

## ARTICLE VI.

ATHANASIUS THE COPT, AND HIS TIMES.<sup>1</sup>

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## I.

THE Athanasian epoch occurred in the latter portion of the third century and the major portion of the fourth. The predominating world power was the Roman Empire, vast in extent, polyglot in its constituents, notably lacking in the virility and cohesive stability of the preceding centuries, — its art, its science, its literature, its politics, its philosophy, and its religion frankly manifesting the evidence of decadence that but foreshadowed its final doom. Speculative philosophy was the fashion of thought in extra-ecclesiastic circles; speculative religion the vogue practiced by the intra-ecclesiastic world. The sound and enduring things are seen to have been masked by casuistic embroideries; the Spirit of the Law has been smothered by the Letter: — while Reason of the Forum, Logic of the Schools, and simple Faith of the Sanctuary have been supplanted by Colliquative Verbiage, — clamorous progenitor of Confusion. With the exception of the far distant civilizations of China, Japan, and India, the Civilized World may be held, at this period, to be synonymous with the Roman Empire. A single instance will suffice as illustration: Britain was invaded by Julius Cæsar B.C. 55; Claudius attempted further conquest nearly a century later; under Julius Agricola A.D. 78-84

Rome attained her maximum of control. In the Athanasian epoch (297-373) the English segment of the Teutonic peoples yet resided on the Continent, crude in civilization, and worshipers of divers gods, of which Tiw, Woden, Thor, Frea, Saetere, and Eastre spring readily to mind. Not until 449 (a century posterior to Athanasius) did Hengist and his predatory followers land at Ebbsfleet.

Among the notable Christians that preceded Athanasius (sequent to 100) may be recalled John, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Origen, and Cyprian; he is followed by Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Chrysostom.

The mere recital of the Emperors that donned the purple during his life is highly suggestive of the turbulence of the time (Diocletian, Maximinianus, Galerius, Constantius I., Maxentius, Maximinus, Constantine I., Licinius, Constantine II., Constans, Constantius II., Julian, Jovianus, Valentinian I., Valens, Gratian, Valentinian II.).

The Decian persecutions had preceded Athanasius by nearly fifty years, the antichristian saturnalia of Diocletian was an early memory of his childhood. This last of the ferocious onslaughts upon Christianity was made by a man who merits praise for his high intelligence, astonishing activity, honesty of purpose, and general policy of benevolence. Severity seems to have been manifested only when he considered the Majesty of the Empire to be in peril. During his reign, it has been estimated that Christians had attained an average of approximately ten per cent of the total population. The Christian propaganda and the rapid increase of adherents, Diocletian held to be a menace to the State; hence virulent efforts at extirpation followed. Fortunately, they lasted barely three years. The Maximinian persecution was less vicious.

Among the long list of Emperors under whom Athanasius lived, search is vain for one that measured up to the stature of predecessors of the first rank. Beyond peradventure the most significant figure was Constantine I. — highly significant (in the present study) for the weighty influence he exerted upon Christianity. Shortly after the beginning of the fourth century there transpired that which — hitherto undreamed of, or at most the subject of a visionary hope — was of critical import to the Christian faith. This fact was no less than the conversion of a Roman Emperor to the tenets of Christianity. From this point on may be observed an abandonment of the official policy of Roman-Empire antagonism; in its stead will be noted a more or less well-defined Imperial patronage and protection. The Church, losing the enmity of the Empire, is now to be seen on friendly terms with earthly rulers and dynasties, the co-associate of civil governments. Constantine I. (born in 274) was a man of remarkable physical charm, of clear understanding (within definite limitations), and great executive ability. His early training in the severe service of Diocletian and Galerius developed a skill and valor that wrought valiant service in his contests with many aspirants to the purple, in numerous rebellions, and against innumerable schisms, through which he made his way, until his victory over Licinius in 323 gave him mastery of the Empire. Despite the adverse carping of various ecclesiastic historians, it may be held that his conversion was probably sincere, though doubtless tinged with his well-known political opportunism. Though he never fully abandoned the cult of Apollo, yet his vast personal influence was skillfully and persistently employed in furthering what he considered to be the welfare of Christianity. He did much to advance its material progress, but even this questionable aid was

largely offset by the increment of mongrel spiritual worldlings that hastened to follow his triumphal progress into the new state religion. He died in 337.

## II.

Athanasius, variously styled Saint, Bishop of Alexandria, Confessor and Doctor of the Church, Father of Orthodoxy, Pope of Alexandria, Head of the World, was born in Alexandria, Egypt, about 297. The limits of this study preclude developing traditions that bear upon his ancestry and his early childhood. It is quite possible that his parents were Christian, their social status seems to have been good, their worldly possessions decidedly limited. In spite of limited resources Athanasius gives evidence of having received substantial secular and religious training. Both from his writings and his widely diversified official relations are we led to the conclusion that he was familiar with both Greek and Latin, their literature and the current vernacular. His grasp of Hebrew is highly problematic; but few men of his day, save Jews or those intimately in touch with Jews, were versed. He was acquainted with later Greek philosophy and had studied jurisprudence. He may, therefore, be fairly classified as a man of liberal education. From his writings we are led to believe that he considered his most valuable knowledge to be his knowledge of the Word.

It may be fairly assumed that Alexandria furnished an environmental influence of great significance in developing his versatile, engaging, and powerful personality. For Alexandria was an epitome, intellectually, morally, and politically, of the ethnically vari-colored Græco-Roman world. Herself the most important trade center of the Empire, she offered hospitality to world citizens. The *fin-de-siècle* metropolis of

an ancient and autocratic civilization, she was a clearing house for the intellectualism, the philosophy, the politics, the arts, the sciences, and the religions of the day. Her widely known "catechetical schools" were but a single evidence of her preëminence as an intellectual center over such formidable rivals as Marseilles, Bordeaux, Antioch, Constantinople, Athens, and Rome. From the comparatively limited ecclesiastic viewpoint, it may be discovered that the prevailing atmosphere was a philosophizing Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

From widely separated countries students foregathered to the Alexandrian schools; pagans and heretics of diversified types rubbed shoulders with exponents of submerging Egyptian superstitions, while the followers of Judaism were confronted with the heterogeneous upholders of Christianity. Against the constantly renewed influx of protean paganism, Christianity failed to present an unbroken front and a compact and aggressive mass. For, in spite of persecutions and their intensive welding action, must be noted a more or less constant mass disintegration. This is seen in the innumerable schisms which in part were politico-ecclesiastic in type, but apparently in a very substantial majority were due to doctrinal differences, these in turn largely the result of frank casuistic hair-splitting. No schism ranked in baleful significance with that known as Arianism,—and no schismatic could compare with Arius, who wielded an influence so vast, and created a following so numerous and aggressive, that he appalled his contemporaries. cleft in twain the Church, and has furnished cause for astonishment to the critical student of history. Somewhat anterior to 311, from his distant Libyan home, arrived in Alexandria the "melancholy, moon-struck giant" by name Arius. His chance for engulfment in the cosmopolitan whirlpool was excellent, but this ascetic was not

of the clay from which are fashioned the common bricks of the high road; or, more accurately, common clay though he was, yet he was to manifest a widely-flung uncanny power of disintegration over the minds of men, chiefly those activated by "a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." Without the vantage of learning, his rude energy and earnestness commanded attention; without conventional grace or courtliness, his sad pale face, disordered hair, and squalid dress combined as a forceful appeal to the unlearned, and the vehemence of his words attracted attention.

With passage of time came widening circles of hearers. The contagion, having gained a foothold, spread like a plague of the Dark Ages; before the Arian chapter was finally closed, the Church had been rocked to its foundation and honeycombed with brawling factions. It is idle to assume that Arius was a monster of iniquity worthy of the damnation ecclesiastic historians have allotted him. The impartial student of history views with approval the dictum that had this ascetic not drifted into the waters of heresy he would, in all probability, have been reckoned as a saint, his individual eccentricities and crudities would have been catalogued, if not with praise, at least a benevolent acceptance, and his virtues accentuated with unctuous laudation. The psychologic appeal exerted by men of his type is familiar to students of psycho-pathology; it finds its richest fruitage among minds that are not rigorously trained, and that are more actively responsive to emotion than to reason.

At about this time in Athanasius' career we find mention of his early friendship with Anthony, the hermit. Divergent as were the two men, yet a common base of cordial appreciation was established that withstood the stress of time. It was the fortunate lot of Athanasius to have attracted the favora-

ble attention of Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria. This metropolitan seems fairly to have won the esteem and reverence of Egypt, Libya, and the Pentapolis. Within his own household he received the lad, and with fatherly care directed the progress of him who was to become a mighty churchman and a valiant defender of the faith. At the time of his majority Athanasius had written "Oratio contra Gentes" and "De Incarnatione Verbi Dei." These developed a remarkable refutation of heathenism and a sturdy defense of monotheism. Emphasis is laid that Christianity centers in One Divine Person. Mental originality and alertness were employed in these fascicles, which constitute one of the earliest efforts to present Christian truth in a philosophico-religious form. The latter may be fairly classified as brilliant.

In the meantime the leaven of Arianism was spreading apace; but apparently not until 319 was Alexander informed of the heresies of his presbyter. Before three years had elapsed the whole Christian world was seething with the new ferment. The so-called "Songs of Arius" were chanted by peddlers, fishermen, and housewives; his doctrines were heatedly discussed by bishops and rulers, street corners and market places were favorite fields for wrangling, the theaters echoed jokes about Christian schisms; diocese was arrayed against diocese, and bishop grappled with bishop, in the universal controversy. Though but a deacon, young in years, and of no extended reputation, Athanasius was the man who compelled the problem to assume a vital significance. His engaging personality and iron will admirably equipped the champion as he entered the lists. By this time Constantine, now Emperor, interested himself in the conflicting clamors that had penetrated the Imperial Palace. That his interest, whether as catechumen, politician, or Emperor, was of the

fimsiest substantiality is evidenced by his letter (circ. 323) following the defeat of Licinius at Chrysopolis, addressed to Alexander and Arius. Its obvious inadequacy is sufficient to stimulate Homeric laughter. This was followed by a yet more extraordinary manifesto to the Prefect of Egypt, addressed to, and concerning, Arius and his adherents. These follies of Constantine I., wholly inexcusable in themselves, should in fairness be held to be somewhat minimized by his significant service in assembling the bishops throughout the Empire in the First Œcumenical Council at Nicæa in 325. This Council is justly classified as a pivotal point in ecclesiastic history. For the silence of three centuries of absolutism is now to be broken, a silence hitherto so pervasive that the raucous cries of the rhetoricians or the groans of victims served merely to ruffle its lethal oppression. It was planned to gather in common council men of personal dignity and ecclesiastic standing, there to discuss in sincerity and liberty, without coercion or subornation, matters whose vital significance was limited only by the periphery of Christendom. So fair was the outlook, so limitless the possibilities of this revolutionary convocation, that the spectator might well be pardoned if he anticipated most sanguinely the most felicitous outcome. And yet one must needs scratch but lightly a civilized skin to find the under stratum of barbarism, and alas, " 't is true, 't is pity, and pity 't is 't is true " that the vestments of the sanctuary may but scantily veil a human will, and but inadequately clothe a human heart that, unrestrained by the gentle compulsion of the ascended Lord, " is desperately wicked, — who can know it? "

Amid scenes of splendor, enhanced by military and imperial coöperation, some three hundred bishops and attendants were gathered. Among others we observe Paphnutius, Bishop of

the Thebaid, whose dragging leg, made impotent by cutting of muscles and tendons, and a vacant orbit spake eloquently of the rigors of the Diocletian persecution. Paul, Bishop of Mesopotamia Neocæsarea, did not deign to conceal a hand flame-scorched in his day of testing. From the distant deserts of the Nile have come Potomon, Bishop of Heraclea, and Hypatius, Bishop of Gangra, later to be stoned to death by the Novatians. Arius, Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, and Athanasius, are also seen. The presiding officer of this (and many another) gathering was Hosius, Bishop of Cordova, the most loved and trusted Bishop of the West.<sup>3</sup>

After prolonged and intensive debate, in which the anti-Arian forces were led by Alexander and Athanasius, the Council finally agreed that there is "one essence" in the Trinity ("homousios," "consubstantialis," "unius consubstantiæ," "eiusdem substantiæ," are the words commonly employed). The closing sessions were less characterized by fruitless quibbling over words and phrases. Avoiding arbitrary differentiation of terms and meanings, the Council left their creed in general, and their homousios in particular, to be, — as later noted by Luther, — a *propugnaculum fidei*.<sup>4</sup> Constantine I. and the Convocation as a whole, accepted the Creed. Arius (with two others) was banished, his books were to be burnt, death being the penalty of those who should read them. The Nicene Creed was declared in 325 at Nicæa, established at Constantinople in 381, strengthened at Ephesus in 431, sealed at Chalcedon in 451, and finally altered by adding the unauthorized word "Filioque" at the Provincial Council of Toledo in 589. Mention should be made of the effort to force the clergy to separate themselves from their wives. This was frustrated only when the hermit-bishop Paphnutius, one-eyed and crippled, passionately opposed the plan, supporting his antagonism by quota-

tions from the Epistle to the Hebrews. (This memorable incident was revived by an aged Cardinal at the Council of Basle, and yet later by Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester, at his trial preceding his martyrdom, — both occasions without success.) Without question the sturdy stand of Paphnutius produced an impelling influence, notably in evidence among subsequent Protestant ecclesiastics.

It is with regret that indorsement must be accorded the summary, — “The history of the Ante-Nicene Age is the history of the World against the Church; the history of the Post-Nicene Age is the history of the World in the Church.”

If the net result of the Nicene Convocation is essentially as above, the man Athanasius furnishes a stimulating and vivifying contrast. The stripling who had entered the Council, yet in his diaconate, a mere attendant upon Alexander, with a reputation strictly local, left it the recognized champion of Antiarrianism, whose forensic efficiency was made possible by, and based upon his knowledge of, and faith in, the Scriptures. A digest of the propaganda of Arius, that served so destructively within, and caused limitless criticism from without, the Church is necessary. Arius taught that the Son is inferior to the Father (the very name Father presupposes priority; hence the Son must at one time have been non-existent); that “there was [a time] when He was not” (hence He was “a creature or created Being”); that as creature He could not fathom even His Own Being; that in essence Father and Son are “utterly unlike to all infinity”; that there could be no identity, but only a resemblance of nature, between Father and Son. Furthermore, the Son did not perfectly know the Father, and that (like the Archangel!) He was created liable to fall. Thus, though not frankly denying the divinity of the Son, this teaching is seen

to be allied to paganism, partaking of the nature both of polytheism and atheism. It seems to be recognized that Arius descended to unpardonable means for extending his tenets, such as satirically questioning the gossipy women of Alexandria, "Pray, had you a son before you were a mother?"; while the indignant challenge of Athanasius has come down to us, "They call themselves Christians, yet they change the glory of God into the likeness of the image of corruptible man." It but remains to furnish a few texts which Arius and the Arians employed to substantiate their claims. It is obvious that non-discerning Christians would find the path of divergence from Scriptural soundness easily trodden. He appealed to the Old Testament and its monotheism to indorse the posteriority, inferiority, and physical generation of the Son thus, "The Lord our God is one God." From the New Testament he selected "My Father is greater than I," "Who is first born of every creature," "Being made so much better than the angels," "God hath made Jesus both Lord and Christ," etc.

In about five months after the Council of Niceæ, Alexander died, and Athanasius was promptly elected his successor. In spite of tempestuous fortunes and innumerable hardships Athanasius remained to the end of his life "Pope of Alexandria," the occupant of the "Chair of St. Mark," the head of the Alexandrian church, and hence (according to Gregory of Nazianzus) "the Head of the World." Copt though he was, his mastery of Greek and Latin gave him great power in all ecclesiastic matters encountered by him in his later cosmopolitan activities. To a wholesome physical personality he united a mental equipment noteworthy even among the learned of his day; <sup>5</sup> and a spirituality that caused him to measure up with surprising fidelity to the postulates

as laid down by Paul when discussing Episcopal qualifications. So largely does the further record of Athanasius consist of a recital of hardships that it would seem suitable to record an event or two that brought joy and satisfaction. In 327 he visited the Thebaid. This visit was made significant by the reception given him by the monks of the desert. This community was founded by Pachomius, and was composed of converted pagan soldiery; their lives were devoted to silence, labor, and worship. With whole-hearted fervor the vast multitude greeted their Bishop with a burst of psalmody that made of the desert wastes an extra-mural sanctuary. This visit, taken in conjunction with later European journeys and his well-known approval of the ascetic life, may be fairly assumed to be the progenitor of the widely scattered stately monasteries that doubtless held but scanty knowledge of their beginning in the lowly Thebaid cells. Again, in about 330 Athanasius received a visit from Frumentius, who in early childhood was captured, together with his brother *Ædisius*, by Abyssinian savages. By a series of remarkable occurrences, they rose to positions of commanding power and influence, founded a Christian church of Abyssinia, of which Frumentius was appointed the first bishop shortly after, if not actually at, the time of the present visit.

Ecclesiastic schisms are notorious breeders of scandal-mongery, unbridled vituperation, and personal antagonisms. In the vast web into which Athanasius was drawn he failed to escape the flood of calumnies and scandalous plottings that characterized this period of church history. Constantine I. thrust himself into the Arianistic brawl which again had come to the fore; Athanasius was assailed by false charges, but was exonerated; later, and yet later, he was accused of murder and employing black art. of this too was he repeat-

edly cleared. Again, in 333 at the Council of Cæsarea was he assailed, which was ignored; in 335 before the Council of Tyre he was condemned on a series of silly ecclesiastic charges. On appeal to the Emperor he was confronted with the additional charge that he had restrained the Alexandrian corn ships from entering Constantinople, and was banished by the Emperor to Trèves. Welcomed heartily at Trèves in 336 by the younger Constantine and Bishop Maximin, he spent a pleasant exile of some two and a half years. In the same year the Emperor ordered Arius to be received into churchly communion, and designated the See of Constantinople. It is recorded that Alexander, Primate of Constantinople, prayed earnestly that if Arius must needs be received that he might die; but that, if possible, Arius himself might be removed, lest heresy should find entrance with him. By a strange coincidence, on the morrow when on his way to the church, Arius was seized with a severe abdominal pain, retired to a latrine behind the Forum, and when sought after a decent interval, by his adherents, was found dead. Contemporaneous records state that he had burst asunder, and was seen flooded in his own blood. In regard to this tragic event, it may be stated that at the time it was widely compared to the end of Judas; nor may the majority of subsequent ecclesiastic historians be held guiltless of an unmanly, indeed shameful, gloating over Arius' end. Time and space are lacking for more than a suggestion that we are confronted with the following dilemma: (1) death induced by poison planned "ad majorem Dei gloriam"; (2) an instance in that ill-defined field commonly spoken of as "a visitation of God"; or (3) some pathologic condition, unrecognized by current medical knowledge, and concerning which the transmitted data are so meager that even modern science must refuse an opinion.

Following shortly after his baptism occurred the death of Constantine I. in 337. He was succeeded by his three sons, to whom he had assigned definite sections of the Empire. A wholesale massacre of imperial relatives followed. At an early council of the three emperors they decided to recall Athanasius. He reached Alexandria in November, 337, where a hearty welcome awaited him. Again charges were preferred before his Emperor, who appointed an Arian bishop to succeed him. Athanasius then called a synod at Alexandria and in 340 sent an encyclical letter to the churches. But the Emperor's hostility continuing unabated, he journeyed to Rome. During this exile it is highly probable that he substantially forwarded monasticism in Italy. Likewise at this time he produced his "Exposition of the Truth." Coincidentally had been manifested, by his Episcopal successor, a misrule of shocking brutality. The year 343 saw the ludicrous and disgusting councils of Sardica and Philippopolis. In spite of ever-recurring assaults and persecutions, he was allowed by Constantius II. to return to his see. He arrived in October, 346. A remarkable welcome awaited, the populace vying in showering attentions upon their beloved bishop. During the succeeding five years he enjoyed a season of comparative freedom, during which he wrote "On the Nicene Definition," "On the Opinion of Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria," and "Apology against the Arians." It is to be noted that the writings of Athanasius deal almost exclusively with problems of Christianity and Ecclesiasticism. At this period the Hellenistic and Neo-Platonic cults were the most active opponents of Christianity, yet he refused to be diverted from his well-defined controversial field.

He lost his best civil friend in 350, when Emperor Constans was murdered. He was again condemned in 355 by the

Council of Milan. Emperor Constantius II. — whose confidential advisers and rulers were eunuchs, barbers, ecclesiastics, and women, — now engaged in plots to overthrow Athanasius, which culminated in an assault by soldiers while he was engaged at service in church, February, 356; fortunately he escaped, finally retiring to the Thebaid désert.<sup>6</sup> During the subsequent six years the resources of the Empire were taxed to acquire his person, living or dead, substantial rewards awaiting the captor. Notwithstanding the urgency of the search, his remarkable authority continued to be exerted throughout the Christian world. Nor did the powerful members of the hierarchy hesitate to be influenced by his admonitions, though they issued forth from isolated monastic cells, the darkness of tombs, and the cloud-sheathed caves of far distant mountain sides. His active mind and unflagging courage were not dimmed by advancing age nor years of persecution. Fialon and Gwatkin state that words of Athanasius may yet be discovered in the Abd-el-Kurna tombs of the Pharaohs. Valuable contributions of this period include "Apologia ad Constantinen," "Apologia de Fuga," "Historia Arianorum ad Monachos." (In the last one, unfortunately, he indulges in the too common ecclesiastic policy of wholesale personal abuse, directed, in this instance, against the Emperor.) Certain other encyclical and formal contributions, but of somewhat less significance, may probably be assigned to this period.

In 359 occurred the dual councils of Rimini and Seleucia. There was manifested a continuance of follies, policies of deception, cajolery, and intrigue, — with the not wholly unexpected conclusion of a practically universal acceptance (including the orthodox wing) of the tenets of Arianism, i.e., the heresy of essential denial, in its full significance, of the

Doctrine of the Incarnation. It should be recognized that Athanasius was an outstanding man of his day, a conspicuous exception among his fellow ecclesiastics. The versatile genius of the man was inflexibly and constantly addressed to the task of lucidly explaining and driving home fundamental Scriptural truths; nor should a lesser meed of praise be accorded the directness, the simplicity, the pertinacity, of his aggressively defensive measures. The situation was not altogether hopeless, in spite of the apparently universal Arianistic putrescence, for, fortunately, the bulk of the laity remained sound;—and though the clerics wrangled and cajoled, indulged in chicanery and intrigue, their infamous leadership failed notably to influence those over whom they were, at least nominally and presumably, set as “overseers.”

Constantius II. died in 361. Julian was saluted as Emperor by the Gallic troops. He speedily ordered all exiled bishops back to their sees; thus Athanasius returned in February, 362. Shortly after, he called a council at Alexandria which took official action, but in most gracious fashion, with the erring ones of little faith.

The crass stupidity of the policy of Julian proved a source of irritation alike to pagans and Christians. Having become the frank enemy of Athanasius, he ordered his apprehension; but, escaping the soldiery, refuge was secured in the Thebaid. This, his fourth, exile was rendered brief by the death of Julian in 363, during his Persian conflict. He was succeeded by Jovianus, whose friendly attitude toward Athanasius warranted a synodical letter which was forwarded by a Council that had been summoned by the Bishop. Athanasius himself sailed to Antioch to meet Jovianus in person. There now appears hopeful evidence of a widespread reflux to the postulates of the Nicene Creed. He returned home in 364,

— by chance but a few days before the death of Jovianus, induced by charcoal fumes from the brazier of his bedroom. He was succeeded by Valentinian I., whose reign permitted some measure of relief to the veteran defender of orthodoxy. The "Life of Anthony" commonly attributed to the pen of Athanasius at this period, though of no small interest and value, seems to be not above suspicion of extensive interpolations, with the fair probability that the whole is spurious.

The Imperial order of Valens banishing all bishops formerly exiled by Constantius II.; but later pardoned by Julian, was obeyed by Athanasius, but this edict when revoked four months later permitted his home-coming.

The remaining six years of his life were peaceful, in grateful contrast to the stress and tumult that had hitherto constantly enveloped him. His Festal Letter of 367 is significant, in that he notes a list of New Testament Scriptures which is in accord with those accepted to-day. A monograph "De Incarnatione" is probably an output of these latter years. In 369 he rebuilt the church at Cæsarea, and laid the foundation of another, which later bore his name. Fast-coming old age found him, as ever, actively engaged in profitable work. In 373, lacking but a few months of rounding out the forty-seventh year of his episcopate, his head, once sunnily auburn but now silver-crowned, was bowed in death. A few days before, he had consecrated his friend and Presbyter Peter as his successor.

In full possession of his Episcopal dignity, with an active mind and unflagging zeal, widely beloved in spite of the vast flood of calumnies that had been poured over him, the quinqui-exiled veteran of faith's wars reached his peaceful end beneath his own hearth tree.

## III.

In summary it should be noted that the intensive energy of Athanasius was not permitted to lie fallow in his numerous periods of exile; for from the Thebaid desert and southern and western Europe was spread a propaganda that was limited only by the periphery of the then known Christian world. Nor was his courage of that variety that tracks but insignificant game, for the greatest of the hierarchs felt the lash of his condemnation; nor did the Imperial Throne escape his righteously stern censure, and the haughty spirit of the great Constantine "was awed by the courage and eloquence of a bishop who implored his justice and awakened his conscience."

This man of action, of imperious temper, inflexible purpose, and unflagging endurance, was in no sense a student of the cloister, an esoteric dweller in ivory towers, nor a systematic theologian. His works are largely controversial in character, — admirably adapted to the demands of his stressful day.<sup>7</sup>

The illuminating critique of Gregory Nazianzen (*Orat.* xxi. 7) states that "he showed himself the reconciler and mediator of the age, imitating Him who by His own blood set at peace those who had parted asunder; showing (with the hermits) that religion was able to become philosophical, and (with the monks) that philosophy stood in need of the guidance of religion . . . whilst he was a fire which burns away, as a forest, the noxious vegetation, and a sword which cuts up evil by the roots, — so he was a husbandman's winnowing fan to separate the light chaff from the solid grain of the wheat. Whilst he went along with the sword of the conqueror, he was also the breath of the quickening spirit."

Well has Cardinal Newman characterized him as "a prin-

cipal instrument after the Apostles, by which the sacred truths of Christianity have been conveyed and secured to the world."

Versatile in intellect, versed in the Word far beyond his contemporaries, a motive power that aroused the sluggish, a conservative force that restrained the exuberance of the ecstatic, the mystic, and the extravagant.

We marvel at his patience and his grace, the quietude of his inner poise beneath the ever-recurring storms of calumny. Passing strange that he lost not his abiding faith in his fellow man; glorious fact that he lost not his abiding faith in his adored Lord.

At many points a Paulo-Athanasian likeness is frankly in evidence, of which not the least is the saddened record of Second Timothy, — "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, . . . Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. . . . Alexander . . . did me much evil . . . no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. . . . Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear."

To our limited vision it would seem — and to our childish crepusculous groping amidst the shades of this world's dark night it would appear — an inexplicable pity that this valiant soldier of the Great Captain of our Salvation had not been granted a brief extension of his honorable career; — for we can well imagine how he would have thrilled to the substantial orthodoxy of the Emperor Theodosius, and how wholeheartedly he would have received the decrees of the Second Œcumenical Council of Constantinople, which in 381 pronounced its emphatic indorsement of his watchword and the Creed which he had so nobly defended.<sup>8</sup>

We hail thee, royal-hearted Athanasius!

Through long centuries has thy body crumbled and mingled with the shifting Afric sands thou didst love full well.<sup>9</sup>

But dear to us are thy name and thy fame, thou valiant warrior, loyal defender of the Faith.

We rejoice in thy notable achievements, thou Coptic Paul. In grateful remembrance, thine hours of distress, thy years of loneliness, are held.

Sleep, mighty warrior, sleep!—well-earned repose is thine. These centuries of silence do serve but as the threshold of thy day, thy day of open acknowledgment before the Throne, and the accolade of approval from the Great Captain of thy Salvation.

We hold it to be true that rich reward is reserved for thee, — for didst thou not fight a good fight, finish thy course, keep the faith? Then surely there awaits thee a crown, aye, a crown of righteousness, — which the Lord the Righteous Judge shall give thee at that day; and not to thee only, but to all them also that love his appearing.

#### NOTES.

<sup>1</sup> An address before the Men's Missionary Society of the Washington and Compton Avenues Presbyterian Church, June 10, 1915.

<sup>2</sup> The widespread religious unrest characteristic of this period was doubtless accentuated by the Edict of Milan in 313, which guaranteed unlimited religious freedom. And though by this Edict Christians were particularly favored; yet, as they were in the significant minority, they were increasingly assailed from all quarters by a subtle and diversified paganism.

<sup>3</sup> It seems to be conceded that the Bishops of Nicæa were not generally men of distinguished learning; but Hosius of Cordova, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Athanasius of Alexandria were men of substantial and statesmanlike ability.

<sup>4</sup> The Creed of the Nicene Council (noted by Gwatkin, *Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. I.) differs from the conventional Nicene Creed, more or less in vogue to-day, — which is a revision of the Catechet-

ical Creed of Jerusalem, drafted circ. 362. The following translation is of the original Creed of the Nicene Council:—

“ We believe in one God, the Father all-Sovereign,  
 maker of all things, both visible and invisible;  
 And in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
 the Son of God,  
 begotten of the Father, an only-begotten—  
 that is, from the essence (*οὐσία*) of the Father—  
 God from God,  
 Light from light,  
 true God from true God,  
 begotten, not made,  
 being of one essence (*ἁποθῆτος*) with the Father;  
 by whom all things were made,  
 both things in heaven and things on earth; [made flesh,  
 who for us men and for our salvation came down and was  
 was made man, suffered, and rose again the third day,  
 ascended into heaven,  
 cometh to judge quick and dead:

And in the Holy Spirit.

But those who say

that ‘there was once when he was not,’

and ‘before he was begotten he was not,’

and ‘he was made of things that were not,’

Or maintain that the Son of God

is of a different essence

or created or subject to moral change or alteration—

These doth the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematize.”

<sup>5</sup> Among them may be mentioned the Egyptian Plotinus; the Syrians Iamblichus, Porphyry, Libanius; and the Asiatic Galen.

<sup>6</sup> George of Cappadoeia, an ex-pork contractor, was appointed to the Alexandrian See.

<sup>7</sup> Probably the best edition of his works is the Maurine edition of Bernard de Montfaucon (3 vols., Paris, 1698). This was enlarged in the 3d edition of Glustiniani (4 vols., Padua, 1777), and is so printed in Migne's Patrologia, vols. xxv.—xxviii.

<sup>8</sup> I have been unable in this study to convince myself that Athanasius was the author of the “Athanasian Creed,” nor do I find adequate evidence that he was intimately associated with it in any vital capacity.

<sup>9</sup> I am unable either to affirm or disprove the tradition that his body was removed from Egypt, transported from place to place, and found final lodgment in western Europe.

AN INCOMPLETE, BUT OTHERWISE APPROXIMATELY ACCURATE,  
ATHANASIAN CHRONOLOGY.

250. Decian persecution.  
 274. Birth of Constantine I.  
 284. Diocletian Emperor.  
 297. Birth of Athanasius.  
 303. Diocletian persecution.  
     Maximian persecution.  
 305. Diocletian abdication.  
 311. Edict of Toleration (Nicomedia).  
     Death of Galerius.  
 312. Edict of Milan.  
 318-319. Arian Controversy begins at Alexandria.  
     "Oratio Contra Gentes";—"De Incarnatione Verbi Dei."  
 321. Arian controversy divides Eastern Church.  
     Arius excommunicated.  
 325. Council of Nicæa.  
 328. Athanasius Bishop of Alexandria.  
 328-330. Corner stone of Constantinople laid by Constantine I.  
 333. Council of Cæsarea.  
 335. August. Council of Tyre—Athanasius confuted—ordered  
     to Trèves.  
     September. Council of Jerusalem.  
     October. Athanasius at Constantinople.  
 336. Exile at Trèves (1st).  
     Death of Arius.  
 337. May. Death of Constantine I.  
     November. 1st return.  
 339. Expelled by Philagrius (2d). Supplanted by Gregory of  
     Cappadocia.  
 340. Council of Rome.  
     Letter of Julius.  
 341. Council of Dedication (Golden Basilica of Constantine) at  
     Antioch. Exile at Rome.  
     "Encyclica ad Episcopos Epistola."  
 342. Death of Eusebius of Nicomedia.  
 343. Council of Sardica.  
     Council of Philppopolis.  
 344. "Makrostich Creed" issued at Antioch:  
 345. Death of Gregory of Alexandria.  
 346. 2d return.  
 350. Death of Constans. "Apologia contra Arianos."  
 351-352. Eusebian Council of Sirmium (pro Arian).  
 353. Council of Arles.

355. Council of Milan. Exile of Hosius and Liberius.  
 356. Expelled by Syriannus. Desert (3d). Supplanted by George of Cappadocia.  
 "Apologia ad Constantinen";— "Apologia de Fuga."  
 358. "Historia Arianorum ad Monachos."  
 359. Council of Rimini (Ariminum).  
 Council of Seleucia.  
 Council of Nike.  
 The "Dated Creed" of Sirmium.  
 "Athanasius De Synodis."  
 360. Council of Constantinople.  
 362. Murder of George. 3d return.  
 363. Flight from Julian (4th).  
 Death of Julian.  
 364. 4th return.  
 367. Flight (5th).  
 Return (5th).  
 373. Death of Athanasius.

FROM THE VOLUMINOUS LITERATURE BEARING UPON THE  
 ATHANASIAN EPOCH THE FOLLOWING ARE  
 SUGGESTED AS HELPFUL.

Böhringer:—*Die Alte Kirche (Kirchengeschichte in Biograph-  
 leen)*.

Gibbon:—*Decline and Fall of Roman Empire.*

Bingham:—*Antiquities.*

Dorner:—*On the Person of Christ.*

Ueberweg:—*History of Philosophy.*

Villemani:—*Tableau de l'éloquence chrétienne.*

Keim:—*Rome und das Christenthum.*

Lightfoot:—*St. Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp.*

Bright:—*Athanasius.*

Flalon:—*St. Athanase.*

Gwatkin:—*The Arians.*

Farrar:—*Early Days of Christianity; Lives of the Fathers.*

De Montalembert:—*Monks of the West.*

Fisher:—*History of the Christian Church.*

Stanley:—*History of the Eastern Church.*

Hertzberg:—*Imperial Rome.*

Mommsen:—*History of Rome.*

The Standard Encyclopedias, Biographical Dictionaries and *Gazetteers*; in particular the Catholic Encyclopedia and *Encyclopedia Britannica*.