

**On the 18th of January, the holy Church commemorates
our holy fathers among the saints,
ATHANASIOS and KYRIL, Archbishops of Alexandria.**

Athanasios and Kyril, the most holy archbishops of Alexandria and our divine fathers, were from Alexandria. The great Athanasios lived during



Saints Athanasios and Kyril

the years of Emperor Constantine the Great (306-337). He attended the First Œcumenical Synod in Nicaea (325), which put down the profane Arius. This saint also suffered numerous exiles on account of the Arians. Saint Kyril lived during the time of Emperor Theodosios II the Younger (408-450). He attended the Third Œcumenical Synod in Ephesus (431), which denounced the blasphemies of Nestorios. Kyril championed the Virgin Mary's title of Theotokos. Saint Athanasios addressed those questions pertaining to the Trinity, while Saint Kyril wrestled with Christological problems. Both fathers left the Church many religious writings. Today the Church

celebrates the synaxis of these two holy fathers. This feast was observed from ancient times by our holy Mother Church. Saint Athanasios is individually commemorated by the holy Church on the 2nd of May, which has been assigned as the day of the translation of his relics. Many are of the opinion that this latter date should be the main feast day, maintaining it was the day of the saint's repose. The shared date of the 18th of January is believed by them to be in response to the feast day of the Three Hierarchs, commemorated by the holy Church on the 30th of January. The special feast day of Saint Kyril is commemorated by the holy Church on the 9th of June, the day of his falling asleep in the Lord. The histories and sayings of Saints Athanasios and Kyril have been popular with many writers. Those who have written about

Saint Athanasios include Saint Gregory the Theologian, Saint Symeon the Metaphrastes, Theodoretos of Kyros, Socrates Scholasticus, Eusebius, Rufinus, Saint Epiphanius, Sozomen, and other ancient chroniclers. Two hagiographies of Saint Athanasios are extant, which are kept at the Athonite Monastery of the Great Lavra. An elegant encomium by Saint Gregory the Theologian has also been preserved. The biography in *The Great Synaxaristes* (in Greek) is taken from *Neon Thesavron*, upon which the English version herein was based and enhanced with other sources. The biography of Saint Kyril was composed by Nikodemos the Hagiorite, taken from Nikephoros and Sozomen and other ecclesiastical histories, and placed in the *Neon Eklogion*, from which the account in *The Great Synaxaristes* (in Greek) is taken. An encomium to Saint Kyril was composed by Zonaras, which is preserved at the Great Lavra, Vatopedi, Dionysiou, and Iveron. Father Gerasimos Mikrayiananites composed twenty-four stanzas to honor this saint, together with a complete divine office for the 9th of June.

The Life of Saint Athanasios the Great

The homeland of our holy father Athanasios the Great (ca. 296-373) was Alexandria of Egypt. He was described as being very small of stature, somewhat stooping, and emaciated by fasting and many troubles. Nevertheless, he had a fair countenance with a piercing eye and a personal appearance of great power even over his adversaries.

He was the offspring of pious Orthodox Christians who surpassed others in both their wealth and nobility. Straightway, from his earliest years, the saint showed in which state he would labor later in life. Even as a youngster Athanasios did not engage in disorderly play as other children, nor did the youth busy himself with improper pastimes and playthings. Generally, he remained indoors where he prudently hearkened to the admonitions of his parents.

One day in the year 313, however, Athanasios went with a group of other Orthodox companions to the seashore. The city walls of Alexandria were situated nearby the sea. Athanasios and his friends began to imitate the order of the baptismal service of the Church. Although this was recreation to them, it proved to be a prophecy of the future. Some of the lads took the part of Church readers, others as deacons, and others as priests. The young Athanasios was appointed as patriarch by his fellows. Now there were other children also playing down by the seashore. Those that were unbaptized were brought before Athanasios, who then baptized them in the sea.

That same day was the anniversary of the martyrdom of Bishop Peter of Alexandria (311). The then Patriarch of Alexandria, Alexander, after the service, was expecting some clergy for dinner in a house by the sea. The

patriarch happened to gaze out the window looking toward the sea when he observed the boys playing on the shore. He was struck with astonishment how they performed the sacred rite of the Church with such exactitude. He then came to the opinion that the children were really exceeding the bounds of playacting in their imitation. He sent off his attendants to fetch the youngsters and bring them before him.



Saint Athanasios

When the little fellows came face to face with the patriarch, they were alarmed at his questions. At first they denied it out of fear, but Alexander—feigning a stern countenance—threatened them with punishment. The patriarch finally drew out of them the details of what he had witnessed from afar. He learned that one of them acted as bishop and baptized the others. The children confessed that Athanasios was their bishop. Alexander ascertained that all points and the exact order of the Church had been accurately observed by the children in performing the baptisms. He decided to confer with his clergy over the episode.

It was decided that it was unnecessary to rebaptize the children who were immersed in the sea. On account of the Orthodox children's simplicity, they had been judged worthy of divine grace. The baptisms were deemed valid. Indeed, as many children as the holy Athanasios baptized in the sea, the patriarch only performed upon them such offices as it is lawful only for those who are consecrated to initiate when celebrating the Mysteries. Thus, Patriarch Alexander completed the baptisms and then dismissed them in peace, but summoned the parents of the boys. He counseled them to hand the lads over to tutors that they

might be educated for the sacred profession and holy orders.

Now Alexander was especially impressed with the fourteen-year-old boy-bishop, Athanasios. He singled Athanasios out, perceiving his future ability and devotion. He spoke to Athanasios' parents and foretold that their son would become great and marvellous in the future. He commanded them

to give the youth over to teachers that he might learn sacred Scriptures, and added that when he should reach eighteen years of age they were to bring Athanasios to him; but not long afterward he had Athanasios as his able companion and secretary.

Athanasios' education was liberal and that of a Greek. Egyptian religion, monuments, and history had no special interest for him. Nowhere did he betray a trace of Egyptian nationalism. He studied sacred Scriptures from his earliest years, and the Scriptures saturated his mind. He did not know Hebrew, which limited his knowledge of the Old Testament to the Septuagint. With the passage of time, especially during his future exiles, his knowledge of Latin grew considerably. His command of both the Old and New Testaments was formidable.

The holy youth did well in his studies—a combination of scriptural study and of Greek learning at the famous Alexandrian School. He also frequented classes of grammar and rhetoric. It was the school of Clement, Origen, Dionysios, and Theognostos; yet, it was from Patriarch Alexander of Alexandria that Athanasios received much of his molding in true Orthodox belief. Saint Athanasios' study and work in the bishop's household bore fruit. Although trained in Alexandrian theology with its influence of Origenism, Athanasios revealed early on that he achieved an independent grasp of Orthodox theology. He was a thinking man, conspicuous among his classmates, and something more than what the school was capable of graduating.

According to Saint Gregory the Theologian (ca. 329/330-390) the young Athanasios was brought up, from the first, in pious customs and practises, after a brief study of literature and philosophy, so that he might not be completely unlettered in such subjects, or ignorant of profane learning and such matters which he had chosen to despise. He had a generous and eager soul that could not brook being engaged in vanities. He meditated upon every book of the Old and New Testaments, "with a depth such as no one else had ever applied even to one of them," says Saint Gregory.¹ He grew up rich in contemplation, using both life as the guide of contemplation, and contemplation as the seal of life. He understood that the fear of the Lord is the

¹ Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oration XXI: On the Great Athanasios*, ¶¶ 7, 8, Nicene, 2nd Ser., Vol. VII. Also in this Life, extracts are taken from Saint Athanasios' *Defence Against the Arians*, *Discourses Against the Arians*, *Defence Before Constantius*, *Encyclical Epistle to the Bishops of Egypt*, *Defence of the Nicene Position*, *Defence of His Flight*, *History of the Arians*, and his *Epistles*, in *Select Works and Letters*, Nicene, 2nd Ser., Vol. IV.

beginning of wisdom; but when wisdom has burst the bonds of fear and risen up to love, it makes us friends and sons of God instead of slaves.

When Athanasios attained his majority, his parents brought him to the patriarch, who foresaw in the Spirit the virtue of the holy young man before him. With holy joy he received him, and enrolled him in the sacred clergy: first to the office of Reader, followed by the ranks of Subdeacon and then Deacon after he reached twenty-five years of age. Numerous are the exploits of the saint. Many are the toils which he undertook. Varied and sundry are the temptations he suffered for the sake of the Orthodox Faith, due to the machinations of the Arians. Hearken now with attention to some of his deeds, as he passed through all the offices of holy orders, until he was finally entrusted with the throne of Saint Mark.

Arius Enters Alexandria

During that time, one named Arius (250-336), a native of Libya, settled in Alexandria. Spurred on by ambition, he sided at first with Meletios, a schismatic, and then with Archbishop Peter of Alexandria (d. 312), who ordained him a deacon. He was reconciled with another schismatic, Achillas, who raised him to the presbyterate. Arius was put in charge of the parish of Baucalis, one of the principal urban churches at Alexandria. He was not so well versed in understanding Scripture as he was crafty and a vessel of the devil, skilled at instigating scandals. As he was a popular preacher, his teachings began to incite controversy, because he said that Christ was not coeternal with the Father. He was a vigorous advocate of subordinationist teaching about Christ, and his vile doctrine quickly spread, and he made many disciples.

At first, he privately made known his brand of theology; but then he made bold to declare openly that the Son and Logos of God is a creature, and that there was a time when He was not, and that the nature of God the Father is different than that of the Son. Arius conceded that Christ is a God-bearing man, but not God incarnate. These and other blasphemies, which agitated the Orthodox faithful, were spewed forth by the deceitful Arius. His beliefs circulated in the mouths of many. Daily his teachings put every city and land in confusion, because many hierarchs and priests, together with highly placed men, were succumbing to his doctrines. He filled Egypt with tumult and confusion.

After the repose of Archbishop Peter, Arius was disappointed at the election of Alexander to the see of Alexandria. His ill will reached a climax when he opposed Alexander's Orthodox teachings. Archbishop Alexander was at first conciliatory, and agreed to give Arius a patient hearing. Arius was intractable. He canvassed for support and won it. By the concoctions of the enemy of our salvation, his ideas were widely accepted among layfolk,

virgins, deacons, presbyters, and the bishops of Antioch and Ptolemais in Pentapolis.

A synod at Alexandria, under Archbishop Alexander, condemned Arius. In September of 324, Emperor Constantine the Great sent Saint Hosius of Cordova the Confessor (ca. 257-357), as his acting ecclesiastical advisor, to Alexandria. He investigated the dispute between Alexander and Arius. He reported his findings—which strongly favored Alexander—to the emperor, who decided to convene an œcumenical synod. This was something new. Although local councils were a recognized organ of the Church for legislation and judicial proceedings, there was no precedent—no ecclesiastical law or theological principle—which established the “general synod” as the supreme expression of the Church’s mind. They would attempt to bear witness before all of their consensus in the Faith handed down from apostolic times. Brother bishops of different languages, races, and civilizations were to meet and deliberate, without fear.

The First Œcumenical Synod

In 325, the emperor summoned the bishops of the empire by a letter of invitation, putting at their service the public conveyances, and liberally defraying from the public treasury the expenses of their residence in Nicaea and of their return trip. The clergy were to meet in Nicaea of Bithynia from the end of May until the 25th of August. The year was 325. Each bishop was entitled to bring with him two presbyters and three servants. They traveled partly in the public post carriages, partly on horses, mules, or asses, and even on foot. The number that attended was three hundred and eighteen, about one-sixth of all the bishops of the empire (approximately one thousand for the Greek provinces, and eight hundred for the Latin). The Eastern Church was strongly represented. The Western Church had only seven delegates which included Saint Hosius of Cordova. A Persian and a Gothic bishop were also present. The discussions were held part of the time in a church or some public building, and part of the time in the emperor’s residence.

The formal opening of the meeting was made by the emperor’s entrance. The moment the approach of the emperor was announced, all rose from their seats. The emperor, very tall, slender, handsome, and majestic, walked in. He united the spiritual ornament of the fear of God with modesty and humility. His eyes were downcast, his face bore a blush. When he reached the golden throne prepared for him, he halted, and would not sit until the bishops gave him leave. After him, they all took their seats. The emperor then delivered the address in the Latin tongue, which was immediately translated into Greek. Afterward, he gave way to the ecclesiastical presidents of the synod, and the business began. The emperor, however, repeatedly took an active stance, and exercised much influence.

Saint Athanasios was a young deacon when he attended that great and holy synod meeting. Deacon Athanasios was acting as the representative of the Patriarch of Alexandria, who was feeling ill. His convictions were secure. His grasp of the issues made him the backbone of his bishop's party. The young archdeacon from Alexandria was noted for his fervor, intellect, and eloquence.

Among the prominent men at the meeting was Evsevios of Caesarea, noted for his historical writings. Some who attended were confessors from the time of the persecution, who still bore the marks of Christ upon their bodies: Paphnutios of the Upper Thebaid, Potamon of Herakleia (whose right eye had been plucked out), and Paul (who had been tortured with red-hot irons under Licinius, and crippled in both hands). There were illustrious ascetics present: Iakovos of Nisibis and Spyridon of Cyprus. But it was Hosius of Cordova, whom Athanasios calls "the Great," who had the most influence with Constantine.

The Orthodox party held firmly to the deity of Jesus Christ. At first they were in the minority, but in talent and impact they were certainly the more weighty. At the head of the party stood Archbishop Alexander of Alexandria, Efstathios of Antioch, Makarios of Jerusalem, Markellos of Ankyra, Hosius of Cordova (the court bishop), and above all our Alexandrian archdeacon. According to then current practise, he was not admissible to a voice or a seat in the synod meeting; yet he exhibited more exuberance and insight than all others. He showed promise already of being the future head of the Orthodox party. Indeed, this would be the very thing that would engage his attention.

The Arians or Evsevians numbered some twenty bishops, under the head of the influential Evsevios of Nikomedia (later of Constantinople). He was allied with the imperial family, and the presbyter Arius, who was commanded by the emperor to attend, so that he might explain his views. Also in that ill-famed group were Theognos of Nicaea, Maris of Chalcedon, and Menophantos of Ephesus. Evsevios of Caesarea took a middle ground. Many had an Orthodox instinct but little discernment. Many were disciples of Origen or preferred simply biblical expression; others had no firm convictions. The Arians first proposed a creed, which was rejected and torn to shreds.

A middle-of-the-road confession was introduced but avoided the term *homoousios* (*omo-ousios*, of the same essence). The Arians hated the word *homoousios*, declaring it unscriptural. Hosius of Cordova then announced that a confession was prepared, and that Deacon Hermogenes of Caesarea, the secretary of the synod, would read it aloud. It is in substance the well-known Nicene Creed or Symbol of the Faith, with some additions and omissions.

Almost all subscribed to the Creed, Hosius at the head, and then the two Roman Presbyters Vito and Vincentius as delegates of the aged Pope Silvester I (314-335). Evsevios of Caesarea signed after a day's deliberation. Evsevios of Nikomedia and Theognos of Nicaea signed without the condemnatory formula of the Arian heresy. Only the two Egyptian bishops, Theonas and Secundas, refused to sign. They were banished with Arius to Illyria.

At the synod, those that had rallied around Alexander in formal opposition to the Arians might have been about thirty. Between this assembly and hardened Arians sat those bishops, numbering about two hundred, mostly from Syria and Asia Minor, who only desired that they might deliver the Faith to their successors as they received it at holy Baptism. This middle party, while untainted with Arianism, either failed to grasp the nature of this cancer which attacked the body of the Church, or else held to the view of the need for an adequate test if it were to be banished. There was a mood of uncertainty, sympathy, or unwillingness to put Arianism to the test. The Arian party could only hope for their toleration and indulgence. The spokesman of the middle party, a devoted Origenist, was Evsevios of Caesarea—and his theology was vague.

The two other points which this œcumenical synod discussed and decided were the paschal question and the Meletian schism.² The synod issued twenty canons in reference to discipline. Canons 1, 2, 9, and 10 dealt with the conditions of ordination. Canons 4 through 7 dealt with hierarchical structures. Canons 3 and 15 through 17 dealt with the life and status of clerics. Canons 11 through 14 concerned the penance and the reconciliation of lapsed Christians. Canons 8 and 19 set out the ways to admit dissidents. Canons 18 and 20 settled two points of liturgical discipline. The Creed and canons were written in a book, and the bishops signed the document. Imperial edicts were sent to the churches, and the decrees which were reached through divine inspiration were set forth as the law of the realm. A splendid banquet was then hosted by the emperor in his palace. The bishops were remunerated in a lavish manner and dismissed with a suitable valedictory, with letters of

² Meletios, Bishop of Lykopolis, was accused of having sacrificed during the persecution in 301. He was condemned by a synod under Patriarch Peter of Alexandria. He carried on schismatical intrigues under Peter, Achillas, and Alexander. He even attracted a large following, especially in Upper Egypt. Many cities had Meletian bishops. He also managed to secure the confidence of many hermits and some monasteries. The Meletian account of the matter differs from this. Meletios had been in prison with Peter. They differed on the question of how to deal with those who lapsed from the Faith. Meletios maintained a sterner point of view. This created a schism in the Egyptian Church. An alliance of Meletians and Arians belongs to a later date. See Saint Athanasius, "Letter LVI," Nicene, IV:xv.

commendation to the authorities of all the provinces on their way home. Thus ended the Synod of Nicaea, the first of the œcumenical synods.

Saint Athanasios remarked, "It was a true monument and token of victory against every heresy." Athanasios indeed was a man of God and a mighty trumpet of truth. He was energetic and eloquent. Though not ranked among the episcopate, he held the first rank among the members of the synod; for preference was given to virtue as much as to office.

The synod testified that Arianism was a novelty, subversive of Orthodoxy. The Orthodox Church annually celebrates the memory of this event on the Sunday before Pentecost. The eternal deity of Christ abides. Thus the Orthodox Faith was proclaimed and confirmed, through the God-inspired word and right dogmas of Athanasios. Arius was censured, and the Orthodox Faith was made manifest. The hierarchs and other fathers then returned to their own cities and sees. In like manner the great Athanasios returned to Alexandria. The word *homoousion* was everywhere proclaimed, that is, that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are of the same essence.

After 326, Arius spent the next few years in Illyria. At court, on account of the influence of one Arian sympathizer, Evsevios of Nikomedia, Arius was returned from exile by Constantine. Arius went to Alexandria.

Saint Athanasios had thrown himself wholly into the cause which he advocated. However, the truth is that the synod's triumph was a victory only in appearance. Some of the bishops had subscribed to *homoousion* with reluctance, or out of regard to the emperor, or with the reservation of a broad interpretation. If circumstances changed, some undoubtedly would have made a turnabout. A controversy could not be restrained. Council was held against council, creed was set forth against creed, anathema was cast against anathema. Saint Athanasios rebuked the restless flutter of the clergy, who journeyed the empire over to find the true Faith. The Arians became increasingly intolerant and violent. They contested elections of bishops, which would often end in bloody frays. The pagans watched and ridiculed the Christians with scorn. Imperial intervention only aggravated the parties.

Evsevios of Nikomedia and Theognos of Nicaea, filled with notions of their own importance, used all their influence against the advocates of *homoousion*. On account of the maneuvering and sophistry of Evsevios of Caesarea, many were swayed who went on thinking that they were in accord with the Orthodox view and the Nicene Creed. The substance of the mischievous controversy was, to many, misrepresented and never fully explained.

The Repose of Saint Alexander

Saint Athanasios was always on hand as Saint Alexander's assistant. He behaved toward him as a son would to his own father. On his deathbed Alexander summoned Athanasios. With God's help, he believed the succession was to devolve upon Athanasios. When Saint Alexander was at the point of death, he wished to entrust Athanasios with shepherding the Church. He called upon Athanasios, who was then out of town. It was believed he fled to escape the proposed honor. At the time, however, there happened to be another deacon of that same name who answered the summons. When that other Athanasios entered the room of Saint Alexander, the latter kept silent, since he was not summoning that man. Again Alexander called out for the absent Athanasios while the one present kept still. At length, the blessed Alexander then made a prophetic utterance, "O Athanasios, thou thinkest to escape, but thou shalt not escape! It cannot be." The meaning of these words was that Athanasios would be called to the conflict. Not much time later, by the help of God, Saint Athanasios was discovered in the place of his concealment. Bishop Alexander of Alexandria (commemorated on the 29th of May) reposed in 328—the year the fire of schism broke out again.

Elevation to the Episcopacy

Saint Athanasios succeeded to the high-priesthood of the episcopacy on the 8th of June. Though Alexander had nominated him, Athanasios was elected bishop by general consent and popular opinion. He was viewed as good, pious, a Christian, one of the ascetics, and episcopal material. He did not at once, after taking possession of his throne—as do men who unexpectedly seize upon some sovereignty or inheritance—grow insolent. This is the conduct of illegitimate and intrusive priests, who are unworthy of their vocation. They are the ones who only have just begun to study religion, and now are appointed to teach it.

Now Alexandria was the second see in all of Christendom at that time. Athanasios went on to become the head of the Nicene party and teacher of the world. He adamantly refused to admit persons who were condemned of heresy at the œcumenical synod. This stance brought down upon the new hierarch a threatening letter from the emperor. He wrote that he would depose Athanasios by imperial mandate, unless he should freely admit all who might desire communion. Saint Athanasios abided steadfast. He answered that "the Christ-opposing heresy had no fellowship with the Church."

From the first, the Arians were unable to endorse the idea of Athanasios on the throne. When they beheld the man of God sitting upon the throne of Alexandria, they lost no time—after being goaded by their father the devil—in exhibiting their malice. They did not cease, on a daily basis, creating stumbling blocks, with the intention of not only having the saint

exiled from his throne, but also from the city, and if possible even to deprive him of life itself.



Saint Athanasios the Great

Now chief among those who would snare the saint was the aforementioned Evsevios, whose piety existed only in name (in the Greek language his name means "piety"); for he was in reality utterly impious. Of like mind with Evsevios was Metropolitan Theognos of Nicaea, Ision, Evdaemon and Kallinikos. They believed that if they could remove Athanasios, they would impose Arianism upon the people of God. They enlisted whomever they could in Alexandria to defame the archbishop by accusing him of three crimes: 1) that Athanasios compelled the bishops and priests of his jurisdiction to hand over as a kind of tax a certain number of vestments, veils, and coverings on a yearly basis; 2) that Athanasios was plotting treachery against the emperor; and, 3) that Athanasios was avaricious, and that for safekeeping he deposited with a friend a chest filled with gold florins. (These charges of course were false.) The calumniators wrote down these three charges against the saint and made them known throughout the city. These written charges were then given to a pseudo-priest, Ischyrras by name. He was supposed to go into Nikomedia to Evsevios, who kept audience with the emperor. The sorry story of this imposter, is told below.

The Case of Ischyrras

While Saint Athanasios was at Nikomedia, the following tale was reported to Emperor Constantine regarding a clergyman of Archbishop Athanasios, one named Makarios, who was sent to Ischyrras, a presbyter whose canonical standing was questionable.

The background and truth of this story is as follows. Ischyrras desired to become a priest, but he was unworthy of the dignity. The bishop at that time knew this, and refused to ordain him. Ischyrras departed for a time. Then, without the fear of God or reverence for the divine canons, he returned, claiming to be a presbyter ordained by one named Kollynthos, and

performed priestly ministrations. If in fact he had been ordained a presbyter by Kollynthos, then his ordination would have been invalid. Every ordination of Kollynthos during the schism had been pronounced invalid at the Alexandrian Synod of 324. That being the case, Saint Athanasios maintained that Ischyras was to be ranked among the laymen. Nonetheless, Ischyras persisted in performing priestly functions in a very small private house where he lived with the orphan child Ision. Out of the few inhabitants of his village, only his seven relatives were attending his services.

Now during a visitation of his diocese, a report of Ischyras was submitted to Athanasios by the presbyter of the township. Saint Athanasios sent one of his clergyman, Makarios. He was to ascertain if Ischyras was really an ordained presbyter by finding out who performed the ordination and where. He was also to bring Ischyras back to the archbishop for an examination. Makarios found Ischyras living in poverty, sick in bed, and unable to accompany him. He discovered that Ischyras was not ordained. Makarios exhorted Ischyras' father to prevail upon his son to desist from holding such irregular gatherings. However, Ischyras had other ideas and joined the Meletians. He feared that the archbishop might punish him as a traitor for disdaining the canons. He then plotted against the holy archbishop by taking the written accusation and bringing it to the enemy of the saint, Evsevios. The latter then took the written charges to Constantinople and showed them to Arian-minded bishops, who were overjoyed by the prospect of creating a great scandal against Athanasios. They received Ischyras as a legitimate priest.

Ischyras contended that Makarios burst into his cottage, smashed the chalice, upset the holy Table, and cast the holy books into the flames. The Arians wasted no time bringing the accusations to the ears of Emperor Constantine. To advance their designs, they kept trying to stir up the emperor against the saint by charging Athanasios with disobedience to the emperor's edict to accept Arius into ecclesiastical communion. Nonetheless, Constantine the Great, a meek and gentle emperor, had no desire to provoke a scandal either among the hierarchs or in the Church. Hence, with peace-filled words, he sought to reconcile the disputants.

The Council of Tyre

At that time, already some thirty years since Constantine began his reign, the bishops of the east and the west and Africa were gathering together in Jerusalem for the consecration of the great Church of the Resurrection of Christ, scheduled for the 13th of September. His mother, the illustrious Saint Helen, had raised this church from the foundation. The emperor did not wish to condemn the holy Athanasios, so he decided to bring the case before those bishops attending the solemn dedication of the church. After the dedication,

the hierarchs were summoned to Tyre to examine the charges against Athanasios. The issue of Arius was also on the agenda. They would investigate the proceedings of his excommunication, whether it was out of malice, and if Arius was preaching true Orthodoxy. If his excommunication proved unjustified, he was to be received back.

At the synod meeting, the prefect was summoned, and also the Priest Makarios was brought bound in chains. Makarios was to present his defense in answer to Ischyrras' allegations that he trampled upon the body and blood of Christ. Saint Athanasios was also summoned to appear. Now the saint was planning to attend and make his defense concerning the alleged crimes, but what did God dispense on his behalf? The Arian contingent had a considerable representation at the council, including Evsevios of Nikomedia, Narcissus, Maris, Theognos, Patrophilos, George of Laodikeia, Ursakios, and Valens. Evsevios of Caesarea headed a large party of conservative malcontents. Of the total number of one hundred fifty bishops, those who rallied for Athanasios were outnumbered by two to one. The proceedings were passionate and chaotic. Wildly indiscriminate accusations were hurled from side to side. The president himself was even accused of sacrificing to idols, while against the holy archbishop every charge that could be contrived was laid at his door. The saint was accused primarily of harshness and violence in dealing with those who took up Ischyrras' cause. They charged that those who refused to be in communion with Archbishop Athanasios were beaten and imprisoned. It was lamentable that most of the bishops in attendance were prepared to believe the worst concerning Athanasios. The saint could scarcely believe that he should ever find justice in this conclave. His enemies then wished him to answer to the charges of taxing Church linens and also avarice. As God was helping him, the slanders were immediately proven false.

At the proceedings, Saint Athanasios entered into evidence an exhibit that showed in the following manner that the person who was his accuser was not even a presbyter. When Meletios was admitted into communion, Athanasios' blessed predecessor Alexander—who perceived Meletios' craftiness—required of him a registry of the bishops whom he claimed to have in Egypt, including the presbyters and deacons in Alexandria herself, and if he had any clerics in the country districts. The purpose of Patriarch Alexander's demand was as follows. In the event Meletios, after he received the freedom and sanction of the Church, should develop the habit of imposing many undeserving clerics upon the Church, thus foisting upon her whomsoever suited him, this registry would fix the name and number of his clergy. The schedule was presented personally by Meletios to Archbishop Alexander and did not have among its enrollment any person named Ischyrras. In fact, he did not profess to have any clergy even in the region of the Mareotis from

which Ischyrras hailed. With impudence, however, the enemies of Athanasios shamelessly and boldly persisted.

The Case of Arsenios

In the meantime, the Bishop of Hypsele, Arsenios, received a sizeable bribe from one of the Meletians, John Arcaph. Arsenios was prevailed upon by Arcaph to go missing and hide himself among certain Meletian monks in the Thebaid of Egypt. Reports circulated that Athanasios contracted to have him slain. After the slaying, it was alleged that one of the victim's hands was severed for use in magic ceremonies. This ridiculous rumor was bruited about, until a report was drawn up for Emperor Constantine, together with an updated rendition of the Ischyrras incident.

Constantine was moved to anger. Even though he expressed his previous sentiments to condemn their injustice, as soon as he heard this accusation, he straightway became incensed. Saint Athanasios, as a result, was not granted a hearing. The confused and disordered proceedings were never examined. The angry emperor could not keep his countenance. Jolted after receiving the bizarre intelligence of a severed hand, he bade his half-brother Dalmatos, a high official at Antioch, to investigate the particulars of the case. The latter suggested a council convene in 334 in Caesarea, under the presidency of Evsevios. Saint Athanasios received a summons but refused to appear before a judge who was patently prejudiced against the defendant. Nonetheless, the venue was fixed for Tyre, and the date postponed till the following year. A peremptory summons was issued by Constantine to Athanasios that he must put in an appearance. Though unwilling, Saint Athanasios obeyed the imperial writ compelling his appearance.

Commenting upon the conspiracy contrived against him, he said, "There are in Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis nearly one hundred bishops. Not one of them has ever laid anything to my charge. Not one of the presbyters has ever found fault with me. However, the Meletians—ejected by Peter, and the Arians—divided the plot between them: one party is claiming the right of accusing me, while the other sits in judgment of the case." The saint objected to having Evsevios and his minions sit in judgment, regarding them as biased and, moreover, heretics and not even presbyters. The high functionary Dionysios was to represent the emperor.

In the meantime a trusted deacon of Saint Athanasios was doing investigative work behind the scenes in the Thebaid, to locate the missing Arsenios. The deacon's detective work traced the bishop to a Meletian Monastery of Ptemencyrcis in the nome (province) of Antaeopolis in Upper Egypt. But the elder of that community, one named Pinnes, a presbyter, also had his own informants. He received intelligence that Athanasios' deacon had learned the whereabouts of Arsenios. Pinnes caused Arsenios to embark on

a vessel, thus smuggling him down the Nile, where he made his way toward Tyre. The deacon with others then suddenly entered the monastery, took hold of Pinnes, and bore him away to Alexandria before Dionysios. In the presence of Pinnes, the very monk who stole Arsenios away was brought before him. Pinnes and that monk were compelled to confess their mischief. Pinnes wrote John Arcaph that the plot had been exposed, and recommended that all charges be dropped.

Meanwhile, Arsenios was reported to have been seen at an inn in Tyre by the servant of some magistrate. In fact, Arsenios learned of the false accusations laid at the feet of the holy man, and was saddened. He betook himself secretly to Tyre. This same magistrate took Arsenios into custody. Thereupon, Athanasios was notified of Arsenios' recovery. The saint rejoiced and gave glory to God. The brash audacity of Arsenios was almost too absurd when he continually refused to acknowledge his own identity. But the Bishop of Tyre knew better, and identified Arsenios for all. Unable to maintain the charade, Arsenios acknowledged his true identity. The holy Athanasios visited him, and said, "Grant me one favor, Arsenios. Do not present thyself before my accusers and the witnesses before I go into the synod meeting, lest they should slay thee. But when the perjury of the witnesses is exposed, then thou shalt present thyself before them in order to censure them as slanderers and false witnesses."

While this was taking place, the enemies of the saint were not satisfied with the crimes already charged. Unwilling to adhere to the facts and ignoring all civility, they fabricated another story against Orthodoxy's bright ornament. A certain brazen woman, who was willing to give false testimony, was hired for a handsome sum by the saint's opponents to accuse the holy man of sinning with her. When the trial recommenced, they set propriety at nought and led in the shameless woman. Summoning up her tears, she began to wail before the judges, accusing Athanasios, who in fact she never even had met, but had only heard of him. "For the Lord's sake I received the bishop into my house, in the hope of receiving his blessing. However, I suffered adversely when, in the middle of the night, he crept into my chamber and forced himself on me. No one could rescue me, since the entire household was asleep." As the unabashed perjurer continued, Father Timothy, a prudent priest and friend of the hierarch, could no longer bear to hear her filthy account, and wished to reveal her as a liar. He entered into the court, assuming the character of his bishop. He approached her, and said, "Was it I, O woman, who sinned with thee?" The woman, assuming him to be Athanasios, exclaimed aloud, "This is the man, O holy hierarchs, the abominable and unclean Athanasios, who committed the iniquity! He is the one unworthy of the episcopacy. He is the one who rendered me violence in

exchange for my hospitality." The judges then howled with laughter, for she continued with her blatant pretense, not realizing she had been discovered. The charges were dismissed. The Arians' hatred only sharpened when their attempt was turned against them. They proceeded to examine the charges against Athanasios dealing with the crime of sorcery.

The discussions grew heated. Then, at one point, a severed hand, alleged to be that of Arsenios, was actually produced as evidence. The accusers raised it and showed it to the holy man, shouting, "This hand, O Athanasios, rebukes thy magic. This hand, O impious and unrighteous one, reveals thee a sorcerer, a conjurer, a trickster! What kind of magic didst thou perform?" Saint Athanasios, never losing his composure, humbly questioned them, asked, "Among your reverences, who did know Arsenios?" There rose up five of the hierarchs, and then from many sides there echoed, "We knew him." These were men of no conscience who set themselves up as judges, accusers, and witnesses. The holy man asked them again, "Who knoweth for certain that the hand which is being displayed is that of Arsenios?" The same answered again, "We knew him." Athanasios, unwilling to allow the truth to be maligned, cried aloud to Arsenios to enter into the midst of the synod. Straightway, Arsenios was escorted in their midst, clad in an ample cloak that concealed his arms entirely. Saint Athanasios then addressed them, "Is this one Arsenios, holy hierarchs, or someone else?" The spectators, speechless, were struck with astonishment at this unlooked-for spectacle. The council members then expected an explanation of the way he had lost his hand. Saint Athanasios then turned up Arsenios' cloak revealing that at least one hand was present. All were spellbound. Moments of intense expectation passed, as the onlookers waited to see what might be exposed at the end of Arsenios' other wrist. Then the other hand, intact, was unveiled. Saint Athanasios then said, "Do ye seek two hands from Arsenios, or a third? Behold the right hand! Lo, the left!" At that dramatic juncture the accusers were requested to answer from where the third had been severed. The accusers were brought to shame, and the synod meeting broke down.

But the trial proceeded when an imperial epistle was brought into the proceedings. The defamers of the holy man were rebuked. Athanasios was acquitted, and summoned to meet with the emperor in Constantinople. The wicked hierarchs, since they were unable to fulfill their will against the holy man, followed after Athanasios, threatening, insulting, and reviling him, saying, "Magician, swindler, charlatan, hypocrite, mischief-maker!" From that hour there was such rage and commotion from the multitude and the attendants and friends of the bishops, that if the imperial magistrate Archelaos had not been present, there surely would have been scenes unpleasant and violent. Although this same Archelaos was no friend of Athanasios,

nonetheless he knew that his duty was to keep order. He also did not wish to be accountable for any civil disobedience. Therefore, he took hold of Athanasios and escorted him safely outside the city limits. He advised the archbishop to betake himself far away.

Saint Athanasios wrote afterward: "The grace of God prevailed. For they could not convict Makarios in the matter of the chalice. Arsenios, who was reported to have been murdered by me, stood before them alive, with both his hands joined to his body, thus openly showing the obvious falseness of their accusation. Nonetheless, when they perceived that they were unable to convict Makarios, Evsevios and his fellows became enraged that they had lost the prey of which they had been in pursuit. They persuaded Dionysios, who is one of them, to send to the Mareotis, in order to see whether they could not find out something there against the presbyter, or rather that they might at a distance patch up their plot as they pleased in our absence; for this was their aim. However, we protested that the journey to the Mareotis was a superfluous undertaking. Yet if they must go, then at least the suspected parties ought not to be sent. Dionysios was convinced by my reasoning with respect to the suspected persons. But they would do anything rather than what I proposed. For the very persons whom I objected against on account of the Arian heresy, they were the very ones who were promptly dispatched. In the meantime, Makarios, the accused party, was to remain behind in custody under a guard of soldiers, while they took with them the accuser. Now who after this does not see through this conspiracy? For if a judicial inquiry is to be made, the accused ought not to have been sent thither."

The commission of enquiry with the apostate prefect of Egypt and heathen soldiers were not to have their way. The presbyters of Alexandria found fault with them, because they were by themselves in their proceedings. Their evil design had not escaped detection. The presbyters of the city and of the Mareotis addressed letters to the investigators. They protested that both Archbishop Athanasios and Father Makarios ought to have been brought. Hence, they rightfully wrote: "Your coming was only the act of a cabal and conspiracy."³

The clergy of the Mareotis also wrote, affirming that "Ischyrras was never a presbyter of the Church. In fact, he never had a church. But since he has falsely accused our Archbishop Athanasios of breaking a cup and overturning a table, we are necessarily obliged to address you on this point. We have said already that he never had a church in the Mareotis. And we declare before God as our witness, that no cup was broken, nor table overturned by our bishop, nor by any one of those who accompanied him. But

³ Saint Athanasios, *Defence Against the Arians*, Part II, Ch. VI, Nicene, Vol. IV.

all that is alleged respecting this affair is mere calumny. Now we do not say this as if we were not present with the bishop, for we are all with him whenever he comes on a pastoral visit of the Mareotis. He never goes about alone, but is accompanied by all of us presbyters and deacons, and by a considerable number of people." Thus the whole charge was proved a false invention.

The Saint in Constantinople

The Evsevians attempted to recover themselves, unwilling to let Athanasios clear his name. When they prevailed upon Dionysios to dispatch a commission, made up mostly of Arians, to the Mareotis to investigate the Ischyra case, Athanasios himself escaped in an open boat with four of his bishops. They managed to find their way to Constantinople, and arrived on the 30th of October.

Emperor Constantine describes his chance encounter with the archbishop: "As I was entering our all-happy home of Constantinople, all of a sudden Bishop Athanasios, with certain others whom he had with him, approached me in the middle of the road, so unexpectedly as to occasion me much amazement. My servants informed me both who he was, and under what injustice he was suffering, though I should have been able to recognize him at first sight. I, however, did not enter into any conversation with him at that time, nor grant him an interview. When he requested to be heard, I refused, and all but gave orders for his removal. With increased boldness he persisted and claimed only the favor that the bishops who had assembled at Tyre should be summoned to appear before me, that he might complain before me in their presence of the ill-treatment with which he met. I deemed this a reasonable request and suitable to the time."

The emperor wrote to Jerusalem and summoned all who had been at the Council of Tyre, in order that they might render in person a true account of the proceedings. Constantine wished to learn if the judgment passed was impartial and incorrupt.

When Evsevios and his cohorts read the emperor's letter, sensible of their outrageous behavior, they hindered the other bishops from going, and only went themselves, namely, Evsevios, Theognos, Patrophilos, the other Evsevios, Ursakios, and Valens. They did not dare bring up the matter about the cup or Arsenios, but invented some other vicious charge. They alleged that Athanasios levied a precept upon Egypt for Church expenses. It was generally known that the Archbishop of Alexandria had command of large funds, which were used for Church purposes and almsgiving. Evsevios and his fellows went up and falsely charged Athanasios, that he deliberately detained the vessels laden with corn exports from Alexandria to Constantinople every autumn.

As soon as Constantine heard this, he was incensed and exiled Athanasios to Gaul. Certain friends of Athanasios, the two Alexandrian Presbyters Makarios and Apis, were in the palace that day and heard the emperor's threats. The emperor observed them and questioned them concerning the allegations made by Evsevios and the other bishops against Athanasios. They made as good a defense as possible for their archbishop. These priests, being God-fearing, told the truth. They said that the charges were lies, and those alleging them were calumniators. The emperor discerned their integrity and sincerity, and believed them. The emperor straightway issued a decree to those bishops that in whatever hour they were to receive the imperial command, they were to desist and leave Athanasios free and on his throne. Those bishops, however, together with Arius, stirred up trouble, demanding that the case of Ischyrras be tried, and that Athanasios be made to answer for the grain losses.

When Athanasios heard the account of the false report, he cried out against the calumny. He positively declared it to be a lie, for how, he argued, should he, a poor man, and in a private station, be able to do such a thing? Evsevios, waxing bold, went public with the accusation. He swore that Athanasios was wealthy and powerful and could do anything he chose. By now Constantine was no longer disposed to hear about the broken chalice or Arsenios, but the allegations of stopping grain ships struck him sorely.

The emperor was now persuaded that the profane hierarchs were being instigated by the devil. He ordered that Athanasios, for his own safety and well-being, should be sent away to Gaul. He left on the 5th day of February, in the year 336. Thus, he was condemned and deposed for false accusations by two Arian councils: one at Tyre (ca. 335) under the presidency of the historian Evsevios, and the other at Constantinople in 335/336.

It was the emperor's desire to bring an end to the ongoing scandal, and for this reason he thought it wise to dispense with the problem by removing Athanasios out of the sight of his slanderers. Constantine wished to unite the churches, since these bishops would have created a schism in the Church, giving idolatry a strong hold on those weak Orthodox who might fall back to their old ways. Thus, the grace of God proved superior to the wickedness of the Arian madmen.

The Repose of Emperor Constantine

The emperor, at sixty-five years of age, after reigning thirty-one years, reposed at Nikomedia in May of 337. None of his three sons was present, so couriers were dispatched to notify them. Constantine left his legacy and empire to his three sons, Constantine, Constantius, and Constas. In the articles of his will, he disposed of the empire as follows. Constantine was to reign in Constantinople and all her prefectures; Constantius was to

reign in Spain, and Constas in Rome. The dying emperor furnished instructions to the Priest Efstathios to deliver the will to his eldest son Constantine. That vile man, however, filled with Arian madness, had waited for the appropriate moment to further the cause of Arianism. Therefore, he was quite determined not to hand over the will to the firstborn son, but gave it instead to the middle son, deeming him impressionable and one who could be easily persuaded. He knew that he could move Constantius to support the dogmas of Arianism. He also believed that Constantius would not revoke the exile of the holy man Athanasios. Evsevios and his confederates also supported him in this, as did several of the imperial eunuchs. Not many days had passed when, after the chief eunuch was converted, the others followed him. The emperor's consort was also convinced to change her Orthodoxy after listening only to a few blasphemous words. It would not be long thereafter that Constantius should prove himself inconstant, and be won over.

Constantine, the eldest son, keenly aware of the long and unjust exile of the saint (then two years and four months), was grieved for him. Being a devout Orthodox Christian, he decided to return him to his patriarchal throne. On the 17th day of June, in the year 337, he wrote a letter to the Alexandrian clergy and people proclaiming the restoration of Athanasios as their archbishop. He wrote: "The victor Constantine, to the Church of Alexandria and to the people: I suppose that it has not escaped the knowledge of your pious minds of the temptations which came upon the splendid preacher, the great Athanasios, the interpreter of the precious law, who was sent away into Gaul, to the city of Treveri (Trier) for a time. The object of that was that the fierceness of his bloodthirsty enemies might not persecute him, unto the peril of his holy life. In order to escape this, he was ordered to pass some time under my government. Now it was the fixed intention of our master Constantine Augustus, my blessed father, to restore the said bishop to his own place, and to your most beloved piety. Before his repose he ordered me, his eldest son according to the succession, to give Athanasios his episcopal throne. Now he went to his rest before he could accomplish his wish, so I believe it is incumbent upon me to fulfill that intention of the emperor of sacred memory. Therefore, receive Athanasios with all honor and reverence, as a hierarch, shepherd and teacher of piety. Then, after a time, send him to me, that I may honor him also as I should." By this epistle, a way was opened for the saint to enter Alexandria.

Constantine with his two other brothers, Constantius and Constas, then hastened to meet together in Sirmium. They agreed upon the division of the empire, so that Constantine took the Gauls and Africa, Constantius took the east, and Constas took Italy and Illyricum. By the 9th of September, they each formally assumed the title of augustus. Saint Athanasios had accompa-

nied Constantine on his way eastward to Sirmium, when he met Constantius for the first time at Viminacium.

Not much time passed afterward when the Ariomaniacs culminated their influence on the mind of the middle son, Constantius. In a very short space of time, he, too, became a militant Arian and engulfed in the darkness of impiety. After he professed and championed Arianism, he issued a decree that every city and province was to believe in what Arius taught. He also said that any bishop or priest who did not accept the dogmas of Arius would be cast out and exiled.

At that time, the Patriarch of Constantinople was Alexander, that of Antioch Efstathios, and of Jerusalem Maximos. The Alexandrian flock still recognized their absent Archbishop Athanasios as the legitimate shepherd. Alexander of Constantinople was commanded to concelebrate the divine Liturgy with Arius; otherwise, he was to relinquish his throne. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. Here is some background on Arius.

The Decease of Arius

In 335, Arius was formally acquitted of the charge of heresy by a council at Jerusalem. From Jerusalem he went to Alexandria, but he did not succeed in gaining admission to the Church. He decided to return to the capital. The Evsevians did not wish him to be repelled, so Arius satisfied the emperor by a sworn profession of Orthodoxy.

Saint Athanasios was not in Constantinople when Arius died, so he received the account from Makarios. Arius had been invited by the Emperor Constantine, through the interest of Evsevios and his fellows. When he entered the presence of the emperor, inquiry was made of Arius whether he held the Faith of the catholic Church. He declared upon oath that he held the right Faith, and submitted an account of his belief in writing, suppressing the points for which he had been cast out of the Church by Bishop Alexander, and speciously alleging expressions out of the Scriptures. When he swore that he no longer professed the opinions for which Alexander had excommunicated him, Constantine dismissed him, saying, "If thy belief be right, thou hast done well to swear; but if thy belief be impious, and thou hast sworn, may God judge thee according to thine oath."

Evsevios now wished to bring Arius into the Church. A day was fixed for his reception. But Alexander, the Archbishop of Constantinople, was greatly distressed. He resisted them and said that the inventor of the heresy ought not to be admitted to communion. Evsevios and his minions threatened, and declared, "We have caused him to be invited by the emperor, in opposition to thy wishes. Tomorrow, though against thy desire, Arius shall have communion with us in this church."

It was the sabbath when Bishop Alexander heard this. He was understandably distressed, and entered into the church. He stretched forth his hands to God and bewailed himself. As he lay prostrate in the sanctuary, his tear-stained face rested upon the pavement. Makarios was present and prayed with him. He was a witness to the bishop's words. Alexander asked God for two things: "If Arius is brought to communion tomorrow, let me, Thy servant, depart, and destroy not the pious with the impious; but if Thou wilt spare Thy Church—and I know that Thou wilt spare—look upon the words of Evsevios and his fellows, and give not Thine inheritance to destruction and reproach. Take Arius away, lest if he should enter into the church, the heresy also may seem to enter with him, and henceforward impiety be accounted for piety."

The bishop then arose and retired in great distress and anxiety. Then an extraordinary circumstance took place. On the evening before the intended reception and procession from the imperial palace to the Church of the Apostles, Arius suddenly died. The year was 336 when he was over the age of eighty. He died while attending to the necessities of nature. God hearkened to the bishop's entreaty in the following manner; for at Arius' withdrawal to attend to this need, suddenly, "he fell headlong and burst asunder in the midst [cf. Acts 1:18]." For his daring criminalities, there was a violent relaxation of the bowels. Soon afterward a faintness came over him, and together with the evacuations, his bowels protruded, followed by a copious hemorrhage, and the descent of the smaller intestines. Portions of his spleen and liver were discharged in the effusion of blood, so that he almost immediately died in the back of Constantine's Forum.

Though Saint Athanasios knew in the Spirit that this was God's judgment upon that detractor of Jesus, others ascribed his death to magic or even heart disease. His spiritually diseased condition proved stronger than any remedy. Regrettably, many drank from the turbid waters of his impiety. Afterward, Athanasios wrote to the bishops of Egypt about the significance of that evil agitator's death: "Death, it is true, is the common end of all men,...but the end of Arius was not after an ordinary manner. Evsevios and his fellows threatened to bring Arius back into the Church, and Archbishop Alexander of Constantinople resisted them. Now it was the sabbath, and he was expected to join communion on the following day. There was a great struggle between them; the others threatening, Alexander praying. But the Lord, being the Judge of the case, decided against the unjust party; for the sun had not set, when the necessities of nature compelled him to that place, where he fell down, and was forthwith deprived of communion with the Church and his life. The blessed Constantine, hearing of this, at once was struck with wonder to find him thus convicted of perjury....The Arian

madness was rejected from communion by our Savior both here and in the Church of the Firstborn in heaven." Such was the end of Arius. Alexander then celebrated the divine Liturgy with piety and Orthodoxy. Now Alexander himself reposed very soon afterward. Paul was elected in his place but was banished on some charge. Then Evsevios of Nikomedia was brought to the capital some time between 336 and 340.

The Saint's Banishment in Gaul

Saint Athanasios stated the reason why he was sent to Gaul by Emperor Constantine, in a letter written from Treveri (337). "Who does not plainly perceive the intention of the emperor, and the murderous spirit of Evsevios and his fellows, and that the emperor had done this in order to prevent their forming some more desperate scheme? The emperor listened to them in simplicity."

The holy hierarch remained at Treveri at the noble home of the emperors on the banks of the Mosel. He made his abode there for about one year and spent Pascha in the unfinished church where construction was still proceeding. In this exile Athanasios did not suffer from want, and even had certain Egyptian brethren with him. Bishop Maximinus of Treveri was compassionate and befriended him. Though friends of the saint viewed the banishment as an act of royal clemency, the punishment was what might have been handed down to one who was an agitator, a disturber of the peace, and one charged with treason.

Behind the scenes all the while, Evsevios was still seeking imperial approval for the proposed election of a successor to Athanasios. He failed at this. Therefore, on Athanasios' return after the death of Constantine, Athanasios found his see unoccupied. At length, Arsenios made peace with the man of God, and in due time he even succeeded to the sole episcopate of Hypsele. John Arcaph met with disgrace, confessed his role in the intrigue, and disavowed his schism. Afterward he was invited to court, but his obedience was never stable.

With regard to answering this fabricated charge, it should be noted that Saint Athanasios left Alexandria on the 11th day of July, in the year 335, and was absent for two years, four months, and eleven days from his see. Later, those who lived with Arsenios gave testimony that he was kept in concealment that they might pretend his death.

At length, the relatives of Ischyrras persuaded him to retract his accusations. The bishop was then given a statement by Ischyrras, wherein he declared that he slandered Makarios on account of the violence that he suffered. Ischyrras was pardoned but placed under censure. However, instead of truly repenting, he became increasingly embittered. He made new and more fantastic charges. Later at the Councils of Tyre and Philippopolis,

Athanasios himself was accused of breaking the chalice in a basilica, which he allegedly razed to the ground. Ischyra was unable to prove anything. The holy hierarch was vindicated as a result of this frivolous charge. The Arians temporarily retreated, but regrouped.

Saint Athanasios Returns From Exile in Gaul

In 338, months after Saint Athanasios was recalled from his banishment by Constantine II, he was received by the people with great enthusiasm, more joyously than even an emperor. Joy and cheerfulness prevailed, and the people ran together, hastening to obtain the desired sight of Athanasios. The churches were full of rejoicing, and prayers of thanksgiving were offered up to the Lord in every place. All the clergy gazed upon him with such profound feeling that their souls were filled with delight, and they esteemed that day the happiest of their lives. Saint Athanasios had returned from Gaul triumphant!

The saint, adorned with gentleness and modesty of spirit, possessed an extraordinary love for his neighbor. He showed the constancy of his affection for the people. Athanasios, as one not besotted with power, was described as follows by Saint Gregory the Theologian: "Everything was done harmoniously. For immediately on his restoration to his Church, he was not like those who are blinded by unrestrained passion. Such ones, under the dominion of their anger, thrust away or strike at once whatever comes in their way, even though it might well be spared. But thinking this to be a special time for him to consult his reputation—since one who is ill-treated is usually restrained, and one who has the power to requite a wrong is ungoverned—he was resolved to treat mildly and gently the very ones who



Saint Athanasios of Alexandria

had injured him, so that even they themselves, if I may say so, did not find his restoration distasteful."⁴

In 339, Saint Athanasios held a synod meeting of nearly one hundred bishops in Alexandria. In the encyclical issued as a result thereof, the following was urged upon the bishops throughout the world: "In order that the ordinances which have been preserved in the Churches from times of old until now may not be lost in our days, and the trust which has been committed to us required at our hands, bestir yourselves, brethren, as being stewards of the Mysteries of God and seeing them now seized upon by others."

The Nicene doctrine was vindicated, but again the triumph was temporary for Athanasios. Arianism still prevailed in the east. Constantius, ruler of the east, and his whole court maintained a fanatical Arianism. Evsevios of Nikomedia was elevated to the throne of Constantinople (338) and became the leader of both the Arian and moderate parties.

Reappearance of Troubles for the Saint

The Nikomedian Evsevios, a long-time opponent of Saint Athanasios, was Archbishop of Constantinople, and had Emperor Constantius' ear and found him a willing patron. The malcontents also gained the sympathy of Jews and pagans. The evil rumor that even Anthony the Great sided with the Arians was soon proven false, when the illustrious ascetic left his desert retreat at the request of the Orthodox. He entered the strife-filled city, and his presence attracted both Christians and pagans. They wished to catch a glimpse of him or to receive some physical benefit from his touch. Saint Anthony condemned Arianism as the worst of heresies. He was then escorted out of the city on the 27th day of July, in the year 338, but his impact was felt. He showed himself also wonderful in many other things, including healing many of the sick.

Saint Gregory the Theologian writes about the reform brought about by Saint Athanasios: "The saint imitated Christ and cleansed the temple of those who made merchandise of God [Jn. 2:15] and trafficked in the things of Christ. He did not bring this about by the use of persuasive words, nor with a twisted scourge. He reconciled those who were at variance, both with one another and with himself, without the aid of any coadjutor. Those who had been wronged he set free from oppression, making no distinction as to whether they were of his own or of the opposite party. He also restored the teaching which had been overthrown, and the Trinity was once more boldly spoken of."⁵

Athanasios' enemies harped on the fact that he had been deposed, and by a council. They maintained that the see of Alexandria was legally vacant,

⁴ Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oration XXI*, ¶ 30.

⁵ *Ibid.*, ¶ 31.

and that the restoration of Athanasios was against ecclesiastical order. The proceedings at Tyre, however, were not considered by Saint Athanasios as canonical. Saint Athanasios considered himself—as did his flock—the sole and rightful Bishop of Alexandria. Those who were Arians remained hostile and persecuted the hierarch. The holy man was accused of treachery, slayings, and exiles.

One day a rabble of Arians surrounded the saint, insulting him and threatening his safety. The saint, by the grace of God, passed through them, and left the city by secret means. The Arians sent letters everywhere, citing his deposition and illegal occupation of the throne without conciliar decree. They denied him access to all cities and churches in the empire. In the meantime, the protector of the hierarch, Emperor Constantine II, was slain by soldiers in Aquileia. The Arians lost no time by inciting the hatred of the middle brother Constantius against the saint.

New charges were fabricated. The saint was accused of embezzling corn that had been set aside by the imperial bounty of the emperor for the needy widows of Egypt. Repeated wranglings between the parties, barren of results, continued until a council in 339. Athanasios' deposition was pointed out, so the Evsebian party consecrated Gregory the Cappadocian as the new bishop for Alexandria. There was some violence at Gregory's installation, but he was protected by the prefect of Egypt, also a Cappadocian.

In a circular letter of Saint Athanasios, he mentions the violent and uncanonical intrusion of Gregory. "Such proceedings tend to the dissolution of all the ecclesiastical canons, and compel the heathen to blaspheme, and to suspect that our appointments are not made according to divine rule, but as a result of traffic and patronage. Our schools of religion have been turned into a markethouse and an exchange."

The Saint Hides in a Well

For a long time the holy man hid inside a deep and dry shaft of an abandoned well. No one knew of his hiding place, except the God-fearing woman who provided for him. Though that fountain was dry, in that pit hidden in the earth, his pen gushed forth streams of inspiring words in a powerful appeal to the bishops of all the Churches. He described the ungodly excesses which he witnessed. He gave his opinion decidedly and besought help for his beleaguered Church of Alexandria, which was under attack by Arian madmen and mobs—all of whom received the sanction of Emperor Constantius.

The search for Athanasios in the meantime was relentless. Not finding him, those wicked hierarchs issued a second excommunication. Still not satisfied, they continued their search in a meticulous manner throughout every quarter. The emperor also did his part, and offered a huge reward, estates,

and imperial esteem to anyone who would reveal the whereabouts of Athanasios, whether he were alive or dead—and if he were dead, his head would suffice. Some soldiers then learned that he was in a certain neighborhood, hiding in a pit. The night before the morning on which they were determined to arrest him, the great Athanasios was enlightened by divine grace to flee to another well. There he was concealed for many days, but the soldiers were informed of that location also. He was then led by the Spirit to the Western Empire, and to Rome, to see Emperor Constas and Pope Julius I (337-352).

The Second Exile of Saint Athanasios

The second exile of our holy father falls into two periods: the first of four years to the time of the Council of Sardica (339-343); the second of three years, to his return in October of 346.

In the spring of 339, Saint Athanasios again withdrew from his see with a few of his clergy. He betook himself to Rome and Pope Julius, where he found sympathy. The holy man was at leisure to give himself entirely to Church services. He bore the solitude cheerfully. In general the whole Western Church was more inclined to Nicene Orthodoxy, and even honored Athanasios as a living martyr of the true Faith. Indeed he was highly regarded by the west. His personal sojourn in Rome and Treves, together with his knowledge of the Latin tongue, contributed to the people's high esteem of him. Above all, it was his adherence to fundamental Orthodoxy that gave him a good reputation in the west.

He was cleared of the charges made against him at Tyre, pronounced innocent on all counts, and admitted to communion as the lawful Bishop of Alexandria. However, at the same council, Markellos of Ankyra, accused of heresy, was also admitted to communion. As a result, issues were obscured. At length, Athanasios broke communion with Markellos.

In 341, a synod at Antioch, presided over by the Evsevians, issued twenty-five canons. Four creeds were promulgated which rejected Arianism but avoided the Orthodox formula and the usage of *homoousion*.

In his *Defense Before Constantius*, Saint Athanasios comments about his stay in Rome: "When I left Alexandria...I went only to Rome; and having laid my case before the Church—for this was my only concern—I spent my time in public worship. I did not go to thy brother Constas' headquarters, or to any other persons. I did not write to thy brother, except when Evsevios and his fellows had written him to accuse me; and I was compelled, while yet at Alexandria, to defend myself. And I also wrote him when I sent to him bound volumes containing the holy Scriptures, which he had ordered me to prepare for him.

"After three years elapsed, he wrote to me in the fourth year (342), commanding me to meet him in Milan. I did not know the reason for this (the Lord is my witness), so I made an inquiry. I learned that certain bishops had gone up and requested him to write to your piety, desiring that a council might be called. Believe me, sire, this is the truth of the matter; I lie not. Accordingly, I went to Milan, and met with great kindness from him. He condescended to see me, and said that he dispatched letters to you, requesting that a council might be convened. While I remained in Milan, he sent for me again in Gaul, for Father Hosius was going there, that we might travel from thence to Sardica."

Though Constatas was busy at that time campaigning against the Franks, he still found time to think about the business surrounding Archbishop Athanasios' case. He was persuaded that only a synod meeting would air both sides. He wrote to his brother Constantius to make the arrangements for a general council. When Saint Athanasios visited him in Milan, he was informed of this by Constatas himself, who admired the holy man. He had already received the Scriptures from the saintly bishop, so he was well-disposed toward him. After their meeting, Constatas took the road to Gaul and later called Athanasios to follow him there. The saint did go to Gaul, and he met with Saint Hosius and others.

The east and west were in opposition. It was a time of rival theories of Church authority and ecclesiastical battles fought through creeds and formulae. Emperor Constantius of the east and Emperor Constatas in the west successfully summoned the general council at Sardica (now Sofia, Bulgaria) in Illyria (August-September 343), in the hope of correcting the division, and to hear the cases of Athanasios and Paul. The Nicene party and Roman influence prevailed. Saint Athanasios records there were about one hundred and seventy bishops. In attendance were about ninety-four occidentals and seventy-six orientals or Evsevians, including the infamous Ischyrras of the Mareotis. Pope Julius was represented by two Italian priests. The Spanish Bishop Hosius presided.

Nicene doctrine was confirmed. Also, twelve canons were adopted, some of which are very important since they refer to the discipline and authority of the Roman see. The Arianizing oriental bishops were annoyed at the admittance of Athanasios, and even of Markellos. They demanded that the accused bishops should not be allowed to take their seats in the council. The majority responded that, pending the present inquiry, all previous decisions against them must be considered suspended. The eastern bishops would not abide the consensus.

On the pretext of congratulating Constantius in his victory over the Persians, they withdrew by night and took no part in the proceedings. They

sent their excuses by the Sardican Presbyter Efstathios. They held an opposition council in the neighboring city of Philippopolis in Thrace, where they confirmed the decrees of Antioch. They anathematized both Athanasios and Markellos, their western supporters, with Pope Julius and Hosius of Cordova. They proclaimed anathema to the dogma of the coessentiality of God the Son with God the Father. Instead of healing the division, these two councils exacerbated the contention.

The Synod at Sardica continued. The fathers at this synod anathematized the blasphemous heretical council at Philippopolis for its godless confession. The Sardica Synod also vindicated Athanasios and Markellos, after the exiles were examined. All the charges were carefully examined and dismissed. Those who had seized their sees were deposed. This synod also granted the Bishop of Rome important, but limited, appellate jurisdiction in disputes among bishops. The synod addressed an encyclical letter to all Christendom, embodying the synod's decisions and announcing the depositions of those bishops involved in Arianism.

The people of Adrianople would not have communion with the deposed bishops. Savage cruelties and barbarisms ensued, instigated by the deposed and those who fled the synod. Saint Athanasios was closely observed, to see if he should attempt to return to his see by reason of this synod's acquittal. The deposed carried their complaints to Emperor Constantius, and this act led to the beheading of ten of the laity. Plots were also perpetrated against the Orthodox at Antioch. During this time, Emperor Constas of the west took up the cause of the Sardican Synod. In 344, he communicated to his wayward brother Constantius the propriety of restoring the Orthodox exiles. By this time Emperor Constantius began to feel remorse, especially since Constas threatened to use arms, if necessary, against him. Constantius as a result accepted Patriarch Paul of Constantinople and sent him to his see in honor. Constas gave orders that the presbyters and deacons who had been banished from Alexandria into Armenia should immediately be released. He also wrote (August of 344) an open letter to Alexandria, commanding that the clergy and laity who were friends of Athanasios should suffer no further harm. Thereafter, the saint passed that winter and spring at Naissus.⁶ During the following summer, the saint received an invitation from Constas to come to Aquileia (345).

In June of 345, Gregory, who supplanted Athanasios on the Alexandrian throne, died. Constantius then sent for Athanasios with every mark of honor, writing to him a very friendly letter, exhorting him to pluck

⁶ Naissus, a Roman city on the river Nišava, is near modern Niš in southeastern Yugoslavia.

up courage and come. A presbyter and deacon were also sent to encourage Athanasios' return. The saint hesitated and stayed on at Aquileia. After receiving a third invitation from the emperor, he committed the whole matter to God Who moved the conscience of Constantius to act in this manner. Athanasios then went to Rome to bid farewell to his friend Julius. After that, he went to Trier to take leave of Constas. He then traveled by way of Adrianople to Antioch, where he went to see Emperor Constantius.

When Saint Athanasios visited Constantius, he received a favorable audience. The interview was brief. The emperor assured Athanasios of his future goodwill. He implored the holy man to allow the Arians at Alexandria the use of one church. Athanasios agreed that he would permit it if the Efstathians of Antioch, with whom Athanasios alone communicated during this visit, might receive the same entitlement. Constantius then sent Athanasios away, writing at the same time to the magistrates in several places, that they should grant the bishop free passage. Nonetheless, Bishop Leontios of Antioch forbade the arrangement. Thus it came to nothing. Athanasios stopped over in Jerusalem, where he was detained by the welcome of a council which the holy confessor Maximos of Jerusalem had convened to congratulate him.

Upon the return of Saint Athanasios (October of 346), the Alexandrians received him with enthusiasm and love. The bishops of Egypt and the Libyan provinces, and the laity of both those countries with those of Alexandria, assembled. They met him a hundred miles distant, filled with indescribable delight that they received their bishop. They were also relieved to have been delivered from the tyrannical heretics. The change among the people was remarkable. Many women decided to remain virgins for Christ. Young men were inspired to take up monasticism. Fathers and children wished to practise asceticism. Husbands and wives gave themselves up to prayer. Widows and orphans, who before were hungry and naked, now found that they were fed and clothed. All wished to emulate virtue. In the churches there prevailed a great peace. Many who formerly hated Athanasios now showed him affection. Enemies were reconciled. Those who were forced to side with the Arians came by night and sought forgiveness for themselves. They anathematized Arianism and besought pardon. Saint Athanasios, now forty-eight years old, was to enjoy undisturbed peace for nine years, three months, and nineteen days (346-356).

The Alexandrian Church Flourishes

The next decade was to witness true reform among the faithful of the Alexandrian Church: an increased strictness of life, the sanctification of home, greater assiduousness in their prayer life, almsgiving and charity, and the desire for the monastic life. Saint Pachomios (d. 346) had already

organized the coenobitic life in Egypt. Saint Athanasios was welcomed by monks and solitaries of Tabenne and became the head of the monastic communities. Saint Athanasios often filled up vacancies in the episcopate from among the army of monks, as in the case of Serapion of Thmuis. The saint consecrated bishops not only for Egypt, but also for the Abyssinian kingdom of Auxume. The saint was truly established in Alexandria.

In 350 Constas was murdered. Certain charges were made against Athanasios to the emperor. The saint was accused of poisoning the mind of Constas against his brother Constantius. The holy man replied that he had never spoken to the late emperor, except in the presence of witnesses. The second charge was that the saint was in communication with the treasonous and irreverent General Magnentios. Yet everyone knew of Saint Athanasios' affection toward Constas, who fell victim to the plotting of Magnentios, resulting in the loss of the sovereign's life.

The third charge against the saint was that he used the new church in the caesareum before it was completed or dedicated for the paschal festival of 355. This charge the saint acknowledged, but pleaded necessity and precedent, adding that no disrespect was intended toward the donor, nor any anticipation of its formal consecration. He explained that there was a want of room during the season of the Great Fast. He added that there had been a great number of children, older women, and young men suffering from the pressure of the crowd, and some were obliged as a result to be carried home, but no one died. Nonetheless, there was great discontent and murmuring in the midst of the congregation on account of the crowd. By this the saint justified his use of the building. He indicated that there was no dedication, only a prayer service.

The fourth charge was that Athanasios disobeyed an imperial order to leave Alexandria for Italy. The saint replied that he never received a written command. In this latter instance, when Athanasios began to apprehend the danger that was looming with the establishment of Constantius as sole ruler of the empire, he sent a deputation to Constantius in Milan, headed by his trusted suffragan Serapion. An officer of the palace refused the legates but granted an alleged request of Athanasios to be allowed to come to Italy. No request of this kind was ever made by Athanasios, so the holy man suspected a ruse to draw him from his see.

Second Arian Persecution Under Constantius

After the murder of Constas (350), Constantius, bent to a sorry purpose, convened three successive councils in favor of a milder Arianism. One council was at Sirmium in Pannonia (351), one at Arles in Gaul (353), and one at Milan (355). Patriarch Paul of Constantinople and Bishop Maximos (333-348) of Jerusalem were expelled from their sees. The decrees

of these councils were enjoined upon the Western Church. Orthodox bishops were deposed and banished, such as Liberius of Rome, Hosius of Cordova, Hilary of Poitiers, and Lucifer of Cagliari (Calaris). They all resisted, as did Saint Athanasios. It was at the councils at Arles and Milan that the bishops were pressured to stand against Athanasios.

However, the banishment of the western bishops helped greatly in spreading the knowledge of the truth. They had threatened the emperor with the day of judgment, warning him against infringing upon ecclesiastical order and mingling Roman sovereignty with the order of the Church. They counseled him against introducing the Arian heresy into the Church of God. He would not hearken to them, nor permit them to speak further. Instead, he threatened them so much the more and even drew his sword against them. He gave orders for some of them to be led to execution. He repented of this afterward. The holy men left, shaking off the dust and looking up to God, for they neither feared the threats of the emperor nor betrayed their cause before his drawn sword. They accepted their banishment as a service pertaining to their ministry. As they traveled about, they preached the Gospel in every place and city, even though they were in bonds. They proclaimed the Orthodox Faith, anathematizing the Arian heresy. Thus the wanderings of these holy men actually evinced the impiety of the emperor and the evil-minded bishops. All that saw these bishops enter into exile greatly admired their courage and fortitude, deeming them confessors. The onlookers believed the emperor and his minions to be impious men, executioners and murderers, and anything but Christians.

Persecution of the Church of Alexandria

After Constantius did all he desired by exile and violent oppression, he succeeded in filling every place with fear. Finally his fury shifted toward Alexandria. The enemies of Christ now removed any possible bishop to whom Athanasios might complain, thus leaving him alone in persecution.

The emperor first wrote a menacing letter. He then sent the military commander (*doux*) Syrianos and his soldiers with some notaries. Their arrival in Alexandria ushered in terrible and cruel outrages committed against the Church. A great number of bishops, partly by threats, and partly by promises, were forced to declare, "We will no longer hold communion with Athanasios."

On the 6th day of January, in the year 356, Syrianos reached Alexandria. Athanasios questioned him if he came with any orders from court. Syrianos replied in the negative. Syrianos then remained quiet until he referred the matter to the emperor.

Then on the night of 7th/8th of February, in the year 356, Saint Athanasios was presiding at a vigil in the Church of Saint Theonas, when he was

driven from the cathedral during the divine office. Five thousand armed soldiers, under the command of Syrianos, had one mission—remove one man, Athanasios. Suddenly they surrounded the church and broke down the doors. It was just after midnight when Syrianos and the notary Hilary entered with a great force of soldiers.

Saint Athanasios later wrote that “Arians were mixed with the soldiers in order to exasperate them against me, and, as they were unacquainted with my person, to point me out to them. It was night. Some of the faithful were keeping a vigil, preparatory to holy Communion in the morning. The commander Syrianos suddenly came upon us with more than five thousand soldiers, having arms and drawn swords, bows, spears, and clubs.” Other witnesses attest to this, saying that he came with many legions of soldiers, armed with naked swords and javelins and other warlike instruments, while wearing helmets.

“He surrounded the church,” continues Saint Athanasios, “stationing his soldiers near at hand, in order that no one might be able to leave the church and elude them. I deemed that it would be unreasonable for me to desert the people during such a disturbance, and unacceptable not to endanger myself in their behalf.” Saint Athanasios then declares, “I sat down upon my throne, exhorting all to pray. I desired that the deacon should read a psalm, and the people to respond, ‘For His mercy endureth forever [Ps. 135],’ and then all to withdraw and depart for their homes. The general, having made a forced entry with the soldiers, surrounded the sanctuary for the purpose of apprehending us. The clergy and those of the laity who were still there, cried out and demanded that we too should withdraw. I refused, declaring that I would not do so, until they had retired one and all. Then I stood up, and having bidden prayer, I then made my request of them, that all should depart before me. I said that it was better that my safety should be endangered, than that any of them should receive harm. Thereupon, the greater part departed. The monks who were with us and certain of the clergy then came up and dragged us away. Thus, while some of the soldiers stood about the sanctuary, and others were going round the church, we passed through, under the Lord’s guidance (Truth is my witness). With the Lord’s protection we withdrew without observation! We greatly glorified God that we had not betrayed the people, but sent them away first. Then were we able to save ourselves, and escaped the hands of those who sought us.”

Other witnesses related that “when the doors were burst open by the violence of the multitude, Syrianos gave command, and some of the soldiers began shooting. Others were shouting, their arms rattling, and their swords flashing in the light of the lamps. Virgins were slain; men were trampled down. Others were falling over one another as the soldiers dashed upon them.

Several were pierced with arrows and perished. Some of the soldiers even began to plunder. Others were stripping the virgins, who were more afraid of being touched by them than they were of death.

"The holy man, superb in a crisis, was delivered by providence in a wonderful manner. It was only at the last moment that a group of monks and clergy took hold of their archbishop and managed to convey him in the confusion out of the church in a half-fainting state. Those who witnessed the miraculous escape commented, 'The bishop was seized, and barely escaped from being torn to pieces. He fell into a state of insensibility, and appeared as one dead. He disappeared from among them, and went where we know not. The perpetrators were eager to slay him. But when they saw that many had already perished, they gave orders to the soldiers to remove out of sight the bodies of the dead. The most holy virgins who were left behind were buried in the tombs, having attained the glory of martyrdom. Deacons who were beaten with stripes inside the church were also interred therein.'"

Pierced in his soul on account of the sufferings of his flock, the saint was somewhat relieved that most of the people escaped safely. After that incident, Athanasios disappeared from the public eye. In the pandemonium, the holy hierarch went through their midst. He escaped to the monasteries of Upper Egypt, where he was to hide for six years and fourteen days (356-362). He hid himself for a little season, until the indignation should pass away [cf. Is. 26:20].

The Church in Captivity

The time of Saint Athanasios' involuntary vacancy of church and home was used by him in a prudent and agreeably engaged manner, as he allotted the time to beneficial undertakings. His quick mind had time to galvanize into a flurry of writing activity. More than half of his extant works were the fruit of his seclusion, wherein he did every subject justice. He was not too far from Alexandria, but virtually impregnable to the uninitiated. He found safe anchorage in the vast sands of Nitria. The monks harbored their holy refugee zealously, and not once was there any whisper of betrayal.

The people of the Church of Alexandria, who were loyal to Archbishop Athanasios, wrote two public letters of protest and added their signatures. They inveighed against the nocturnal assault upon themselves while in the Lord's house. They made known the fact that the bodies of the slain which were discovered were exposed in public. Evidence was ample, as the bows and arrows and other arms strewn about in the church pointedly proclaimed the outrage. When the faithful went to complain to Syrianos, and request him not to do violence to any, nor to deny what occurred, he chose not to listen. Attend to how he added to his audacious crimes. He ordered those Christians to be beaten with clubs, which only served to strengthen the

faithful's accusation concerning the assault in church that night. Objecting to the heinous offenses committed in church, the Christians were resolved to take the matter directly to the emperor. First they made their request known to the prefect and controllers of Egypt to relate these matters to the emperor. They wished to inform the emperor that war had been waged against the Church, and that Syrianos had caused virgins and many others to become martyrs.

The faithful also made known in their protest letter that after all this had taken place, whosoever pleased broke open any door that he could and searched and pillaged what was within. The soldiers entered even into those places where not even all Christians were permitted entry. The evidence of their hostile assault was well documented with the javelins and swords left behind and hung up in the church. The Christians testified that the duumvirs at the head of the police force at Alexandria, as well as the commander of the city police, were desirous to remove the implements of war, but the faithful would not allow it, until the circumstance was made known to all.

They wrote: "Now if an order has been given that we should be persecuted, we are all ready to suffer martyrdom....We also desire by this petition that they may not attempt to bring in hither any other bishop: for we have resisted unto death, desiring to have the most reverend Athanasios, whom God gave us at the beginning, according to the succession of our fathers, and whom also the most religious Augustus Constantius himself sent to us with letters and oaths."

Council of Milan (355)

Desiring to depose Athanasios, Constantius convened a council in the Italian city of Mediolanum (Milan). If Arianism were to prevail, Athanasios needed to be permanently removed. Truly Orthodox bishops declined to attend the profane council, and later refused to uphold its decision to depose Athanasios. Those who refused to attend included Eusebius of Vercelli, Dionysius of Milan, Rhodanus of Toulouse, Paulinus of Trier, and Lucifer of Cagliari. As a result, they were sent into exile in Ariminum (Rimini). The account of this council is unedifying. All those who were present yielded and registered their names to condemn Athanasios. The number of bishops was very small. There were protests and then open coercion. When the deposition was handed to each bishop for his signature, if he should refuse, the sentence of banishment was immediately pronounced. The emperor was present, sitting with the velum drawn. This council put forth no creed, since its only business was to depose Athanasios.

The saint was informed by God through an angelic vision of an impending assault by the procurator's forces, who were empowered by the emperor to dislodge him. The holy hierarch fled the episcopal residence by

night and hid in the dwelling place of a certain Christian virgin adorned with hospitality. Some hold the tradition that this godly virgin was our holy mother among the saints, Syncletike, commemorated by the holy Church on the 5th of January.

The virgin was endowed with such extraordinary beauty that those who beheld her regarded her as a phenomenon of nature. The bloom of grace induced all to admire her. Nonetheless, men who possessed prudence and continence avoided her that no suspicion might be attached to their names. She was in the flower of youth, and extremely modest and prudent. Saint Athanasios sought refuge in her home by the revelation of God Who foreordained to save him in this manner. Also, the saint did not want to bring any danger or distress upon his own relatives for harboring a fugitive. She had the courage to receive him, and through her prudence preserved his life. She was his most faithful keeper and assiduous handmaid. She washed his feet, brought him food, and served in every other necessity. Books that the saint needed, she managed to secure through the agency of others. While all this took place, none of the inhabitants of Alexandria knew anything about it.

Saint Athanasios eluded all their search parties. He bore his toils nobly and energetically. During part of the year (357-358), he was actually in the city itself, though it is believed that he also was able to spend some time in the cells of Upper and Lower Egypt.

Writings and Sayings of the Saint

Saint Gregory the Theologian comments, "Saint Athanasios was the first and only one, or with the concurrence of but a few, to venture to confess in writing, with entire clearness and distinctness, the unity of the divinity and essence of the three hypostases."⁷

His *Four Discourses Against the Arians*, written between 356 and 360, were comprehensive treatises refuting the Ariomaniacs, Christ-opposers who contended with God.⁸ We also, for the edification of our readers, cite some of the saint's God-befitting utterances regarding the coeternal Son and and the incarnation.

Speaking to the Arians in his writings, Saint Athanasios says: "You say that He made for Himself His Son out of nothing, as an instrument whereby to make the universe. Which then is superior, that which needs or that which supplies the need? Or does each supply the deficiency of the other?"⁹ The saint then tells the Arians that it is a grave error to call God's Logos a work. "God shall bring every work into judgment." He then asks

⁷ Ibid., ¶ 33.

⁸ Discourse III.

⁹ Saint Athanasios, *Discourse I Against the Arians*, Ch. VII(26), Nicene, Vol. IV.

them, "What room is there for judgment, when the Judge is on trial?"¹⁰ Elsewhere he declares, "Arius raves in saying that the Son is from nothing and that once He was not."¹¹ Comparing the Arians to Jews, he writes: "The Jews said, 'How, being a man, can He be God?' And the Arians, 'If He were very God from God, how could He become a man?' These are Ariomaniacs. Let them openly confess themselves scholars of Caiaphas and Herod, instead of cloaking Judaism with the name of Christianity."¹² He then speaks of them as heretics, characterizing heretics for us: "A heretic is a wicked thing in truth, and in every respect his heart is depraved and irreligious. They invent for themselves other questions Judaic and foolish, as if Truth were their enemy, thereby to show rather that they are Christ's opponents in all things."¹³

In his letters, the saint wrote: "How can men be called Christians who deny Christ? And how can men be admitted to church who do evil against the churches?"¹⁴ "For whom do Arians spare, who have spared not even their own souls?"¹⁵

Speaking about the coeternal Son, He writes: "Christ the Logos is 'the effulgence of the glory and impress of His hypostasis [Heb. 1:3].' It is irreligious to say that once the Son was not. For when did the Father not see Himself in His own Image?"¹⁶ "Now beholding the Son, we see the Father; for the thought and comprehension of the Son is knowledge concerning the Father, because He is His proper Offspring from His essence."¹⁷ "Is it not blasphemous, God being Maker, to say that His framing Logos and His Wisdom once was not? For if the Logos is not with the Father from everlasting, the Triad is not everlasting; but a Monad was first, and afterward by addition it became a Triad."¹⁸ Therefore, "He cannot be called Father, unless a Son exist."¹⁹

In his *Second Discourse*, he speaks of the relationship between Father and Son: "The Son is begotten not from without but from the Father; and while the Father remains whole, the expression of His subsistence ever exists, and preserves the Father's likeness and unvarying image, so that he who sees

¹⁰ Ibid., *Discourse II*, Ch. XIV(6).

¹¹ Ibid., *Discourse IV*, § 6.

¹² Ibid., *Discourse III*, Ch. XXVI(28).

¹³ Ibid., *Discourse III*, Ch. XXX(58).

¹⁴ Ibid., "Epistle XLVII, To the Church of Alexandria," Nicene, Vol. IV.

¹⁵ Ibid., "Epistle LI, Second Letter to Bishop Lucifer."

¹⁶ Ibid., *Discourse I*, Ch. VI(20).

¹⁷ Ibid., *Discourse I*, Ch. V(16).

¹⁸ Ibid., *Discourse I*, Ch. VI(17).

¹⁹ Ibid., *Discourse I*, Ch. VIII(28).

Him, sees in Him the subsistence too, of which He is the expression."²⁰ He then explains, "'I and the Father are one [Jn. 10:30],' saying, 'I am in the Father and the Father is in Me [Jn. 14:10],' by way of showing the identity of the divinity and the unity of essence. For They are one, not as one thing divided into two parts. But They are two, because the Father is Father and is not also Son, and the Son is Son and not also Father; but the essence is one. He and the Father are one in propriety and peculiarity of essence, and in the identity of the one Divinity. For the radiance is also light."²¹

In his *Third Discourse*, Saint Athanasios then explains the word "firstborn"²² with relation to the Son, saying, "When the Son is called Firstborn, this is done not for the sake of ranking Him with the creation, but to prove the framing and adoption of all things through the Son."²³ He then speaks of the Jews: "The Logos of God is Himself the image of the invisible God, being the effulgence of the glory and impress of His hypostasis [Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3]. The Jews did not receive Him Who spoke to them; thereby they did not receive the Logos, Who is the form of God."²⁴

The saint then explains very clearly about the incarnation of our Savior. "He divinized that which He put on, and gave it graciously to the race of man."²⁵ When we read that "on behalf of them I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth [Jn. 17:19], and "Now God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit" [cf. Acts 10:38], He Who sanctifies Himself is the Lord of sanctification. "If then for our sake He sanctifies Himself, and does this when He is become Man, it is very plain that the Spirit's descent on Him in Jordan was a descent upon us, because of His bearing our body. For when the Lord, as Man, was washed in Jordan, it was we who were washed in Him and by Him. And when He received the Spirit, it was we who by Him were made recipients of the Spirit."²⁶

When we read He became a curse for us [Gal. 3:13], Saint Athanasios explains, "He hath made Him sin for us Who knew no sin. We do not simply conceive this, that whole Christ has become curse and sin, but that He has taken on Him the curse which lay against us."²⁷

²⁰ Ibid., *Discourse II*, Ch. XVIII(22).

²¹ Ibid., *Discourse III*, Ch. XXIII(4).

²² Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15, 18; Heb. 12:23.

²³ Saint Athanasios, *Discourse III*, Ch. XXIV(9).

²⁴ Ibid., *Discourse III*, Ch. XXV(16).

²⁵ Ibid., *Discourse I*, Ch. XI(42).

²⁶ Ibid., *Discourse I*, Ch. XII(47).

²⁷ Ibid., *Discourse II*, Ch. XIX(47).

When we read He received our infirmities [cf. Is. 53:3; Heb. 4:15], "He is said to be infirm Himself, though not Himself infirm, for He is the power of God, and He became sin for us and a curse, though not having sinned Himself, but because He Himself bore our sins and our curse."²⁸

When Jesus is said to have "kept on advancing in wisdom and stature, and in grace in the presence of God and men [cf. Lk. 2:52]," the saint explains, "To men then belongs advance, but the Son of God, since He could not advance, being perfect in the Father, humbled Himself for us, that in His humbling we on the other hand might be able to increase. Thus, to advance in wisdom is not the advance of Wisdom Itself, but rather the manhood's advance in it."²⁹

When some say that the Christ was terrified at death [cf. Mt. 26:39, 42], the saint counsels, "It is irreligious and unseemly to say that Jesus was terrified at death or Hades, Whom the keepers of the gates of Hades saw and shuddered. But these affections were not proper to the nature of the Logos, as far as He was Logos, but in the flesh which was thus affected was the Logos....For Christ's enemies are given to see how He Who did the works is the same as He Who showed that His body was passable by His permitting it to weep and hunger, and to show other properties of a body. For while by means of such He made it known that, though God is impassible, He had taken a passable flesh." And, "He let His own body suffer, for therefore did He come, as I said before, that in the flesh He might suffer, and thenceforth the flesh might be made impassible and immortal."³⁰

He explains the purpose of the Christ's becoming Man in this letter: "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."³¹

Third Exile (356-362)

During his exile, the saint struggled in his mind that the emperor would renege upon his pledges, which he gave voluntarily after the death of Constas. The archbishop composed a *Defense Before Constantius*, which dealt with four charges that were drawn up against the hierarch. After he finished his defense, he learned of reports confirming the indiscriminate banishment of Liberius (352-366) of Rome and the great Hosius of Spain. Pope Liberius was the successor to the holy Julius I (337-352), who was heir to Saint

²⁸ Ibid., *Discourse II*, Ch. XX(55).

²⁹ Ibid., *Discourse III*, Ch. XXVIII(52).

³⁰ Ibid., *Discourse III*, Ch. XXIX(58).

³¹ Ibid., "Epistle LX, To Bishop Adelphius," ¶ 8.

Silvester. After exiling Liberius to a certain island, they had the presumption to replace him with an Arian pope, named Felix.

Saint Athanasios knew that they had been banished because they refused to endorse his own banishment. Soon thereafter other sad tidings overtook him of the oppressive measures taken against his Church. Ninety bishops were under persecution, and their churches were given up to the Arians; sixteen bishops were banished, while others fled. Saint Athanasios addressed an epistle to the bishops of Egypt (ca. 356) warning them to shun any Arian formula or creed, even if it meant becoming fugitives. He stated clearly and briefly the original Arian position, and confuted it with the Scriptures. He urged the bishops to become true confessors.

One report of appalling injuries was especially disturbing to the Orthodox. While the brethren were praying during Pascha in a desert place near a cemetery, the general pounced upon them with more than three thousand soldiers, with arms, drawn swords, and spears. The unprovoked attack was even launched against women and children, who were only offering prayers to God. Virgins were stripped, and even the bodies of those who perished from the blows were not buried, but cast out to the dogs. The relatives of the slain, at great personal risk, came secretly and retrieved the relics. Much effort was needed to accomplish this successfully.

Saint Athanasios then received a copy of one of the letters sent from the emperor to him. The letter denounced him to the Alexandrians and recommended a new bishop, one George. It was evident to Athanasios that a personal interview with Constantius was not in order. He returned to his retreat, believing that in the future he would be enabled to address the emperor.

The Arian madmen abruptly installed the uninstructed and greedy George of Cappadocia (356/357), a blackguard and one well acquainted with the ways of the world. He could not attract anyone by a single grace of personal address, other than those of similar mean character. A zealous and wealthy Arian, he made his name as a profiteering fraud and pork contractor in the army. The alliance between George and the Arians was reprehensible. In his arrogant presumption, when he seized the throne, he used violence against the supporters of Athanasios and delivered up the churches to the Arians. Even in exile, the faithful adherents to Nicene theology suffered harassment. George's crude manner, expression, and conduct could not be tolerated indefinitely. His tyrannizing rapacity and affronts against pagan worship also earned him their intense hatred. He abominably abused many hapless souls. One history that was well documented is as follows. He scourged forty men with sticks, thorny and fresh from the palm tree, which necessitated that some of them undergo surgical procedures, but others died

from their sufferings. Those that perished were left unburied. Those whom they took away were banished to the great Oasis.

In addition, the following bishops were cruelly driven from Egypt and Libya: Ammonios, Muius, Gaius, Philo, Hermes, Plenios, Psenorsiris, Nilammon, Agathos, Anagamphos, Markos, Ammonios, another Markos, Drakontios, Adelphios, Athenodoros, and the Presbyters Hierax and Dioscoros. Some died on the way, while others perished in exile. The persecution caused more than thirty bishops to take flight.

In his *Encyclical Epistle to the Bishops of Egypt* (356), written after Syrianos expelled him and the nomination of George the pork contractor for the Alexandrian see was accomplished, the saint warns them, "According to the Arians, God was not always a Father."³² And, again, in his *Defense of the Nicene Definition*, he challenged the Arians: "Let them dare to say openly what they think in secret, that God was once wordless and wisdomless."³³

Saint Athanasios also writes in *Defense of His Flight*: "Although they have done all this, yet they are not ashamed of the evils they have perpetrated against me. Now they even accuse me, because I escaped their murderous hands. They bewail themselves that they have not put me out of the way; so they pretend to reproach me with cowardice, not perceiving that by this they turn the blame upon themselves. For if it is a bad thing to flee, it is much worse to persecute."

George stirred up such resistance against himself that he feared for his own life. He, too, withdrew from Alexandria in 358. Although George went missing, the holy man was unable to return to his see, because the emperor opposed him. The saint refused to accept the emperor's rule in all matters. In this he was supported by the west, which was unwilling to recognize the emperor as a kind of "bishop of bishops." Constantius still begrudged the use of the word *ousia* (essence), favoring those who upheld that the Son was like the Father.

In his written *Defense Before Constantius*, Athanasios defended his flight into the desert. He wrote: "I fled, not because I feared your piety—for I know your long-suffering and goodness—but because from what had taken place, I perceived the spirit of my enemies, and considered that they would make use of all possible means to accomplish my demise, from fear that they would be brought to answer for what they had done contrary to the intentions of your excellency....Now neither was it from fear of death that I felt—let none of them condemn me as guilty of cowardice—but because it is the

³² Ibid., *To the Bishops of Egypt*, Ch. II(12) and Ch. III(9), Nicene, Vol. IV.

³³ Ibid., *De Decretis* or *Defence of the Nicene Definition*, Ch. IV(15), Nicene, Vol. IV.

injunction of our Savior that we should flee when we are sought after, and not expose ourselves to certain dangers, nor by appearing before our persecutors inflame still more their rage against us. For to give one's self up to one's enemies to be murdered is the same thing as to murder one's self; but to flee, as our Savior has enjoined, is to know our time, and to manifest a real concern for our persecutors, lest if they proceed to the shedding of blood, they become guilty of the transgression of the law, 'Thou shalt not murder [Ex. 20:13].'³⁴

The saint then informed the emperor of the conduct of the Arians against the holy virgins, the brides of Christ. "First they stripped them, and caused them to be suspended upon a rack, and scourged them on the ribs so severely there several times, that not even real criminals have ever suffered such abuse. Pilate, to gratify the Jews of old, pierced one of our Savior's sides. Now the limbs of the virgins are in an especial manner the Savior's own. And these men scourged both their sides. All men shudder at hearing the bare recital of these misdeeds. These men not only did not fear to strip and scourge the virgins, solely dedicated to Christ, but when they were rebuked by all for such excessive brutality, instead of showing any embarrassment, they also pretended that it was at thy command. Such a deed as this was never heard of in past persecutions. Even if it had occurred before, yet surely virginity never suffered such outrage and dishonor in the time of your majesty, a Christian. Such wickedness belongs only to heretics, to blaspheme the Son of God, and to do violence to His holy virgins."

After explaining such enormities perpetrated by the Arian maniacs, he mentions his life in exile, saying, "I endured everything; I even dwelt among wild beasts, that your favor might return to me, waiting for an opportunity to offer to you this my defense, confident as I am that they will be condemned, and your goodness manifested to me."

Now Athanasios was also a man of his age. This is why he wrote to the emperor, who was considered the first personage in Christendom. He honestly hoped against hope that the emperor would renew his solemn assurances. Athanasios did so as long as there was any chance of bringing Constantius back to a sense of piety.

Nonetheless, the emperor imposed his rule upon the Church and despotically interfered. Constantius delivered the Alexandrian churches to the heretics. A change of governor was made for Alexandria: Maximus of Nicaea reached Alexandria with the functionary Herakleios. They conveyed with them a letter from Constantius threatening the heathen with severe measures if they did not begin hostilities toward the Athanasian party. Herakleios then

³⁴ Ibid., *Defence Before Constantius*, § 32, Nicene, Vol. IV.

made this announcement: "The emperor disavows Athanasios, and has commanded that the churches be given up to the Arians." All wondered at these words, asking, "What! Has Constantius become a heretic?" All magistrates, including heathen functionaries of the temples, were to sign agreements to the persecution and receive the emperor's nominee for new bishop. The heathen were threatened with starvation, slavery, and the destruction of their idols if they did not consent. Therefore, the pagans reluctantly complied with the imperial incitements. The more abandoned among their tradesmen and workmen took part in the persecution.

Soon after, when the faithful were assembled in the great church, it was the time of dismissal. Most of the congregation had departed, except for a few women. The women had just finished saying their prayers, and sat down to rest. Suddenly, youths that were urged on by the Arians attacked them with stones and clubs. Some women escaped, but others were stoned to death. The virgins consecrated to Christ had their veils torn off and were scourged. Those that resisted were kicked by the feet of the youths. They were assailed with obscene language. Saint Athanasios said, "This was dreadful, exceedingly dreadful."

The youths then seized the seats, the throne, the table, and the curtains of the church. They carried them out into the great street and burned them, casting frankincense in the flames. They sang praises to their idols and exclaimed, "Constantius hath become a heathen, and the Arians have acknowledged our customs!" Now one of those perverse youths sat down upon the throne and gave voice to some lascivious ditty. He then attempted to rise up and drag the throne toward himself, when divine justice chastised that impudent fellow. The wood of the throne penetrated his own bowels. Instead of carrying out the throne, he eviscerated himself by this blow, and the throne ushered in his death. The day after he died, another heathen entered the church with boughs of trees, and waved them in his hands and mocked. He was immediately struck with blindness. He needed to be supported and removed by his rowdy comrades. The pagans were gripped with fear due to these occurrences. The Arians, on the other hand, were not even touched by them.

The general persecution at Alexandria was urged on by one heathen, the vulgar Faustinus. The enormities that he and his minions committed at the instigation of the Arians surpasses the bounds of all wickedness. They went from house to house, searching for Athanasios. What family did they not ravage and plunder? What garden did they not trample upon? What tomb did they not open, pretending they were seeking Athanasios, though their sole aim was to take spoil of all that came their way? Soldiers who assisted them were given the contents of the lodgings of private citizens. Many changed their

residence, moving from street to street, from the city into the suburbs. Some were dealt severe fines, and, when unable to pay, they borrowed, so as to escape this wickedness.

The profligate young Manichee, military commander Sebastian, who succeeded to the military command of Syrianos, also used violence. More bishops were driven into exile, and Arian bishops and clergy were installed. Those virgins that condemned their impiety were hauled from their houses. They were insulted and stripped of their head coverings by Sebastian's young men. The Subdeacon Eftychios was scourged on the back with a leather whip, till he was at the point of death. He was then sent away to the mines without having his wounds dressed. He was unable to finish the journey to the mines, and on account of the pain of his stripes, he reposed on the way, obtaining the glory of martyrdom. The poor also suffered ill-treatment. When the military commander delivered the churches up to the Arians, the destitute and widows no longer received aid. When the brethren attended to the needs of the poor, the Arians descended and persecuted the widows, beating them on the feet. Those who performed the acts of kindness upon the poor were brought to trial. The sufferers neither betrayed nor denied the true Faith in Christ. Even the heathen protested these proceedings, calling them cruel and barbaric. But these men lost even the common sentiments of humanity. Even Gorgonios, the commander of the police, caused the soldiers to ill-treat the presbyters and deacons.

Saint Athanasios asks, "Who would call them even by the name of heathen—much less by that of Christians? Would anyone regard their habits and feelings as human, and not rather those of wild beasts, seeing their cruel and savage conduct? Persecution was the weapon of Arianism.... This heresy is altogether alien to godliness. It acts contrary to our Savior, seeing also that it has enlisted that enemy of Christ, Constantius, as it were Antichrist himself. He has endeavored to emulate Saul in savage cruelty." The holy man urged the duty of separating from heretics, saying, "Depart ye, depart, go out from thence, and touch not the unclean thing; go ye out from the midst of her; separate yourselves, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord [Is. 52:11]."

In Defense of His Flight and Seclusion

Saint Athanasios in his *Defense* says of his persecutors that "neither their thoughts nor their words are according to the Gospel, but that after their own pleasure, whatsoever they themselves desire, and they think to be good.... Where is there a place that has not some memorial of their malice?... So zealously did they endeavor by all means to prove that they were not truly Christians....

"They pretend themselves to be friends, while they search as enemies, to the end that they may glut themselves with our blood, and put us also out

of the way, because we have always opposed and do still oppose their impiety and confute and brand their heresy....

"They even reproach men for hiding themselves from those who seek to destroy them, and accuse those who flee from their persecutors. What will they do when they see Jacob fleeing from his brother Esau, and Moses withdrawing into Midian for fear of Pharaoh? David for fleeing from his house on account of Saul,...Abimelech, the great Elias? The disciples also withdrew and hid themselves for fear of the Jews. Paul was sought by the governor at Damascus. For there was a command under the law that cities of refuge should be appointed. But when they persecute you in this city, flee to another [Mt. 10:23].

"The Logos Himself condescended to hide Himself when He was sought after, that is, His flight into Egypt, and when He withdrew from the Pharisees. Jesus therefore was walking no longer openly among the Jews; but went away from that place into the country near the wilderness [Jn. 11:54].

"He hid Himself when He was sought before that time came, as we do; when He was persecuted He fled; and avoiding the designs of His enemies He passed by, and so went through the midst of them. He neither suffered Himself to be taken before the time came, nor did He hide Himself when it came....

"Therefore, the blessed fathers thus regulated their conduct also; they showed no cowardice in fleeing from the persecutor, but rather manifested their fortitude of soul in shutting themselves up in close and dark places, and living a hard life."³⁵

Persecution of the Western Bishops

A mild Arianism then gained the ascendancy in the whole empire. In place of *homoousion* (same in essence) the doctrine of *homoiousian* (*omoiousian*, similarity of essence) was adopted, instead of the militant Arian view of hetero-ousianism (difference of essence). Rome and the papacy itself also fell prey to this heresy, after the deposition of Pope Liberius. As we mentioned earlier, the Arian Deacon Felix II, "by antichristian wickedness," as Saint Athanasios describes it, was elected as his successor.

The Romans wished to recall Liberius, forcing Constantius to restore him. Some claim that Liberius was prevailed upon to apostatize by subscribing to an Arianizing confession, for which he was restored to the papal throne (358), but later repented. He was said to have denied the Faith through weakness, but not from conviction. The allegation he lapsed from the Faith is admirably refuted on the day of his commemoration, that is, the 27th of August.

³⁵ Ibid., *Defence of His Flight*, §§ 1, 2, 11, 15, 17, Nicene, Vol. IV.

After the lapse of Liberius, the impious thought they had accomplished nothing, so long as the great Abraham-like Hosius did not fall prey to their craftiness. They exerted their fury upon that great old man who served in the episcopate some sixty years. The Arians recognized him as the president of the council, and acknowledged that his letters were everywhere carefully heeded. It was he who put forth the Nicene confession and proclaimed the Arians as heretics. Ancient though he was, they began to persecute him. Constantius wrote to him, "Wilt thou continue as the only person to oppose? Be persuaded and subscribe against Athanasios; for whoever subscribes against him thereby embraces with us the Arian cause." Hosius remained fearless and was ready for persecution. He wrote the emperor a letter expressing his determination to remain steadfast, saying, "I will not unite myself to the Arians; I anathematize their heresy. Neither will I subscribe against Athanasios, whom both we and the Church of the Romans and the whole synod have pronounced to be guiltless. And thou thyself also, when thou didst understand this, sent for the man, and gave him permission to return with honor to his country and his Church. What reason then can there be for so great a change in thy conduct?...Cease then, I beseech thee, O Constantius, and be persuaded by me."

The emperor was not persuaded and did not desist from his designs. He threatened the venerable elder, with a view either to bring him over by force, or to banish him if he refused to comply. His officers were unable to invent any charge against the old man, for his blameless life was known to everyone. Constantius sent for the elder and detained him a whole year in Sirmium. The emperor neither feared God, nor regarded his own father's affection for Hosius, who was now a hundred years old. He used such violence toward the old man, and confined him so straitly, that at last he broke him by means of his disorientating sufferings. He was brought, though with difficulty, to hold communion with the Arian bishops Valens, Ursakios, and their fellows, though he would not subscribe against Athanasios. How the enemies of the Faith drew such a prize would distress anyone in the telling of it. But his falling victim to them should excite our compassion.

Yet there is cause for cheer. Do not, dear readers, make yourselves uneasy. At the approach of his repose, as it were by his last testament, he bore witness to the force, imprisonment, and imperial threats which had been used toward him. Consistent with piety and honor, he anathematized the Arian heresy and gave strict charge that no one should receive it.

Nicene Orthodoxy was discomfited. Yet even the heretics fought among themselves and were divided into factions. The Evsevians or Semi-arians, represented by Basil of Ankyra and Gregory of Laodikeia, maintained that the Son was not of the same essence (*omo-ousios*), yet of like

essence (*omoi-ousios*) with the Father. Many who belonged to this group wished to agree with the Nicene Faith but either harbored prejudices against Athanasios or misunderstood the term *homoousios*. Many did not understand the distinction between *ousia* (essence) and hypostasis (subsistence), or substance and person as the Latins interpreted such words. The decided Arians, under the lead of Evdioxios of Antioch and his Deacon Aetios, together with Bishop Evnomios of Kyzikos in Mysia (after whom they were called Evnomians also), taught that the Son was of a different essence (*hetero-ousios*), and even unlike the Father (*anomoios*), and created out of nothing (*ex ouk onton*). They were also known as Heterousiasts, Anomoeans, and Exukontians.

A number of councils attempted to deal with these internal schisms: two at Sirmium (357, 358), one at Antioch (358), and one at Ankyra (358); a double council at Seleukeia and Rimini (359) and one at Constantinople (360). No compromises could be reached, and Constantius was unsuccessful in unifying the factions. No one was allowed to mention either *homoousios* or *homoiousios* in a sermon. All that any preacher could say was that the Father is greater than the Son in dignity, honor, splendor, and majesty. In time people were dissatisfied with the lack of formula.

In the spring of 358, Basil of Ankyra, who used *homoiousios*, emerged as the leader of those who restored *ousia* to the rolls of religiously correct vocabulary, and anathematized both Aetios and Markellos.

Emperor Constantius, Sole Ruler of the Eastern and Western Empires

In 359, Magnentios, the usurper to the throne, committed suicide in Lyons, leaving Constantius the sole emperor in the Roman world. Constantius was wary and distrustful of Athanasios, whom he believed to have received an emissary from the late Magnentios. Constantius wished to be rid of Athanasios. He now had political reasons to bolster his condemnation of the prelate. Arianism had not yet contaminated Gaul, but of the Gaulish bishops, only Paul of Trier, where the holy exiles had been banished some eighteen years earlier, repudiated the emperor's request to condemn Athanasios.³⁶

On the political level, Saint Athanasios recognized that the emperor had powers to summon synod meetings and to legislate to protect the Church against pagans and heretics. However, he, together with many of the western bishops, opposed imperial attempts to integrate the Church within the state, lest the state sit in judgment on ecclesiastical law and decisions.

³⁶ At the Council of Milan (355), those who refused to condemn and banish Saint Athanasios were Dionysius, Bishop of Alba, the metropolis of Italy, Eusebius, Bishop of Vercelli in Liguria, Paulinus, Bishop of Treves, Rhodanus, and Lucifer of Cagliari in Sardinia. Saint Hilary of Poitiers also would not condemn the saint.

Saint Athanasios thought Constantius to be heterodox. If imperial power were to defend the Church, that protection would be based on Constantius' belief regarding what constituted the Church. Constantius' priority was to establish tolerable religious unity around a creed acceptable to as many of his subjects as possible. Saint Athanasios deemed the emperor's course of action as serving political peace and cohesion, instead of proclaiming the truth and the Faith.

Another creed was promulgated at Sirmium where *ousia* was cast out, since it was deemed an unscriptural term. A version of this creed was placed before the bishops of the east and west—in Seleukeia, in Isauria, and in Ariminum. The west asserted that Christ was like the Father. In October of 359, the east adopted the same resolution. Both east and west then ratified their conclusion at Constantinople in January of 360. Aetios refused to accept the Constantinopolitan Creed of 360, and he was deposed and exiled.

In 361, with Constantius' death, the second and lasting victory of Nicene Orthodoxy was soon to be ushered in. In his *History of the Arians*, Saint Athanasios wrote: "Constantius was worse than Saul, Ahab, and Pilate."³⁷ Julian the Apostate (361-363) recalled Orthodox bishops, in the hope that the intolerance among the warring Christian factions might bring about their self-destruction. The usurper George returned to Egypt only upon hearing that Constantius had died. He was attacked by the pagans with shouts and reproaches. They put him in prison. Early, the next morning, they rushed upon him in the prison, slew him, and flung the corpse upon a camel, making sport with it. After exposing it to ridicule and every imaginable insult during the day, they burned the cadaver at night. The Arians asserted that the followers of Athanasios slew him, but this is unfounded.

The Saint Returns to His See

In accordance with the permission granted by Julian for bishops exiled by Constantius to return to their sees, our beloved Athanasios went home to Alexandria on the 21st day of February, in the year 362. His unexpected appearance by night in the church at Alexandria struck all with amazement. No one knew from whence he came. The people rejoiced at his return and restored his churches to him. The Arians were expelled and compelled to meet in private houses. With the death of their Arian bishop George, they now had Lucius, who had nothing to recommend him.

Straightway, Saint Athanasios convoked a synod meeting to deal with the questions which stood in the way of the peace of the Church. On the agenda were four issues: 1) The terms on which communion should be vouchsafed to those Arians who wished to reunite. (They were to ask for

³⁷ Ibid., *History of the Arians*, § 68, Nicene, Vol. IV.

nothing beyond the Nicene test, and they were to anathematize Arianism, including the belief that the Holy Spirit is a creature.) 2) The question of Arian Christology. 3) The state of the Church of Antioch. 4) Theological terminology, and the uses of “essence” and “hypostasis.”

The synod members included saints and confessors, and Egyptian bishops who had suffered under the Arian madman George. Also attending were Lucifer of Cagliari, Apollinarios of Laodikeia, Eusebius of Vercelli, and Paulinus the presbyter who shepherded the Efstathian community at Antioch.

Supporters of both *homoousios* and *homoiousios* made ready to reexamine the causes of discord. “Like in all respects” was taken to imply *homoousios*, but with two conditions: the acknowledgment of the hypostases of the Trinity, and that no Sabellianism was inferred. The Holy Spirit’s coessentiality with the Father and Son was acknowledged. Another issue that was discussed was how the Son is co-essential with the Father and yet one with us. As a result, former Homoiousians became Homoousians. Those bishops who out of fear signed the creeds of the Councils of Seleukeia and Ariminum were pardoned. Terminology was also discussed, but the rift was not completely healed between the two anti-Arian groups. The council was yet another jewel in the heavenly crown for the saint. Its Orthodox resolutions proceeded from him.

Saint Gregory the Theologian comments about the Alexandrian Synod of 362, writing: “We use in an Orthodox sense the terms one essence and three hypostases, the one to denote the nature of the Divinity, the other the properties of the Three. The Italians mean the same, but, owing to the scantiness of their vocabulary, and its poverty of terms, they are unable to distinguish between essence and hypostases, and therefore introduce the term ‘Persons,’ to avoid being understood to assert three essences. Now there was danger of the whole world being torn asunder in the strife about syllables. Seeing and hearing this, our blessed Athanasios, the true man of God and great steward of souls as he was, felt it inconsistent with his duty to overlook so absurd and unreasonable a rending of the word, and applied his medicine to the disease. In what manner? He conferred in his gentle and sympathetic manner with both parties. After he had carefully weighed the meaning of their expressions—and found that they had the same sense, and were in nowise different in doctrine—he permitted each party to employ its own use of terms, and bound them together in unity of action.

“This in itself was more profitable than the long course of labors and teaching....This again was of more value than his many vigils and acts of

bodily mortification, the advantage of which is limited to those who perform them."³⁸

Saint Athanasios was a source of vexation for Julian the Apostate. Julian's anticipated results of recalling the exiles were very different from what was taking place. The hierarch was ordered to leave the city immediately on pain of severe punishment. The people appealed the order, but without effect.

Though Julian worked to unite his empire, he could not overthrow his ancestral imposture of idol madness. Begrudging his own salvation, in a brazen manner, he openly denied and blasphemed the Christ. Borne hither and thither by the demons, he paid homage to senseless idols, reconstructed the pagan temples, and decreed that sacrifices were to be offered to the gods, thus blazing his degradation to the world. Bestirring themselves, the Orthodox clergy and laity protested. Julian, whose behavior was vulgar and offensive in the extreme, responded by raining down a wave of acute persecution against the faithful. The deranged defector, seeking council with his confederates and sorcerers, sought to eradicate the name of Christ and Christianity from his realm. All those with Julian concurred that Athanasios must be the first to be removed. He was the lodestone that needed to be crushed. They believed that the removal of that popular hero and living martyr was the most expedient way to lead others to idolatry, because if one destroys the foundation of the house, then out of necessity the entire structure falls.

"Although Julian," says Sozomen, "was anxious to promote paganism by every means, he acknowledged the imprudence of employing force or vengeance against those who refused to sacrifice. There were so many Christians in every city throughout the empire that it would have been no easy task even to number them. He did not forbid them to assemble, but he expelled the clergy and presidents of the churches from all the cities, in order to put an end to their gatherings. He believed that on account of their absence and with none to convene the churches, surely the gatherings would be effectually dissolved. He reasoned there would be no one to teach or celebrate the Mysteries. Thus, their religion should fall into oblivion. The pretext he used was that the clergy were leaders of sedition among the people."³⁹

Although the pagan temples were opened and sacrifices were being offered, and Julian was forever prating about the glories of the gods, Christianity still prevailed among the populace. Julian was particularly provoked when he discovered that the wives, children, and servants of many

³⁸ Saint Gregory, *Oration XXI*, ¶¶ 35, 36.

³⁹ Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book V, Ch. XV.

pagan priests had been converted to Christianity. The standard of the Roman armies, since Constantine's time, was the Cross. Exercising imperial privilege and irrational hostility, Julian indulged himself and changed the ancient form of the standard to display pictures of the gods and even himself. Every soldier was commanded to sacrifice and was promised gold if he did so. Christians were then prohibited from the markets and the judicial seats. They were not allowed to share in Greek education. Christian children were forbidden entry into public schools. Julian granted permission to the Jews to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. Every attempt to put their hands to the work of the temple resulted in fire springing upward and killing many. The sign of the Cross miraculously appeared on the clothing of many who had exerted themselves in this work.

The Saint's Fourth Exile (362)

The emperor was informed that Saint Athanasios held meetings in the Church of Alexandria. His informants also notified him that Athanasios taught the people boldly and even converted many pagans to Christianity. The latter activity, in Julian's mind, signed the death warrant for the archbishop. In his deluded view, nothing now would acquit the hierarch.

Julian wished to humble the hierarch and have him publicly put down and humiliated before the Alexandrian Church. In October of 362, Julian sent an indignant letter to Prefect Ekdios Olympos, threatening Athanasios with a heavy fine if he refused to leave not only the city, but even the country. He then made a complaint about how Athanasios baptized some Greek pagan ladies of rank. The hierarch was charged as an "enemy of the gods." The emperor again commanded Athanasios, under the most severe penalties, to depart from Alexandria. Another excuse which he used was that after Athanasios had been banished by Constantius, he resumed his episcopal see without the sanction of the reigning emperor. Julian said that he never had contemplated restoring the bishops exiled by Constantius to their ecclesiastical functions, but instead only to their homelands. In December, he sent a letter to the Alexandrians with arguments in favor of Serapis and the other pagan gods. He wrote against Christ and repeated his command for Athanasios to exit Egypt, calling the holy man "a contemptible little fellow."

The beacon of virtue, Athanasios, was again subjected to an illegal and criminal trial. With a deadened conscience and conduct so carelessly unguarded, Julian dispatched a military force of two hundred armed soldiers which was again ordered to enter Alexandria. They surrounded the cathedral and commenced a search for the archbishop, that they might put him to death.

Imitating the Master's love for man, the saint implored the Christian multitudes: "Be of good courage; let us retire for a little while, friends; it is but a cloud which shall speedily be dispersed." After uttering these words on

the 23rd of October, he bade them farewell. He commended the care of the Church to his most zealous friends. By the grace of God he was enveloped by so many Christians that he was able to pass through the crowd undetected by the soldiers.

The hierarch went to the Nile. He found a ready boat and set sail for Upper Egypt and the Thebaid. But this time the holy man had been observed. He was closely pursued by those who sought to lay hold of him. When the saint understood that his pursuers were not far distant, his attendants began to beseech him to retreat into the desert again. The saint then, moved by the Holy Spirit, told the captain to turn the vessel around and sail toward their adversaries! Though quite surprised at the unexpected words of the archbishop, he did as he was bidden. As the enemy vessel closed the gap between them, the archbishop called out to the soldiers, saying, "What are ye seeking, and why do you make haste so?" They replied, "The Patriarch of Alexandria, Athanasios. Have you seen him?" The hierarch answered, "He is before you as you go; only hurry to overtake him!" They did not recognize the archbishop. God had allowed this delusion to befall the soldiers. Those rascals accelerated their hot pursuit, but to no avail. The man of God made good his retreat, by God's good pleasure, and returned secretly to Alexandria. Again, however, he remained concealed. He is said to have returned to Chaeru, the first station on the road eastward from Alexandria. After the danger of being caught had passed, he ascended to the upper parts of Egypt, as far as Upper Hermoupolis in the Thebaid and as far as Antinoupolis.

As the saint approached Hermoupolis, about one hundred bishops, clergy, and monks of the Thebaid lined both banks of the Nile to welcome their archbishop. He then greeted Abba Theodore, who was great among the Tabennesian monks, and asked after the brethren. "By thy holy prayers, father, we are well," he was told. The hierarch was mounted on an ass and escorted to the monastery with so many lit torches that they nearly burned him. Abba Theodore walked before the archbishop on foot. The saint inspected the monasteries and gave his approbation of what he saw and heard.

Meanwhile, the governors of the province then took advantage of the emperor's command and committed more grievous outrages upon the Christians than their earthly sovereign had decreed. At times they exacted more money than they ought to have done, and upon others they inflicted corporal punishment. The emperor learned of these excesses, and instead of punishing the offenders, he entered into collusion with them. Indeed, the emperor was not blameless. When the victims appealed to their emperor against their persecutors, he tauntingly replied, "It is your duty to bear these afflictions patiently; for this is the command of your God." Surely Jesus warns of offenses, and says to Julian and those like him: "Woe to the world

because of the stumbling blocks! For it must be that the stumbling blocks come, yet woe to that man by whom the stumbling block cometh [Mt. 18:7]!”

About midsummer Saint Athanasios was near Antinoupolis. Loyal couriers warned him that his enemies were on his trail. Abba Theodore brought his covered boat to escort the archbishop up to Tabenne. Traveling with the archbishop at that time was also the friend of Abba Theodore, Abba Pammon, who was an old man of a cheerful disposition. The vessel made its way slowly against contrary winds and tide. Though completely concealed, Saint Athanasios became apprehensive about the unfavorable conditions. Having continual recourse to prayer, he besought divine assistance. The monks with Theodore then got out and began towing the boat. Abba Pammon began to encourage the archbishop. But the seasoned fugitive had not given any thought to repining, and replied, “Believe me when I say that my heart is never so trustful in time of peace as in time of persecution. For I have good confidence that suffering for Christ and strengthened by His mercy, even though I am slain, yet I shall find mercy with Him.” Saint Athanasios then observed that while he was saying this, Abba Theodore looked on Abba Pammon and smiled. The other one then barely restrained a chuckle. The saint asked, “Why dost thou laugh at my words? Dost thou censure me for cowardice?” Abba Theodore then said to Abba Pammon, “Tell the archbishop why we smiled.” Abba Pammon said, “It is thee that ought to tell him.” Abba Theodore then said to his archbishop, “In this very hour, Julian hath been slain in Persia, for so God hath declared beforehand concerning him. The haughty man, the despiser and boaster, shall finish nothing. But an illustrious Christian emperor shall arise. However, he shall live only a short while. Do not, therefore, trouble thyself by departing into the Thebaid. Secretly, go to the court, for thou wilt meet the new emperor along the way. Thou shalt be kindly received, and thou shalt return to thy Church. And he shall soon be taken by God.” And thus it all came to pass. Julian was killed in Persia on the 26th day of June, in the year 363. While Saint Athanasios was sojourning in Upper Hermoupolis in the Thebaid, and as far as Antinoupolis, it was learned that the Emperor Julian had died.

Saint Gregory the Theologian writes of Julian: “Envy could not brook all this, or see the Church restored again to the same glory and health as in her former days. Therefore, it was, that the enemy (the devil) raised up the emperor against Athanasios. This Julian was a rebel like the enemy himself, and his peer in villainy—inferior to him only from lack of time. He had the infamous distinction of becoming the first of Christian emperors to rage against Christ. From the time he was proclaimed emperor, he showed himself to be a traitor to the Emperor Christ—Who had entrusted him with the empire—and a traitor to the God Who saved him. Julian devised the most

inhuman of all persecutions. The honor achieved by the martyrs in their struggles only heightened his cruelty and envy. He called into question the reputation of the martyrs for their courage, by making verbal twists and quibbles a part of his character, or, to speak the real truth, buckling down on them with an eagerness born of his natural indisposition, and imitating in varied craft the evil one who dwelt within him. The subjugation of the whole race of Christians he thought a simple task; but found it a great one to overcome Athanasios and the power of his teaching over us. This crafty perverter and persecutor, clinging no longer to his cloak of illiberal sophistry, laid bare his wickedness and openly banished the bishop from the city. Brief was the interval before Justice pronounced sentence and handed over the offender to the Persians; thus sending him forth an ambitious monarch, but bringing him back a corpse for which no one felt pity."⁴⁰

Emperor Jovian

After the death of Julian the Apostate, Jovian (363-364), a Christian, came to power. He was a soldier by profession, very tall in stature, and well known for his bravery. During the reign of Julian, he removed his officer's belt on account of the Faith of the Christ, and resumed the life of a civilian. When he was about to be garbed in the imperial robe, no garment of sufficient length was to be found in the entire imperial wardrobe, on account of his great height.

Saint Gregory the Theologian describes the new emperor and the beginning of his reign, as follows: "Another king arose—not shameless in countenance like the former, not an oppressor with cruel tasks and taskmasters—but most pious and gentle. In order to lay the best foundations for his empire, he inaugurated his reign, as is meet, by an act of justice: he recalled from exile all the bishops. And in the first place, he restored Athanasios, who stood first in virtue and had conspicuously championed the cause of piety. For Jovian made inquiries into the truth of our Faith which had been torn asunder, confused, and parceled out into various opinions and portions by many. He intended, if it were possible, reducing the whole world to harmony and union by the cooperation of the Spirit."⁴¹

The archbishop entered Alexandria secretly. He made haste to meet Jovian that Church affairs might be settled, since Jovian was on a march from Persia to Antioch and was passing through Alexandria briefly and privately. There was another reason for his haste: the Arians were rising up against him again. Evzious, bishop of the Arian heresy in Antioch, endeavored to install a eunuch named Provatos in Alexandria. Lucius, a citizen of Alexandria,

⁴⁰ Saint Gregory, *Oration XXI*, ¶ 32.

⁴¹ Ibid., ¶ 33.

who had been ordained presbyter by the usurper George, undertook defaming the hierarch, by claiming he was accused of various crimes and had been banished by preceding emperors as the author of dissension in the Church concerning the divine Being. Lucius wanted Jovian to appoint another bishop, even himself, over the Church of Alexandria. Jovian, well aware of the conspiracies against Athanasios, cast a friendly eye upon the hierarch and gave no credence to the slander. He both threatened Lucius and commanded him to withdraw quietly. The emperor, deeming the eunuchs as troublemakers, also ordered Provatios and the other eunuchs to act more advisedly. Thenceforth Jovian exhibited the greatest friendship toward the man of God. He sent him back to Egypt with directions to govern the churches and the people as he deemed proper.

Thus Athanasios was recalled from hiding in the desert. Jovian had written him a letter. "To the most pious and friend of God, Athanasios: Admiring exceedingly the achievements of thy most honorable life, and of thy likeness to the God of all, and of thine affection toward our Savior Christ, we accept thee, most honored bishop. And inasmuch as thou hast not flinched from all labor, nor from the fear of thy persecutors, and, regarding dangers and threats of the sword as dung, holding the rudder of the Orthodox Faith which is dear to thee, are contending even until now for the truth, and continue to exhibit thyself as a pattern to all the people of the faithful, and an example of virtue, our imperial majesty recallesh thee, and desireth that thou shouldest 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 thy prayers for our forgiveness. For we know that by thy supplication we, and all who hold with us the Christian Faith, shall have great assistance from the supreme God."⁴²

As a result, the saint was able to resume his throne in relative peace. However, this would only last for seven months. On his way to Constantinople, Emperor Jovian died in his sleep in Galatia. It is unknown whether this was an act of God or human treachery.

The Saint in Exile a Fifth Time (365)

In early 364 Jovian died, after reigning only eight months, and was succeeded by Valentinian I (364-375), an officer of Pannonian birth, who was elected emperor in the west by the army. He appointed his brother, Valens (364-378), as emperor in the east. Valens was steeped in the sottishness of Arian impiety. He agreed with the creeds promulgated at Seleukeia and Ariminum. He in turn was supported by two successive Bishops of Constanti-

⁴² Saint Athanasios, "Epistle LVI" (Copy of a letter of the Emperor Jovian, sent to Athanasios, the most holy Archbishop of Alexandria), Nicene, Vol. IV.

nople, namely, the Arians Evdioxios (d. 370) and Demophilos (370-380). Valens strove to put these creeds into effect upon the bishops in his eastern realm. The Arian Bishop Evdioxios baptized Valens in 367. Saint Athanasios, speaking of the baptism of heretics, said in his *Discourses Against the Arians*, "There are many other heresies too, which use the words only, but not in a right sense, as I have said, nor with sound Faith, and in consequence the water which they administer is unprofitable, as deficient in piety, so that he who is sprinkled by them is rather polluted by the irreligious than redeemed."⁴³

Those bishops who had been exiled by Constantius and recalled by Julian were to be expelled from their sees. Meletios, Archbishop of Antioch, was driven out. If the civil authorities did not follow the injunction, heavy fines were imposed on them, and also the threat of corporal punishment. The announcement was vehemently opposed by the people. The faithful contended that the order should not apply to Archbishop Athanasios, since he had been restored by Constantius, expelled by Julian as an anti-idolater, and reinstalled by Jovian's command. The majority of Christians in the city assembled and besought the governor not to eject Athanasios without further consideration of the terms of the imperial letter. The governor could not be persuaded. Riots ensued which lasted one month, and an insurrection was anticipated. The governor, however, restrained himself and did not use force against the populace. The prefect restored order only by announcing that the matter had been referred to the augustus. The issue was referred to the emperor, and the bishop was allowed to remain in the city. Some days afterward, when the excitement appeared to have diminished, the holy hierarch secretly departed the city at dusk.

The very same night, the governor of Egypt and the military chief seized possession of the Church of Dionysios, where Athanasios lived most of the time. They searched every part of the building and the apartments of the clergy—even the roof, but to no avail. The truth is that they had counted upon seizing Athanasios when popular feeling had subsided. When the city was asleep, they were to execute the emperor's mandate and to transport Athanasios quietly out of Alexandria. The saint dreaded the irrational impetuosity of the multitude. He feared lest he should be regarded as the author of the excesses which might be committed. Some attributed the archbishop's escape to divine revelation, others to the advice of his followers. The holy man fled that October night (365) and retired to the country.

The saint actually hid in the family sepulcher, where he remained four months, until the death of the Alexandrian governor, Tatianos, who was

⁴³ Ibid., *Discourse II*, Ch. XVIII(43).

seeking to slay him. The people's love for their archbishop was so impassioned that on account of their affection for him, they became seditious in impatience over his absence. In the meantime, the rest of the empire was experiencing civil unrest as a result of a revolt instigated by one named Prokopios.

There were also signs and portents, permitted by God, as a warning to the Arians. There were earthquakes. The sea also exceeded her bounds, flooding and covering many cities and countries. Places that were once bereft of water were covered, and those that were once covered with water were now dry. Lakes vanished. Cities in Crete completely disappeared. Peradventure by these signs the Arian emperor would quit his blaspheming? But instead of considering all that befell his realm, he only wished to enforce his own will.

However, fearing where the agitation might lead in an Alexandria already in turmoil, the emperor deemed it expeditious to allay the public anger. Wishing to avoid upheaval, he decided to repeal the edict of banishment against the archbishop. By his letters he issued an imperial order allowing Athanasios to preside unmolested over the churches. In February of 366, a notary publicly announced the recall of Archbishop Athanasios. The notaries then went out to the suburb personally and escorted the archbishop in state to the Church of Dionysios.

Thus, the Alexandrian Church was to partake of a few years of tranquility until the death of the saint. The Arians' faction took possession after his repose, but that is another history.

The Final Years

The last seven years of the holy man's life were spent in Alexandria. These years were relatively peaceful for his Church. As long as he lived, the Orthodox Church was secure from molestation in Alexandria and Egypt. Even the emperor, restrained by God's providence, abstained, for he also was cognizant that the multitude maintained a strong attachment to their archbishop. Therefore, he was unwilling to risk public displeasure and civil unrest due to his beliefs.

Athanasios' almost omnipresent activity, his rapid and mysterious movements, his fearlessness, and his clairvoyance were attributed by his friends to divine assistance, but by his enemies to demonic powers. Yet our holy father possessed prophetic foreknowledge through his perpetual intercourse with God. His flock in Alexandria and the monks of Egypt were attached to him through all the vicissitudes of his tumultuous life. They deemed him a venerable and pure person, superior in character and clear in his judgments. His zeal for the purity of the Orthodox Faith often placed him in the midst of theological controversies. His Church writings in the Greek

tongue are in a magnificent, antique style, and yet they are most readable, natural, and direct. His language is mighty when expressing great thoughts. He pursued and drove out the arguments and sophisms in the secret hiding-places of the Church's enemies with his eloquent pen. It was his life-work to vindicate the deity of Christ. For this truth he spent the best years of his life and strength, often either suffering deposition or spending some twenty years as a refugee. He suffered persecution as a living martyr. He would not practise persecution. He believed Orthodoxy should persuade one to faith, not compel it.

However, in 367, Lucius, who was ordained by the Arians as their Bishop of Alexandria, tried to enter the city. He was especially covetous of the episcopate of Athanasios. He arrived secretly one September night, after a long absence from Alexandria. He sojourned in a small house, where he hid for one day. After he went to visit his mother in the city, the faithful learned of his appearance among them. The news spread quickly, and civil unrest was menacingly close at hand. The military commander and the prefect were displeased at his arrival. Officials were sent to escort him out of the city. The officials hesitated to remove Lucius from his house, fearing the angry multitude that had gathered outside. A report was made to the judges. It was necessary for the prefect and the military commander to remove Lucius themselves. Lucius obediently and cautiously followed after the judges, and all the people after them. Both Christians and pagans were in the crowd. They shouted, and hurled charges and accusations at Lucius. The people cried out, "Let him be taken out of the city." Nevertheless, the military commander took him to his own home, where he stayed for one day and night. Early in the morning he was sent as far as Nikopolis, where soldiers escorted him out of Egypt.

On the 22nd day of September, in the year 368, Saint Athanasios began to build a church in the quarter known as Mendidium. It was dedicated on the 7th day of August, in the year 370.

Information about the last years of his life is scanty. There was a case involving the young officer Siderios. He was appointed as a bishop by only one bishop, Philo, without the canonical number required for a consecration. This of course was also done without the knowledge of Athanasios. Evidently Philo felt pressed when two large villages of the diocese were clamoring for a bishop when their own Bishop Orion was becoming senile. In view of the utility of the appointment, Athanasios overlooked the irregularity. Later he even promoted Siderios as Metropolitan of Ptolemais, merging the two villages upon Orion's death once more into their proper diocese.

There was also the matter of Saint Basil corresponding with Saint Athanasios over the matter of the schism at Antioch. Saint Basil respectfully

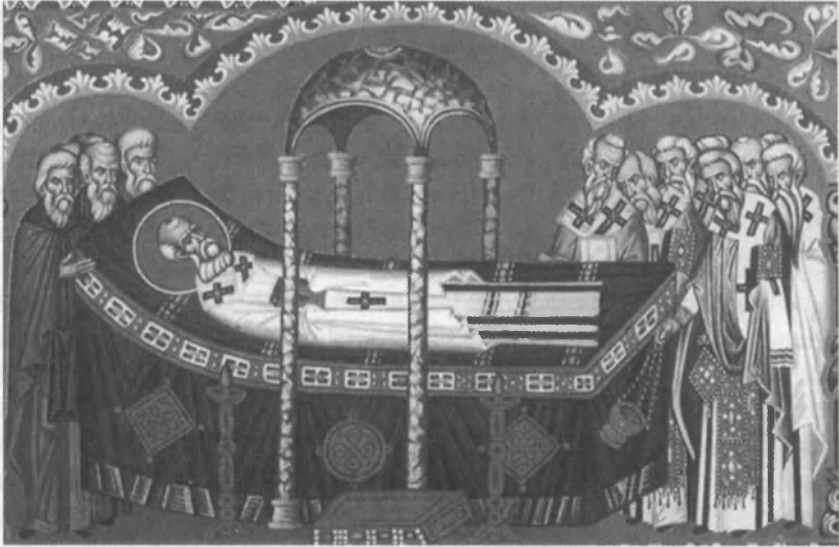
requested Saint Athanasios' mediation. He wished for Saint Athanasios to compose a letter addressed to the bishops in communion with Meletios, that he might use his influence with Paulinus and prevail upon him to withdraw. Nothing came of the application. However, Saint Basil obtained the good offices of Athanasios in his attempt to induce the bishops of Rome and the west to give him some support in his efforts against heresy in the east. The westerners, however, showed themselves arrogant and self-serving. Thus, they failed with Saint Basil.

Saint Basil was also put out by the continued refusal of Saint Athanasios and the western bishops to repudiate Markellos of Ankyra. Saint Athanasios wished to be indulgent toward Markellos after he and his followers submitted a statement of the Faith, emphatically adhering to the Nicene Creed and condemning Sabellios. Saint Athanasios accepted his confession. Saint Basil regretted Saint Athanasios' generosity. Nonetheless, both Athanasios and Basil, though they never personally met, held each other in veneration and high esteem.

Saint Athanasios had a commanding personality which rose to decisive, epoch-making influence. He was scarcely more than twenty-seven at the Synod of Nicaea. His election as bishop was accomplished when he was barely of canonical age. His rapid rise in Egypt and Libya, the enthusiastic loyalty of his clergy and monastics, and his great popularity among the lay people, even the pagans (except the more abandoned among them), were prodigious. He would not compromise with Arius or Arianism, and he wrote to the bishops of Egypt, "We are contending for our all"; while with wayward friends he restrained himself and was even lenient. The glory and welfare of the Church was his major concern. The emperors recognized him as a true political force of the first order. He was brave, self-sacrificing, humble, steady in his resolve, versatile, resourceful, and sympathetic. He often treated subordinates as equals, asking Serapion and the monks to correct or alter anything incorrect in his writings. He was not a systematic theologian, nor a speculative one. He did not play the schoolmaster or philosopher. His brilliance lay in his tight grip on soteriological principles. His solid character, strength of mind, and firmness of purpose rendered him fit for such holy service.

To the last, the man of God Athanasios was active. His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. When he perceived in the Spirit that the end of his earthly sojourn was drawing near, he followed his predecessor's example and named the devout and eloquent Peter as the most able to become his successor. He reposed in a wonderful manner on the 2nd day of May, in the year 373. His life and habits represented the idea of what ought to constitute a true bishop. As for his teaching the law of Orthodoxy, what

reward does he not win for his piety? At a good old age he closed his life and was gathered to his fathers, the patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, and martyrs who contended for the truth.



The Repose of Saint Athanasios

Saint Athanasios presided over the flock as a bishop for forty-six years. His fame extended through the east and west. Seventeen of those years he sojourned in exile. In summary, the first exile was from 335 to 337, a result of the Council of Tyre; the second exile was from 337 to 346; the third exile was from 356 to 361; and the fourth and fifth exiles were from 362 to 366, during the time of Julian and his successors. His sojourn in Rome and Treveri, and his knowledge of the Latin tongue, endeared him to the west. He was held in high esteem in the Western Church during the fourth century, and even helped transplant monasticism to the west. Embodying the dignity of patriarchs, and splendidly adorned with action and vision, he departed this life during the second consulate of Gratian and Probus after having piloted the Alexandrian Church through some of the roughest waters of its history.

Slowly the Nicene Faith gained ground on account of the interference of politics in theology. At length it prevailed first in the Latin Church, which held several Orthodox synods in Rome, Milan, and Gaul. Synods were then held in Egypt and the east, through the labors of Saint Athanasios, who was inflamed with love for the Trinity and emerged as victor. Later in the fourth century, Nicene Orthodoxy was supported by the three great Cappadocian Fathers: Saints Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and Gregory of Nyssa.