order to attain an underhanded agreement in the fellowship of their enmity. At the same time each group expected to prevail easily in what it desired. From this period on, however, the Meletians, after discussion on those topics, received the Arian doctrines and held the same opinion as Arius concerning God. This revived the original controversy concerning Arius, and some of the laity and clergy seceded from communion with the others.</p>	
<b>330 - Eusebians plot against Athanasius</b>		
	<p>2.22.6a Athanasius, however, wrote to the emperor and convinced him that the Arians ought not to be received into communion by the Catholic Church;</p>	
<p>1.27.6 Then the followers of Eusebius, hostile towards Athanasius, thought they had found a seasonable opportunity and welcomed the emperor's displeasure as a tool for their own purpose. Because of this they raised a great disturbance, attempting to remove him from his bishopric. They assumed that the Arian teaching would only prevail with the removal of Athanasius.</p> <p>1.27.7a The chief conspirators against him were Eusebius bishop of Nicomedia, Theognis of Nicaea, Maris of Chalcedon, Ursacius of Singidnum in Upper Moesia, and Valens of Mursa in Upper Pannonia. These people bribed certain followers of the Meletian heresy to fabricate various charges against Athanasius.</p>	<p>2.22.6b ...and Eusebius perceived that his schemes could never be carried out while Athanasius worked in opposition. Thus, he determined to resort to any means in order to get rid of him. But because he could not find a good excuse to remove Athanasius, he promised the Meletians to influence the emperor and those in power in their favor if they would bring an accusation against Athanasius.</p>	
<b>c. 330 – Athanasius accused of imposing unauthorized taxes</b>		
		<p>1.26.3 Those who had denied the only-begotten Son of God heard that the helm of the Church of Alexandria had been entrusted to his [<b>Athanasius</b>'] hands. They knew</p>

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		by experience his zeal for the truth well enough that they thought that his rule would prove the destruction of their authority. They, therefore, resorted to the following conspiracy against him.
<p>1.27.7b First they accused him through the Meletians Ision, Eudaemon and Callinicus, of ordering the Egyptians to pay a linen garment as tribute to the church at Alexandria.</p> <p>1.27.8a But this slander was immediately disproved by Alypius and Macarius, presbyters of the Alexandrian church, who then happened to be at Nicomedia. They convinced the emperor that these statements against Athanasius were false.</p>		<p>1.26.4 In order to avoid suspicion they bribed some of the supporters of Meletius who, although deposed by the council of Nicaea, had continued causing disturbances in the Thebaid and in the adjacent part of Egypt. They persuaded them to go to the emperor and to accuse Athanasius of levying a tax on Egypt and giving the gold collected to a certain man who was preparing to usurp the imperial power.</p>
<b>334 - Athanasius disproves and is exonerated from the charge of murdering Arsenius and using his hand for magical purposes</b>		
<p>1.27.18 They had by some means, I know not how, obtained a dead man's hand. Whether they themselves had murdered someone and cut off his hand or had severed it from some dead body, only God and the perpetrators of the deed know. Be that as it may, they publicly announced it as the hand of Arsenius, a Meletian bishop, while they kept the alleged owner of it concealed. This hand, they claimed, had been used by Athanasius to perform certain magic arts.</p>	<p>2.23.1 When their first attempt failed, the Meletians secretly concocted other accusations against Athanasius. On the one hand they charged him with breaking a sacred chalice, and on the other with the murder of Arsenius, cutting his arm off, and afterwards using it for magical purposes. It is said that this Arsenius was one of the clergy, but when he had committed some crime, he fled to a hiding place because he was afraid of being convicted and punished by his bishop.</p>	<p>1.28.1 The slanderers of Athanasius, however, did not cease their attempts. On the contrary, they devised such a bold fiction against him that it surpassed every invention of the ancient writers of the tragic or comic stage. They again bribed individuals of the same party [<b>Meletians</b>] and brought them before the emperor, raucously accusing that champion of virtue of many abominable crimes. The leaders of the party were Eusebius, Theognis, and Theodorus, bishop of Perinthus, a city now called Heraclea.</p> <p>1.30.1 Arsenius was a bishop of the Meletian faction. The men of his party put him in a place of concealment and ordered him to remain there as long as possible. They then cut off the right hand of a corpse, embalmed it, placed it in a wooden case, and carried it around everywhere, declaring that it was the hand of Arsenius, who had been murdered by Athanasius. But the all-seeing eye did not permit Arsenius to remain hidden for long.</p>
	<p>2.23.2 The enemies of Athanasius devised the most serious attack for this occasion. They diligently searched for Arsenius. When they had found him, they showed him great kindness and promised to secure for him every goodwill and security. They conducted him secretly to Patrines, a presbyter of a monastery, who was one of their</p>	

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	allies and was working for the same interests. After they had carefully concealed him in this way, they meticulously spread the report in the market-places and public assemblies that he had been slain by Athanasius. They also bribed John, a monk, to corroborate the accusation.	
1.27.19 Therefore it was established as the gravest grounds for an accusation which these slanderers had come up with against him. And as it generally happens, anyone who had a grievance against Athanasius came forward at that time with a variety of other charges.	2.23.3 This evil report was universally circulated and had even reached the ears of the emperor. Athanasius, afraid that it would be difficult to defend his cause before judges whose minds were influenced by such false rumors, resorted to strategies like those of his adversaries. He did everything in his power to prevent truth from being obscured by their attacks;	
1.27.20 When the emperor was informed of these proceedings, he wrote to his nephew Dalmatius the censor, who at that time lived at Antioch in Syria. The emperor directed him to order the accused parties to be brought before him and after due investigation to inflict punishment on whomever was convicted. 1.27.21 He also sent Eusebius and Theognis there so that the case might be tried in their presence. When Athanasius knew that he was going to be summoned before the inspector, he sent men into Egypt to make an arduous search for Arsenius. Although Athanasius found out that he was indeed hiding there, Athanasius was unable to apprehend him because he often changed his hiding place. Meanwhile, the emperor stopped the trial, which was to have been held before the inspector, for that reason.		
	2.23.4 ...but the multitude could not be convinced, because Arsenius did not turn up. Athanasius realized, therefore, that the suspicion resting on him could not be removed except by proving that Arsenius, who was said to be dead, was still alive. He sent a most trustworthy deacon on a quest to find him. The deacon went to Thebes and learned from the statements of some monks where he was living. When he came to Patrines, who had hidden him, he found that Arsenius was not there. The moment the arrival of the deacon had been reported, he had been moved to	

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	<p>Lower Egypt.</p> <p>2.23.5 The deacon arrested Patrines and conducted him to Alexandria. He arrested Elias as well, one of his associates, who was said to have been the person who moved Arsenius elsewhere. He delivered them both to the commander of the Egyptian forces, and they confessed that Arsenius was still alive, that he had been secretly hidden in their house, and that he was now living in Egypt.</p> <p>2.23.6 Athanasius took care that all these facts should be reported to Constantine. The emperor wrote back to him, encouraging him to continue to perform his priestly functions and to maintain order and piety among the people. He told him not to worry about the conspiracy of the Meletians because it was clear that envy was the only reason for the disturbance in the churches and for the false indictments which were circulated against him.</p> <p>2.23.7 The emperor added that, in the future, he should pay no attention to such reports and that, unless the slanderers preserved the peace, he should certainly subject them to the rigor of the state laws and let justice have its course. For they had not only unjustly plotted against the innocent, but had also shamefully abused the good order and piety of the Church. Such was the sense of the emperor's letter to Athanasius. He also commanded that it should be read aloud in public, in order that everyone would know his intentions.</p> <p>2.23.8 The Meletians were alarmed at these warnings and became quieter for a while, because they were anxious about the ruler's threats. The churches throughout Egypt enjoyed profound peace and, directed by the leadership of this great priest, daily increased in numbers by the conversion of multitudes of pagans and other heretics.</p>	
	<p>2.25.1 The new plots of the enemies of Athanasius placed him in fresh troubles, aroused the hatred of the emperor against him, and stirred up a multitude of accusers. Wearing by their demands, the emperor convened a council at Caesarea in Palestine. Athanasius</p>	

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	<p>was summoned to it. But because he was afraid of the dishonesty of Eusebius, bishop of the city, of Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, and of their party, he refused to attend, and for thirty months, although pressed to attend, he persisted in his refusal.</p> <p>2.25.2 At the end of that period, however, he was pressured more urgently and traveled to Tyre, where a great number of the bishops of the East were assembled. They commanded him to defend against the charges of those who accused him.</p>	
	<p>2.31.4 When Constantine heard that the church [<b>in Alexandria</b>] was split into two factions, one which supported Athanasius and the other John, he was beside himself with indignation and personally exiled John. This John had succeeded Meletius and had, with those who held the same sentiments as he did, been restored to communion and reappointed into the clergy by the Synod of Tyre.</p> <p>2.31.5 They enemies of Athanasius did not want John banished, yet it was done. The decrees of the Synod of Tyre also did not benefit John, for the emperor was beyond supplication or petition of any kind when someone was suspected of stirring up Christian people to sedition or dissension.</p>	
<b>The Meletian schism endures until Theodoret's day</b>		
		<p>1.9.14a Despite the efforts of that divine assembly of bishops to apply this medicine to the Meletian disease, traces of this heresy remain even to this day. For there are in some districts bodies of monks who refuse to follow sound doctrine and observe certain vain points of discipline, agreeing with the heretical views of the Jews and the Samaritans.</p>