

MAY II.

ST. ATHANASIUS,

PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA, DOCTOR OF THE
CHURCH.

From his works, and the fathers and historians of that age. See his life by Hermant, who first cleared up the intricate history of Arianism. See also Tillemont, Ceillier, Orsi, the Benedictin editors of this father, and Combefis, *Bibl. Concionat.* p. 500 ad 530.

A. D. 373.

ST. GREGORY Nazianzen begins with these words his panegyric of this glorious saint, and champion of the faith.¹ "When I praise Athanasius, virtue itself is my theme: for I name every virtue as often as I mention him who was possessed of all virtues. He was the true pillar of the church. His life and conduct were the rule of bishops, and his doctrine the rule of the orthodox faith." St. Athanasius was a native of Alexandria, and seems to have been born about the year 296. His parents, who were Christians, and remarkable for their virtue, were solicitous to procure him the best education. After he had learned grammar and the first elements of the sciences, St. Alexander, before he was raised to the episcopal chair of that city, was much delighted with the virtuous deportment of the youth, and with the pregnancy of his wit: and took upon himself the direction of his studies, brought him up under his own eye, always made him eat with him, and employed him as his secretary. Athanasius copied diligently the virtues of his master, imbibed his maxims of piety and holy zeal, was directed by him in the plan and method of his studies, and received from him the greatest assistance in the pursuit of them. By writing under so great a master, he acquired the most

elegant, easy, and methodical manner of composition. Profane sciences he only learned as far as they were necessary, or might be rendered subservient to those that are more sublime and important: but from their aid he contracted an elegant, clear, methodical, and masterly style; and was qualified to enter the lists in defence of our holy faith with the greatest advantage. However, the sacred studies of religion and virtue he made the serious employment of his whole life: and how much he excelled in them, the sequel of his history and perusal of his works show. From his easy and ready manner of quoting the holy scriptures, one would imagine he knew them by heart; at least by the assiduous meditation and study of those divine oracles he had filled his heart with the spirit of the most perfect piety, and his mind with the true science of the profound mysteries which our divine religion contains. But in his study of the sacred writings, the tradition of the church was his guide, which he diligently sought in the comments of the ancient doctors, as he testifies.¹ In another place, he declares that he had learned it from holy inspired masters, and martyrs for the divinity of Christ.² That he might neglect no branch of ecclesiastical learning, he applied himself diligently to the study of the canons of the Church, in which no one was more perfectly versed: nor was he a stranger to the civil law, as appears from his works; on which account Sulpicius Severus styles him a lawyer.

Achillas who had succeeded St. Peter in the patriarchal see of Alexandria, dying in 313, St. Alexander was promoted to that dignity.³ The

1 Orat. contra gentes, p. 1.

2 L. de incarn. p. 66.

3 The hearsay story of St. Athanasius baptising certain children at play, is inconsistent with the evident chronology of his history; as is shown by Hermant, Tillemont, &c. It is only grounded on the authority of Rufinus, who, on other accounts, is acknowledged to be a careless writer.

desire of grounding himself in the most perfect practice of virtue drew St. Athanasius into the deserts to the great St. Anthony, about the year 315; with whom he made a considerable stay, serving him in quality of a disciple, and regarding it as an honour to pour water on his hands when he washed them.¹ When he had by his retreat prepared himself for the ministry of the altar, he returned to the city, and having passed through the inferior degrees of ecclesiastical orders, was ordained deacon about the year 319. St. Alexander was so much taken with his prudence, virtue, and learning, that he desired to have him always with him, and governed his flock by his advice. He stood much in need of such a second, in defending his church against the calumnies and intrigues of the schismatics and heretics. The holy patriarch St. Peter had, at the intercession of the martyrs and confessors, dispensed with the rigour of the canons in behalf of certain persons, who through frailty had fallen into idolatry during the persecution, and upon their repentance had received them again to communion. Meletius, bishop of Lycos in Thebais, unjustly took offence at this lenity, and on that pretence formed a schism over all Egypt against St. Peter and his successors. Arius, a Lybian by birth, and a deacon, who for seditious practices was expelled the church by his bishop St. Peter, fell in with Meletius. St. Peter was so well acquainted with his turbulent spirit, that no entreaties could move him, even when he was going to martyrdom, to receive him into the communion of the Church. However, his successor, Achillas, upon his submission and repentance, not only admitted him into his communion, but also ordained him priest, and intrusted him with the church of Baucalis, one of the parishes of the city. Achillas was succeeded by St. Alexander, whose promotion Arius

¹ Athan. Vit. Anton. p. 794.

resented as an injury done to himself, being in his own opinion the more worthy: and some time after impudently and blasphemously asserted that Christ was not God, but a mere creature, though formed before all other created beings, (but not from eternity,) and of a nature superior in perfection to all other creatures. St. Alexander long endeavoured by mildness to reclaim the heresiarch, but was compelled by his obstinacy to cut him off from the communion of the Church, in a synod of all the bishops under his jurisdiction, held at Alexandria. Arius fled first into Palestine, and thence to Nicomedia, where he had already gained by letters the confidence of Eusebius, the crafty bishop of that city. In 319, St. Alexander sent an account of his proceedings against Arius in a circular letter directed to all the bishops of the Church, signed by St. Athanasius and many others. In 325, he took the holy deacon with him to the council of Nice, who there distinguished himself by the extraordinary zeal and learning with which he encountered not only Arius, but also Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theognis, and Maris, the principal protectors of that heresiarch; and he had a great share in the disputations and decisions of that venerable assembly, as Theodoret, Sozomen, and St. Gregory Nazianzen testify.

Five months after this great council, St. Alexander, lying on his death-bed, by a heavenly inspiration recommended to his clergy and people the choice of Athanasius for his successor, thrice repeating his name; and when he was found to be absent, he cried out, "Athanasius, you think to escape, but you are mistaken."¹ Sozomen says he had absconded for fear of being chosen. In consequence of this recommendation, the bishops of all Egypt assembled at Alexandria, and finding the people and clergy unanimous in their

¹ Sozomen, b. 2. c. 17. Theodoret, b. 2. c. 26.

choice of Athanasius for patriarch, they confirmed the election about the middle of the year 326; for St. Cyril testifies,¹ that he held that chair forty-six years. He seems then to have been about thirty years of age. He ordained Frumentius bishop of the Æthiopians, and made the visitation of the churches under his jurisdiction throughout all Egypt. The Meletians continued, after the death of their author, to hold private assemblies, ordain new bishops by their own authority, everywhere to divide the people, and to fill Egypt with factions and schisms. In vain did St. Athanasius employ all the power which his authority put into his hands, to bring them back to the unity of the Church. The severity of their morals gained them a reputation among the people, and their opposition to the Catholics moved the Arians to court their friendship. Though these schismatics were in the beginning orthodox in faith, and the first and most violent opposers of Arius, yet they soon after joined his partisans in calumniating and impugning St. Athanasius; for which purpose they entered into a solemn league of iniquity together. For St. Athanasius observes,² that as Herod and Pontius Pilate forgot their enmity to agree in persecuting Christ, so the Meletians and Arians dissembled their private animosities, to enter into a mutual confederacy and cabal against the truth: which is the spirit of all sectaries, who, though divided in every other thing, unite in persecuting the truth and opposing the Church.

Arius being recalled from banishment, into which he had been sent by the emperor, St. Athanasius refused him entrance into the Church; whereupon he retired to his friends in Palestine and the neighbouring eastern provinces, at whose entreaty Constantine urged St. Athanasius to admit him to his communion. The intrepid patriarch

1 Ep. 1.

2 Or. 1. contr. Arian.

answered the emperor, that the Catholic Church could hold no communion with heresy that so impudently attacked the divinity of Jesus Christ.¹ Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis, after three years' banishment, seeing Arius already released from his exile, wrote a letter to the emperor, which is extant in Socrates and Sozomen, artfully declaring that they all agreed in faith, that they received the word consubstantial, having now fully examined its meaning, and that they entirely gave themselves up to peace; but could not anathematize Arius, whom, by a long converse with him, and both by word and writing, they had found not to be guilty of what had been laid to his charge, and who had already met with a favourable reception from his imperial majesty. Hereupon the sentence of their banishment was reversed, and they were both permitted to return to their respective sees. This Eusebius had before ambitiously procured his translation from the see of Berytus to that of Nicomedia, which being at that time the residence of the eastern emperors, gave him a fair opportunity of ingratiating himself with the great ministers of state, and thereby of rendering himself considerable for power and interest at court. He neither wanted parts nor learning, was of a subtle and daring temper, a deep dissembler, and the most artful of men; and on these accounts a proper instrument of the devil to be the contriver of the calumnies and persecutions against our saint and the Catholic Church. He was no sooner come back to Nicomedia, than he began to set his engines at work. He first wrote a civil letter to St. Athanasius, wherein he endeavoured to justify Arius. But neither his own flattering words, nor the emperor's threats, which he procured, prevailing, he wrote to the Meletians, that the time was now come to put their designs in execution, and im-

1 Apol. contra Arian, p. 178. and Socr. 1. 2. c. 22.

peach Athanasius. It was some time before they could agree what they should lay to his charge. At length they sent three of their schismatical bishops, Isio, Eudæmon, and Callinicus, to Nicomedia, who undertook to accuse him to the emperor of having exacted linen for the use of his church, and imposed it as a tribute upon the people; also of sending a purse of gold to one Philumenus, who was plotting to usurp the empire. Athanasius being summoned to appear before Constantine, his cause was heard in his palace of Psammathia, situated in the suburbs of Nicomedia. The emperor, having examined the accusations against him, was convinced of his innocence, acquitted him of what had been alleged against him, and sent him back with a letter to the faithful of Alexandria, wherein he calls him a man of God, and a most venerable person.

Eusebius, though baffled for the present, did not despair of compassing his ends; and, in the mean time, contrived the banishment of St. Eustathius, the most zealous and holy patriarch of Antioch. And soon after, new allegations were laid against Athanasius, charging him with the murder of Arsenius, a Meletian bishop, and with other crimes. Constantine appeared shocked at the accusation of the murder, and sent an order to St. Athanasius to clear himself in a council which was to be held at Cæsarea, in Palestine, whereof Eusebius, one of the Arian party, was bishop. The saint, disliking it, no doubt, on this account, and justly apprehensive he should not have liberty allowed him for his defence, did not appear. This his enemies represented to Constantine as the effect of pride and stubbornness; who, being exasperated by these suggestions, began to entertain an ill opinion of him, and appointed another council to assemble at Tyre, where he commanded Athanasius at his peril to appear. The council met there in August, 335,

consisting of sixty bishops, chiefly Arians. St. Athanasius, after some delay, came thither, attended with a considerable number of bishops of his own province, and, among these, the illustrious confessors, Paphnutius and Potamon. All the chiefs of the Arian sect were present; the two Eusebiuses, Flacillus, the intruded bishop of Antioch, Theognis of Nice, Maris of Chalcedon, Narcissus of Neronias, Theodorus of Heraclea, Patrophilus of Scythopolis, Ursacius of Syngidon, Valens of Mursa, and George of Laodicea. The just exception which Saint Athanasius made against such judges who had declared themselves his enemies, was tyrannically overruled, and, on his entering the council, they, instead of allowing him to take his place among them, obliged him to stand as a criminal at the bar before his judges. St. Potamon could not forbear tears upon the occasion; and, addressing himself to Eusebius of Cæsarea, who had been a prisoner with him for the faith in the late persecution, cried out, "What, Eusebius, are you sitting on the bench, and doth Athanasius stand arraigned? Who can bear this with patience? Tell me; was not you in prison with me during the persecution? As for my part, I lost an eye in it, but I see you are whole and sound. How came you to escape so well?" By which words he insinuated a suspicion of public fame, that Eusebius had been guilty of some unlawful compliance. The rest of the Egyptian bishops persisted in refusing to allow those to be judges of their patriarch, who were his professed enemies; but their remonstrances were not regarded.

The first article of accusation against the saint was, that Macarius, his deputy, had been guilty of sacrilege, in breaking the chalice of one Ischyrras, a supposed priest, whilst he was officiating at the altar. This, which had been already proved to be mere calumny, and was farther confuted

by deputies sent from Tyre into Egypt to examine into the state of the affair, whereby it appeared that the whole charge was groundless and malicious, and that Ischyras, who at length was reconciled to St. Athanasius, had been set on by certain bishops of the Meletian faction. He was next accused of having ravished a virgin consecrated to God: and a woman was accordingly prevailed with to own and attest the fact in open council. Whereupon Timothy, one of the saint's clergy, turning to her, "Woman," said he, "did I ever lodge at you house; did I ever, as you pretend, offer violence to you?" "Yes," said she, "you are the very person I accuse;" adding, at large, the circumstances of time and place. The imposture thus plainly discovering itself, put the contrivers of it so much out of countenance, that they drove her immediately out of the assembly. St. Athanasius indeed insisted on her staying, and being obliged to declare who it was that had suborned her; but this was overruled by his enemies, alleging that they had more important crimes to charge him with, and such as it was impossible to elude by any artifices whatsoever. They proceeded next to the affair of Arsenius, an old Meletian bishop, whom they accused St. Athanasius of having murdered. To support this charge, they produced in court a dried hand, supposed to be the hand of Arsenius, which, as they alleged, the patriarch had ordered to be cut off, to be employed in magical operations. The truth was: Arsenius, styled by his party bishop of Hypsele, had fallen into some irregularity, and had absconded. St. Athanasius had first procured certificates from many persons that he was still living; and prevailed with him afterward, through the interest of friends, to come privately to Tyre, to serve St. Athanasius on this occasion. The saint therefore asked if any of the bishops present knew Arsenius: several answering, they did;

he then made him appear before the whole assembly with both his hands. Thus was the wicked purposes of his adversaries defeated, no less to the pleasure and satisfaction of the innocent, than to the shame and confusion of the guilty. Arsenius soon after made his peace with St. Athanasius, and with the Catholic Church; as did also John, the most famous of the Meletian bishops. The Arians called the saint a magician, and one that imposed upon their senses by the black art; and would have torn him to pieces had not the imperial governor interposed and rescued him out of their hands, who for farther security sent him on board a ship that sailed the same night. Having thus escaped their fury, he went soon after for Constantinople. All these particulars are related by St. Athanasius, in his Apology: also by Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret. Though the saint had been convicted of no crime, the Arian bishops pronounced against him a sentence of deposition, forbidding him to reside at Alexandria, lest his presence should excite new disorders there, repeating in their sentence the calumnies which had been so fully refuted.

Constantine, who had refused to see or give audience to our saint on his arrival at Constantinople, whom he looked upon as justly condemned by a council, sent an order to the bishops of Tyre to adjourn to Jerusalem, for the dedication of the church of the holy sepulchre, which he had caused to be built there. Arius came thither at this time to the council, with a letter from the emperor, and a profession of faith which he had presented to him, and which is extant in Socrates. In it the subtle heretic professes his belief in Christ, "as begotten before all worlds: God the Word, by whom all things were made, &c." But neither the word consubstantial, nor any thing equivalent to it, was there. The heresiarch had assured the emperor that he received the council

of Nice, who was thus imposed upon by his hypocrisy; but he ordered the bishops to examine his profession of faith. The Eusebians readily embraced the opportunity which they had long waited for, declared Arius orthodox, and admitted him to the communion. St. Athanasius, in the mean time, having requested of the emperor, who had refused him audience, that his pretended judges might be obliged to confront him, and that he might be allowed the liberty to exhibit his complaints against them, Constantine sent them an order to come to Constantinople to give an account of their transactions at Tyre. But only six, and these the most artful of the number, obeyed the summons, namely, Eusebius, Theognis, Maris, Patrophilus, Ursacius, and Valens. These agreed to attack St. Athanasius with a fresh accusation, as they did, charging him with having threatened to hinder the yearly transportation of corn from Alexandria to Constantinople. This accusation, though protested against by the saint as absolutely false and to the last degree improbable, was nevertheless believed by Constantine, who expressed his resentment at it, and banished him, in consequence, to Triers, then the chief city of the Belgic Gaul.

The holy man arrived there in the beginning of the year 336, and was received with the greatest respect by St. Maximinus, bishop of the place, and by Constantine the younger, who commanded there for his father. St. Antony and the people of Alexandria wrote to the emperor in favour of their pastor: but he answered that he could not despise the judgment of a council.¹

¹ St. Jerom says, (in Chron. ad an. 538.) that Constantine inclined to the Arian doctrine. But St. Athanasius and all others, except Lucifer of Cagliari, expressly affirm that he always adhered to the faith of the council of Nice, against which, while he lived, none durst openly appear. When he was deceived by Arius and Eusebius, they always persuaded him that they maintained its decisions. If he sometimes persecuted St. Athanasius, it was never for his doctrine or

The saint had the satisfaction to be informed that his church at Alexandria constantly refused to admit Arius. The year after, on Whitsunday, the 12th of May, Constantine departed this life, being sixty-three years and almost three months old, whilst he yet wore the Neophyte's white garment after his baptism. His historian testifies with what ardour the people offered up their prayers to God for his soul.¹ He was buried in the porch of the church of the twelve apostles, which he had founded in Constantinople for the burying place of the emperors and patriarchs, though he had built that of Saint Irene for the great church or the cathedral. He would be

faith; and the Arians forged against him calumnies of another nature when they endeavoured to exasperate this prince against him. This emperor was baptised in his last sickness by Eusebius of Nicomedia; but that crafty Arian did not openly discover his heresy to him, enjoyed at that time the communion of the Catholic Church, and was the diocesan of the castle of Aguyron, where he received the sacraments from his hands. He had shown great zeal for the extinction of that heresy in the council of Nice. His devotion and sincere piety, his extraordinary zeal for the Christian religion, and for the peace of the Church, his respect for priests, &c. the many wholesome laws which he made in favour of religion, and the great sentiments of piety in which he received baptism and the other sacraments, oblige us to excuse some symptoms of vanity in his youth, and with the Church to speak of his name with gratitude and respect. His heroic virtues atoned for faults and errors which true repentance blotted out. That he was imposed upon by the artifices of wicked Arian hypocrites, so far as to harbour suspicions against an Athanasius, was an extreme misfortune, which proved favourable to the abettors of heresy, fatal to many, and the ruin of his son Constantius, and of his own sister, Constantia. In excuse for Constantine's unjust treatment of St. Athanasius, we ought to reflect how often princes are obliged to see with the eyes of others, and how difficult it frequently is to them, when surrounded with flatterers, to come to the knowledge of the truth. But God opened the eyes of this emperor before his death, with regard to the innocence of his holy servant: he accordingly gave orders in his last illness that he should be recalled from his banishment, in which he had then lived one year and some months; but as this could not be put in execution before the middle of the year 338, the continuance of his exile was one year and four months.

1 *Innumerabilis populus unà cum sacerdotibus Dei, non sine gemitu ac lacrymis, pro imperatoris anima preces offerebant Deo, gratissimum pio principi officium exhibentes. In hoc etiam Deus prolixam erga famulum suum benevolentiam declaravit; quippe quod maxime ambierat, locum juxta Apostolorum memoriam ei concesserit, ut animæ illius tabernaculum Apostolici nominis atque honoris consortio frueretur, divinisque cæremoniis, ex mystico sacrificio et sanctarum precum communione potiri mereretur. Eus. l. 4. Vit. Const. c. 11. ed. Vales.*

buried in that holy place, according to Eusebius, "that he might deserve to enjoy the benefit of the mystical sacrifice, and the communion of devout prayers."¹ Constantine's three sons divided the empire, as their father's will directed. Constantine, the eldest, had Britain, Spain, Gaul, and all that lies on this side the Alps: Constantius, the second son, Thrace, Asia, Egypt, and the East: Constans, the youngest, had Italy, Africa, Greece, and Illyricum. Constantine, the younger, restored St. Athanasius to his see, sending with him a letter filled with high commendations of the holy prelate, and expressions of great respect for his sanctity, and of indignation against his adversaries. The saint passed through Syria, and was received by his flock with a joy and pomp equal to the triumph of an emperor.

The city of Alexandria was situate within the jurisdiction of Constantius, whom the Arians had gained over to their party without much difficulty. These heretics accused Saint Athanasius afresh to the three emperors for raising tumults and seditions upon his return, for committing violence and murder, and selling, for his own private use, the corn which Constantine had destined for the support of widows and ecclesiastics in those countries where corn did not grow; but the attestations of the bishops who had received it in Lybia justified him, and covered his accusers with confusion. Constantine and Constans sent away their deputies with disgrace: but Constantius being met at Antioch by Eusebius of Nicomedia, and others of his party, was easily persuaded into the belief of this last head of the accusation, and prevailed upon to grant them leave to choose a new bishop of Alexandria. They lost no time, but, assembling at Antioch, named one Pistus to that see, an Egyptian priest of their sect, who, together with the bishop that

ordained him, had been condemned by Saint Alexander and by the council of Nice: but pope Julius rejected his communion, and all other Catholic churches pronounced anathemas against him; nor was he ever able to get possession of the patriarchal chair. St. Athanasius called a council of about a hundred bishops, at Alexandria, to defend the Catholic faith: after which he repaired to Rome to pope Julius, to whom this council sent letters and deputies. Here the pope acquitted him in a council of fifty bishops, held in 341, and confirmed him in his see: but he was obliged to continue at Rome three years, during which the Arians carried on every thing by violence in the East. The same year a council met at Antioch to the dedication of the great church, called the Golden Church, and framed twenty-five canons of discipline. After the departure of the orthodox prelates, the Arians framed a canon levelled against St. Athanasius, that if a bishop, who had been deposed in a council, whether justly or unjustly, should return to his church, without the authority of a greater council than that which had deposed him, he should never hope to be re-established, nor have his cause admitted to a hearing. They then named Gregory, a Cappadocian, and placed him by force of arms in the see of Alexandria, in 341. The emperor Constans, in 345, invited St. Athanasius to Milan; and, by earnest letters, obliged his brother Constantius to join with him in assembling a general council of the East and West at Sardica, in Illyricum. It met in May, 347, and consisted of three hundred bishops of the West, and seventy-six of the East, according to Socrates and Sozomen; but, according to St. Athanasius, only of one hundred and seventy, besides the Eusebians; which agrees nearly with Theodoret, who reckons them in all two hundred and fifty. They were collected out of thirty-five provinces,

besides the Orientals. This is reputed a general council, and is proved such by Natalis Alexander, though commonly looked upon only as an appendix to that of Nice. St. Athanasius, Marcellus of Ancyra, and Asclepas of Gaza, were acquitted. They and some others out of the eastern empire were present. But the Arian Orientals made a body apart, being foreshore in number, who having formed several assemblies in certain places by the way, on their arrival at Sardica, refused, as they had agreed before they came, to join the other prelates; alleging the presence of Athanasius, and other such frivolous pretences; and at length, upon an intimation of the threats of the synod, if they did not appear, and if the Eusebians did not justify themselves of the matters laid to their charge, they all fled by night, and held a pretended council at Philippopolis, as St. Hilary, in his fragments, and Socrates testify. Dr. Cave alleges, that they dated their acts at Sardica: but this they did only to usurp the venerable name of that synod: for at the same time they quote the synodal epistle of the prelates who remained at Sardica, before the date of which epistle all historians testify that they had left that city. The true council excommunicated the chiefs of the Eusebians, with Gregory the Cappadocian, forbidding all Catholic bishops to hold communication with them.¹ This council sent two deputies to Constantius to press the execution of its decrees. The emperor Constans wrote to him also, both before and after the

¹ This council of Sardica decrees that the appeal of a bishop deposed in his own province, to the bishop of Rome, be always allowed, and that the pope may either refuse to re-examine the cause, if he thinks that superfluous, or depute bishops of a neighbouring province, or send persons from Rome to determine it. (Can. 3, 4. 7.) This was no new law; but a confirmation of that which had been established from the beginning; and, as a proof of it, we see that St. Athanasius had, before this, appealed to pope Julius, and been acquitted by him at Rome; nor had the Eusebians themselves found fault with the procedure.

council, to acquaint him, that, unless he restored Athanasius to his see, and published his calumniators, he would do it by force of arms. Gregory the Cappadocian, who had, with the Arian governors, exercised a most bloody persecution against the Catholics, and among others had caused to be beaten to death the holy confessor St. Potamon, dying four months after the council of Sardica, facilitated our saint's return to Alexandria, and deprived the emperor of all pretexts for hindering or delaying it. Constantius had also upon his hands an unsuccessful war against the Persians, and dreaded the threats of a civil war from his brother. Therefore he wrote thrice to the holy prelate, entreating him to hasten his return to Alexandria. St. Athanasius, at the request of Constans, went first to him, then residing in Gaul, and probably at Milan, and thence to Rome, to take leave of pope Julius and his Church. He took Antioch on his way home, where he found Constantius, who treated him with great courtesy, and only desired that he would allow the Arians one church in Alexandria. The saint answered, that he hoped, that, in that case, the same favour might be granted to the Catholics at Antioch, who adhered to Eustathius: but this not being relished by the Arians, Constantius insisted no longer on that point, but recommended Athanasius in very strong terms to his governors in Egypt. In the mean time, the zealous and pious emperor Constans was treacherously slain by Magnentius, in Gaul, in January, 350. Nevertheless, Constantius restored Athanasius, who immediately assembled a council at Alexandria, and confirmed the decrees of that of Sardica. St. Maximus did the same in a numerous synod at Jerusalem. Many Arian bishops on this occasion retracted their calumnies against the holy man, and also their heresy, among whom were Ursacius and Valens: but they soon returned to the vomit.

Magnentius usurped the empire in Italy, Gaul, and Africa, and Vetrannio in Pannonia. Constantius marched into the West against them. He made himself master of Vetrannio's person by a stratagem, and his army defeated Magnentius, near Mursa, in Pannonia, in 351, and that tyrant fell soon after, by his own sword. Whilst Constantius resided at Sirmium, in 351, a council was held in that city, consisting chiefly of oriental bishops, most of them Arians. Photinus, bishop of that see, who renewed the heresy of Sabellius, and affirmed Christ to be no more than a mere man, having been already condemned by two councils at Milan, was here excommunicated, deposed, and banished by the emperor. The profession of faith drawn up in this synod, is commonly esteemed orthodox, and called the first confession of Sirmium. The Arians had never ceased to prepossess the credulous emperor against Athanasius, whose active zeal was their terror; and that prince was no sooner at liberty, by seeing the whole empire in his own hands, than he began again to persecute him. He procured him to be condemned by certain Arian bishops, at Arles in 353, and again at Milan, in 355, where he declared himself his accuser, and banished the Catholic bishops who refused to subscribe his condemnation, as SS. Eusebius of Vercelli, Dionysius of Milan, Paulinus of Triers, &c. He sent a chamberlain to obtain of pope Liberius the confirmation of this unjust sentence: but he rejected the proposal with indignation, though enforced with presents and threats. Liberius not only refused the presents which were brought him, but, when the messenger sought means to deposit them, as an offering in St. Peter's church, unknown to the pope, he threw them out of doors. Constantius hereupon sent for him under a strict guard to Milan, where, in a conference, recorded by Theodoret, he boldly told Constantius that

Athanasius had been acquitted at Sardica, and his enemies proved calumniators and impostors, and that it was unjust to condemn a person who could not be legally convicted of any crime: the emperor was reduced to silence on every article; but being the more out of patience, ordered him, unless he complied within three days, to go into banishment to Berœa, in Thrace. He sent him indeed five hundred pieces of gold to bear his charges, but Liberius refused them, saying, he might bestow them on his flatterers: as he did also a like present from the empress, bidding the messenger learn to believe in Christ, and not to persecute the Church of God. After the three days were expired, he departed into exile, in 356. Constantius, going to Rome to celebrate the twentieth year of his reign, in 357, the ladies joined in a petition to him that he would restore Liberius, who had been then two years in banishment. He assented, upon condition that he should comply with the bishops then at court. About this time Liberius began to sink under the hardships of his exile, and his resolution was shaken by the continual solicitations of Demophilus, the Arian bishop of Berœa, and of Fortunatian, the temporizing bishop of Aquileia. He was so far softened by listening to flatteries and suggestions, to which he ought to have stopped his ears with horror, that he yielded to the snare laid for him, to the great scandal of the Church. He subscribed the condemnation of St. Athanasius, and a confession or creed, which had been framed by the Arians at Sirmium, though their heresy was not expressed in it; and he wrote to the Arian bishops of the East, that he had received the true Catholic faith which many bishops had approved at Sirmium.¹ The fall of so great a prelate, and

1 Liberius fell by a prevarication and notorious scandal: but not by heresy. There were three confessions of faith or creeds, compiled by the Arians, at Sirmium. The first, framed in the council of Sirmium, in 351, against Photinus, was orthodox in its terms; though the word

so illustrious a confessor, is a terrifying example of human weakness, which no one can call to mind without trembling for himself. St. Peter fell by a presumptuous confidence in his own strength and resolution; that we may learn that every one stands only by humility. Liberius, however, speedily imitated the repentance of the prince of the apostles. And he no sooner had recovered his see, than he again loudly declared himself the patron of justice and truth: and, when the council of Rimini was betrayed into a prevarication, which was construed in favour of Arianism, Liberius vigorously opposed the danger, and by his strenuous active zeal, averted the desolation with which it threatened many churches, as Theodoret testifies.¹

Constantius, not content to have banished the

consubstantial was omitted in it. This was drawn up by the oriental bishops, who alone composed that council; the West, except Pannonia, being then subject to Magnentius. The second confession was made at Sirmium, in 357, when Constantius arrived there from Rome; only Valens, Ursacius, and Germinius, are named as concerned in it: and Osius of Cordova, and Potamius of Lisbon, as subscribing to it: for Osius, after most zealously maintaining the faith, was vanquished by tortures, and unhappily fell, but died penitent, in Spain, within a year after, as St. Athanasius assures us. This second creed openly expressed the Arian impiety, and forbade any mention to be made either of *unity* or of *likeness of substance* in Christ with the Father: for the Catholics called Christ of the *same* substance as the Father: the Semi-Arians of *like* substance; the Anomæans, or rank Arians, *entirely unlike* in substance: the last mentioned were also called Eunomians, from one of the chief of that sect. In 359, a third confession was published by the Arians at Sirmium, in which Christ is said to be *alike* in substance *in all things*. This third contains clearly the Semi-Arian heresy: and was made two years after the fall of Liberius. Nor could he have subscribed the second, of which the very authors of it were immediately ashamed, so that it was no more mentioned; and it was framed by very few, and those all western bishops. Whereas St. Hilary testifies, (Fragm. 6. p. 1357.) that Liberius signed the confession which had been made by twenty-two bishops, of which number Demophilus was one, which agrees to the first. Hence Liberius, writing to the oriental bishops, says, he had signed their confession of faith, or that made by them; and that it was presented to him by Demophilus. He moreover calls it Catholic. All which circumstances concur in the first. Sozomen assures us, (l. 4. c. 15.) that, when he arrived at Rome, he anathematized all who did not confess the Son like to the Father in *all things*; which was expressly condemning the second creed. How then could he have subscribed to it so short a time before?

¹ Theodoret, Hist. 1. 2. c. 17.

bishops, who favoured Athanasius, also threatened and punished all the officers and magistrates who refused to join in communion with the Arians. Whilst his presence in the West filled it with confusion and acts of tyranny, St. Athanasius was at Alexandria, offering up to God most fervent prayers for the defence of the faith. Constantius next turned all his rage against him and against the city of Alexandria, sending orders to Syrianus, the duke, that is, general of the troops of Egypt, to persecute the archbishop and his clergy. He likewise dispatched two notaries to see his orders executed. They endeavoured to oblige the saint to leave the city. He answered, that he had returned to his see, and had resided there till that time by the emperor's express order; and therefore could not leave it without a command of equal authority, (which they owned was not in their power to produce,) or unless Syrianus, the duke, or Maximus, the prefect or governor, would give him such an order in writing, which neither of them would do. Syrianus, convinced of the justice of his plea, promised to give neither him nor the public assemblies of his people any farther disturbance, without express injunction from the emperor to that effect. Twenty-three days after this solemn promise, confirmed by oath, the faithful were assembled at the church of St. Theonas, where they passed the night in prayer, on account of a festival to be celebrated the next day. Syrianus, conducted by the Arians, surrounded the church at midnight, with above five hundred soldiers, who having forced open the doors, committed the greatest disorders. The patriarch, however, kept his chair; and, being determined not to desert his flock in their distress, ordered a deacon to sing the 136th psalm, and the people to repeat alternately, *For his mercy endureth for ever*. After this, he directed

them to depart and make the best of their way to their own houses, protesting that he would be the last that left that place. Accordingly, when the greatest part of the people were gone out, and the rest were following, the clergy and monks that were left forced the patriarch out along with them; whom (though almost stifled to death) they conveyed safe through the guards and secured him out of their reach. Numbers on this occasion were trampled to death by the soldiers, or slain by their darts. This relation is given by the saint in his apology for his flight, and in his History of the Arians, addressed to the monks. The next step of the Arians was to fix a trusty man of their party in this important see: and the person they pitched upon was one George, who had been victualler to the army, one of the most brutish and cruel of men: who was accordingly placed in the patriarchal chair. His roughness and savage temper made him seem the fittest instrument to oppress the Catholics, and he renewed all the scenes of bloodshed and violence of which Gregory had set the example, as Theodoret relates. Our holy bishop hereupon retired into the deserts of Egypt: but was not permitted to enjoy long the conversation of the devout inhabitants of those parts, who, according to the expression of St. Gregory Nazianzen, lived only to God. His enemies having set a price upon his head, the wildernesses were ransacked by soldiers in quest of him, and the monks persecuted, who were determined rather to suffer death than to discover where he lay concealed. The saint, apprehensive of their suffering on his account, left them, and retired to a more remote and solitary place, where he had scarce air to breathe in, and saw none but the person that supplied him with necessaries and brought him

his letters, though not without great danger and difficulty.¹

Constantius died on the 3rd of November, in 361; a prince whose memory will be eternally infamous for his heresy, and persecution of the Church, his dissimulation, levity, and inconstancy, his weakness of mind, and the treacherous murder of all his uncles. The year following George, the Arian usurper of the see of Alexandria, was massacred by the Pagans, for his cruelty. Thus was Athanasius delivered from all his chief enemies. Julian, the Apostate, on coming to the empire, granted all the bishops who had been banished by Constantius the liberty to return to their respective churches; not out of any good-will he bore them, but with a view, as his own historian writes, to increase their divisions by this license, and lessen his fears for their uniting against him: also to reflect an odium on the memory and proceedings of his predecessor. Most of the orthodox bishops took their advantage of this permission; and the usurper of the see of Alexandria being massacred by the Pagans in July, 362, our saint returned to his flock in August, after an absence of above six years. His entrance was a kind of triumph of the Catholic faith over its enemies, and the citizens hereupon drove the Arians out of all the churches.

In 359, the council of Rimini had the weakness so far to yield to the artifices of the Arians, as to omit in the creed the word consubstantial. The prelates were afterward surprised to see the triumph of the Arians on that account, and were struck with remorse for their unwary condescension. Their fall was owing, not to any error in faith, but to a want of courage and insight into

¹ This seems to have given occasion to the fable of Rufinus, that the saint lived several years hidden in the bottom of a well: a circumstance which would not have been omitted either by the saint himself, or by Saint Gregory of Nazianzen.

the artifices of the Arians. Nevertheless, Lucifer of Cagliari,¹ and some other bishops, pretended,

¹ Lucifer, bishop of Cagliari, the metropolis of Sardinia, distinguished himself for his contempt of the world, and his zeal against the Arians. This he exerted with great warmth in the defence of St. Athanasius, in the council of Milan, in 355, first in the great church, afterward in the palace of the emperor Constantius, and in his presence: for which he was banished to Germanicia, in Syria, of which city Eudoxus, one of the most implacable chiefs of the Arian heresy, was bishop. From thence Lucifer was some time after removed into Palestine, to Eleutheropolis, Eutychius, bishop of that see, being also an Arian. There he wrote his first book against Constantius, which he was bold enough to send to that emperor, and afterward to confess himself the author of it to Florentius, great master of the palace, who was ordered by the emperor to put the question to him. In this book he shows that the emperor ought not to intermeddle in ecclesiastical matters; and he compares him with the worst of tyrants. In his second book against Constantius, he justifies St. Athanasius. Saint Jerom and other fathers commend his writings against Constantius; but it were to be wished that his terms had been more respectful. By a fresh order of this emperor, the place of his banishment was again changed, and he was removed into Thebais in Egypt, where he remained till the death of Constantius. In his book, *On Apostate Kings*, he shows that wicked tyrants have often enjoyed worldly prosperity, which Constantius thought a proof in himself that he was favoured by heaven. Lucifer's other books, *On Not Sparing Sinners*, or *On the Obligation of boldly reprovng them: On not Communicating with Heretics*, and that we are to die for the Son of God, are wrote with the same harshness of style.

The trophies which Lucifer gained by his zeal, were blasted by the scandal of an unhappy schism to which he gave birth. After the death of Constantius, Lucifer repaired to Antioch with St. Eusebius of Vercelli. St. Eustathius, the bishop of Antioch, whom the Arians had banished, being then dead, the election of St. Meletius was canonical; yet some Catholics rejected it, because the Arians had joined in choosing him. The Catholics had continued to adhere to their bishop, St. Eustathius, during his banishment: after his death, those who schismatically separated themselves from the communion of Meletius were called Eustathians; and Lucifer arriving at Antioch, put himself at their head, ordained Paulinus their bishop, and separated himself from the communion of St. Eusebius, because he disapproved the ordination of Paulinus. Thus Lucifer laid the foundation of the fatal schism at Antioch. Another schism of which he was the author, was still more notoriously unjust, and carried by him to greater lengths. St. Athanasius, in his famous council at Alexandria, in 362, allowed that the bishops, who at Rimini had been drawn into the snare of the Arians, and into an omission favourable to their heresy, and all others who had been engaged in a like fault, should upon their repentance, be suffered to retain their sees. This indulgence so far displeased Lucifer, that he refused to communicate with those penitent bishops, and with those who received them, that is, with the pope and the whole Catholic Church. Many were engaged with him in this schism, at Antioch, at Rome, in several other parts of Italy, in Egypt, and Palestine, but chiefly in Sardinia and Spain. The author survived nine years after his return to Cagliari, and seems to have continued obstinate to his death, which happened in 371, according to St. Jerom in his chronicle. The ancients only reproach

by a Pharisaical pride, that the lapsed, notwithstanding their repentance, could no longer be admitted by the Church to communion in the rank of bishops or priests. St. Anathasius, on the contrary, being filled with the spirit of tenderness which our divine Redeemer exercised and recommended to be shown towards sincere penitents, condemned this excessive severity: and in 362, assembled a council at Alexandria; at which assisted St. Eusebius of Vercelli, in his return from his banishment in Thebais, St. Asterius of Petra, &c. This synod condemned those who denied the divinity of the holy Ghost, and decreed that the authors of the Arian heresy should be deposed, and upon their repentance received only to the lay-communion; but that those prelates who had fallen into it only by compulsion, and for a short time, should, upon their repentance, retain their sees. This decision was adopted in Macedonia, Achaia, Spain, Gaul, &c. and approved at Rome.¹ For we learn from St. Hilary, that Liberius, who died in 366, had established this discipline in Italy, and we have his letter to the Catholic bishops of that country, in which he approves what had been regulated in this regard in Achaia and Egypt, and exhorts them to exert their zeal against the authors of their fault, in proportion to the grief they felt for having committed it.²

Theodoret says, that the priests of the idols complained to Julian, that, if Anathasius was suffered to remain in Alexandria, there would not remain one adorer of the gods in that city,

him with the crime of his schism, so that we are to understand of his followers, what Theodoret says, that after his return into Sardinia, he added to schism certain maxims contrary to those of the Catholic Church. See Theodoret, *Hist. Eccl.* l. 3. c. 2. St. Jerom, *Dial. adv. Luciferian.* St. Ambrose *de obitu Satyri*, p. 316. Socrates, l. 3. c. 9. Sozomen, l. 5. c. 13: and amongst the moderns, Tillemont, t. 7. p. 514. Ceillier, t. 5. p. 384.

¹ Conc. t. 7. p. 73, and 680.

² S. Hil. fragm. 12. p. 1367. Constant. ep. decret. 13. p. 443.

Julian, having received this advice, answered their complaint, telling them, that, though he had allowed the Galileans (his name of derision for Christians) to return to their own country, he had not given them leave to enter on the possession of their churches. And that Athanasius in particular, who had been banished by the orders of several emperors, ought not to have done this: he therefore ordered him immediately to leave the city on the receipt of his letter, under the penalty of a severe punishment. He even dispatched a messenger to kill him. The saint comforted his flock, and having recommended them to the ablest of his friends, with an assurance that this storm would soon blow over, embarked in a boat on the river for Thebais. He who had orders to kill him, hearing that he was fled, sailed after him with great expedition. The saint having timely notice sent him of it, was advised by those that accompanied him to turn aside into the deserts that bordered on the Nile. But St. Athanasius ordered them to tack about and fall down the river towards Alexandria; "to show," said he, "that our protector is more powerful than our persecutor." Meeting the pursuivant, he asked them whether they had seen Athanasius as they came down the river, and was answered that he was not far off, and that if they made haste, they would quickly come up with him. Upon this the assassin continued the pursuit, while St. Athanasius got safe and unsuspected to Alexandria, where he lay hid for some time. But upon a fresh order coming from Julian for his death he withdrew into the deserts of Thebais, going from place to place to avoid falling into the hands of his enemy. St. Theodorus, of Tabenna, being come to visit him, while at Antinoë, with St. Pammon, put an end to his apprehensions on this score, by assuring him, on a revelation God had favoured him with, that

Julian had just then expired in Persia, where he was killed on the 27th of June, in 363. The holy hermit acquainted him also that the reign of his Christian successor would be very short. This was Jovian, who being chosen emperor, refused to accept that dignity till the army had declared for the Christian religion. He was no sooner placed upon the throne but he wrote to St. Athanasius, cancelling the sentence of his banishment, and praying him to resume the government of his church, adding high commendations of his virtue and unshaken constancy. St. Athanasius waited not for the emperor's orders to quit his retreat, but on being apprized, as before related, of the death of his persecutor, appeared on a sudden, and resumed his usual functions in the midst of his people, who were joyfully surprised at the sight of him. The emperor, well knowing that he was the chief person that had stood up in defence of the Christian faith, besought him, by a second letter, to send him a full account in writing of its doctrines, and some rules for his conduct and behaviour in what regarded the affairs of the Church. St. Athanasius called a synod of learned bishops, and returned an answer in their name; recommending that he should hold inviolable the doctrine explained in the council of Nice, this being the faith of the apostles, which had been preached in all ages, and was generally professed throughout the whole Christian world, "some few excepted," says he, "who embrace the opinions of Arius." The Arians attempted in vain to alter his favourable dispositions towards the saint by renewing their old calumnies. Not satisfied with his instructions by letters, he desired to see him; and the holy bishop was received by him at Antioch with all possible tokens of affection and esteem; but after giving him holy advice, he hastened back to Alexandria. The good emperor Jovian reigned only eight months,

dying on the 7th of February, in 364. Valentinian, his successor, chose to reside in the West, and making his brother Valens partner in the empire, assigned to him the East. Valens was inclined to Arianism, and openly declared in favour of it, in 367, when he received baptism from the hands of Eudoxius, bishop of the Arians, at Constantinople. The same year he published an edict for the banishment of all those bishops who had been deprived of their sees by Constantius. Theodoret says this was the fifth time that St. Athanasius had been driven from his church. He had been employed in visiting the churches, monasteries, and deserts of Egypt. Upon the news of this new tempest, the people of Alexandria rose in tumults, demanding of the governor of the province that they might be allowed to enjoy their bishop; and he promised to write to the emperor. St. Athanasius, seeing the sedition appeased, stole privately out of the town, and hid himself in the country in the vault in which his father was interred, where he lay four months, according to Sozomen. The very night after he withdrew, the governor and the general of the troops took possession of the church in which he usually performed his functions; but were not able to find him. As soon as his departure was known, the city was filled with lamentation, the people vehemently calling on the governor for the return of their pastor. The fear of a sedition moved Valens at length to grant them that satisfaction, and to write to Alexandria that he might abide there in peace, in the free possession of the churches. In 369, the holy patriarch convened at Alexandria a council of ninety bishops; in whose name he wrote to the bishops of Africa, to beware of any surprise from those who were for preferring the decrees of the council of Rimini to those of Nice.

The continued scenes of perfidy, dissimulation,

and malice which the history of Arianism exhibits to our view, amaze and fill us with horror. Such superlative impiety and hypocrisy would have seemed incredible, had not the facts been attested by St. Athanasius himself, and by all the historians of that age. They were likewise of so public a nature, having been performed before the eyes of the whole world, or proved by ocular demonstration in the Arians' own synods, that St. Athanasius could never have inserted them in his Apology, addressed to these very persons and to the whole world, could any circumstances have been disproved, or even called in question. By such base arts and crimes did the Arian blasphemy spread itself, like a spark of fire set to a train of gunpowder; and, being supported by the whole power of a crafty and proud emperor, seemed to threaten destruction to the Church of Christ, had it not been built on foundations which, according to the promises of Him who laid them, all the power of hell shall never be able to shake. During more than three hundred years it had stood the most violent assaults of the most cruel and powerful persecutors, who had bent the whole power of the empire to extirpate, if it had been possible, the Christian name. But the more it was depressed the more it grew and flourished, and the blood of martyrs was a seed which pushed forth and multiplied with such a wonderful increase, as to extend its shoots into every part of the then known world, and to fill every province and every rank of men in the Roman empire. By the conversion of the emperors themselves, it appeared triumphant over all the efforts of hell. But the implacable enemy of man's salvation did not desist in his attacks. His restless envy and malice grew more outrageous by his defeats; and shifting his ground, he stirred up his instruments within the bowels of the Church itself, and excited against it a storm, in which hell seemed to

vomit out all its poison, and unite all the efforts of its malice. But these vain struggles again terminated in the most glorious triumph of the Church. In those perilous times, God raised up many holy pastors, whom he animated with his spirit, and strengthened in the defence of his truth. Among these St. Athanasius was the most illustrious champion. By his undaunted courage, and unparalleled greatness of soul under the most violent persecutions, he merited a crown equal to that of the most glorious martyrs: by his erudition, eloquence, and writings he holds an illustrious place among the principal doctors of the Church; and by the example of his virtue, by which he rivalled the most renowned anchorets of the deserts, and the most holy confessors, he stemmed the torrent of scandal and iniquity which threatened to bear down all before it.

St. Gregory Nazianzen gives the following portrait of his virtues in private life. "He was most humble and lowly in mind, as his virtue was most sublime and inimitable. He was most courteous to all, and every one had easy access to him; he was meek, gentle, compassionate, amiable in his discourse, but much more so in his life; of an angelical disposition; mild in his reproofs, and instructive in his commendations; in both which he observed such even measures, that his reproof spoke the kindness of a father, and his commendation the authority of a master; and neither was his indulgence over tender, nor his severity harsh. His life supplied the place of sermons, and his sermons prevented correction. In him all ranks might find enough to admire, and enough to imitate; one might commend his unwearied austerity in fasting and prayer; another his perseverance in watchings and the divine praises; a third his admirable care of the poor; a fourth his courage in checking the injustice of the rich, or his condescension to the humble."

Thus St. Gregory Nazianzen,¹ who says he was a loadstone to dissenters, drawing them to his opinion, unless hardened in malice; and always at least raising in them a secret reverence and veneration for his person; but that he was an adamant to his persecutors; no more capable of impressions against justice, than a rock of marble is of yielding to any slight touch. After innumerable combats, and as many great victories, this glorious saint, having governed the church of Alexandria forty-six years, was called to a life exempt from labour and suffering, on the 2nd of May, on a Thursday, according to the Oriental Chronicle of the Coptes, in the year 373, as is clear from the same author, St. Proterius, and St. Jerom; not in 371, as Socrates mistakes.² St. Gregory Nazianzen thus describes his death: "He ended his life in a holy old age, and went to keep company with his fathers, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, who had fought valiantly for the truth, as he had done; and to comprise his epitaph in few words, he departed this life with far greater honour and glory than what he had received in his more than triumphant entries into Alexandria, when he returned from his banishments: so much was his death lamented by all good men; and the immortal glory of his name remained imprinted in their hearts." He desires the saint "to look down upon him from heaven, to favour and assist him in the govern

1 Or. 21. p. 373.

2 The Greeks honour St. Athanasius on the 2nd of May, because his relics were on that day deposited in the church of St. Sophia at Constantinople, when they were translated thither from Alexandria, as their Ephemerides, in their Synaxarium, expressly mention. They also commemorate him on the 18th of January, which Jos. Assemani (in Kalend. Univ. t. 6. p. 299.) proves, against Papebroke, to have been the day of his death, as the Menæa expressly assure us. The Greeks join with him, on the 18th of January, St. Cyril, because he was bishop of the same city; though he died in June, on the 9th of which month he is again commemorated in the Menæa, but on the 27th in the Menology of the emperor Basil. See Jos. Assemani, ad 2 Maij. t. p. 301, 302, 303, against the different opinions both of Eollandus and Papebroke.

ment of his flock, and to preserve it in the true faith: and if, for the sins of the world, heretics were to prevail against it, to deliver him from these evils, and to bring him, by his intercession, to enjoy God in his company."

The humility, modesty, and charity of this great saint; his invincible meekness towards his enemies who were the most implacable and basest of men, and the heroic fortitude, patience, and zeal, by which he triumphed over the persecutions of almost the whole world confederated against him, and of four emperors, Constantine, Constantius, Julian, and Valens, three of whom employed wiles, stratagems, and hypocrisy, and sometimes open force to destroy him: these, I say, and all other eminent virtues, have rendered his name venerable in the Church to the latest ages, which he ceases not to instruct and edify by his writings.¹

¹ Photius observes, (Cod. 140.) that the diction and style of St. Athanasius is clear, majestic, full of deep sense, strength, and solid reasoning, without any thing redundant or superfluous. He seems to hold the next place in eloquence after St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazianzen, and St. Chrysostom. Erasmus even admires his style above that of all the other fathers, saying, it hath nothing rugged or difficult, like that of Tertullian, nothing laboured or embarrassed, like that of St. Hilary, nothing studied, like that of St. Gregory Nazianzen; no windings and turnings, like that of St. Austin, or of St. Chrysostom: for it is every where beautiful, elegant, easy, florid, and admirably adapted to whatever subject he treats: though in some of his works it wants the finishings which more leisure would have given it. Cosmas, an ancient monk, used to say, "When you find any thing of the works of St. Athanasius, if you have no paper, write it on your clothes." (Prat. Spir. c. 40.)

The first of his works is, his Discourse against the Pagans. In it he displays a most extensive human learning, shows the origin, progress, and folly of idolatry: and raises men to the knowledge of the true God, first from the sentiment of their own soul, and secondly, from visible things. The discourse On the Incarnation, is a continuation of the same work, and proves, first, that the world must have had its beginning by creation; and secondly, that only the Son of God, by his incarnation, could have delivered man from the death which he had incurred by sin. The saint composed these two pieces before the origin of Arianism, about the year 318, when he was not above twenty-two years of age. The Exposition of Faith is an explanation of the mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation, against the Arians. The treatise on those words: *All things have been given me by my Father*: the Letter to the Orthodox Bishops, against the illegal intrusion of Gregory into his see, in 341; his Apology against the Arians, consist-

These and other virtues, Saint Athanasius learned and practised in the most heroic degree,

ing chiefly of authentic memoirs for his own justification against their slanders, composed after his second exile, in 351; his treatise, *On the Decrees of Nice*, against the Eusebians; his *Apology for the Doctrine of St. Dionysius of Alexandria*, whom the Arians quoted in favour of their error; and his circular letter to the bishops of Egypt and Lybia, when George was coming to Alexandria, to intrude himself into his see, were compiled against the Arians. His great work against those heretics are, his *Four Orations against the Arians*. He composed them whilst concealed among the anchorets. Photius admires the beauty, strength, and just reasoning of this excellent performance, which entirely beats down that heresy; and says, that from this fountain St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. Basil the Great drew that torrent of eloquence with which they gloriously defended the Catholic faith. Dialectic is employed here with admirable art, but the oracles of holy scripture are, as it were, the sinews of the work. Dracontius, a holy abbot, was chosen bishop of Hermopolis: but fled and hid himself, refusing to submit to that yoke. The letter of St. Athanasius to him is a tender persuasive to accept that charge. His letter to Serapion, bishop of Thmuis, on the death of Arius, shows his modesty in the moderation with which he speaks of that tragical misfortune. We have four other letters of our saint to the same Serapion, to prove the divinity of the Holy Ghost, written in 360, or thereabouts. The Letter to the Solitaries, in 358, is a confutation of the Arians, with some account of the persecution under George. His *Apology to the emperor Constantius*, written in the deserts, among the wild beasts, in 356, seems the most eloquent and finished piece of all his works. His *Apology for his flight*, in 357, is in merit little inferior to it. He shows that it is lawful, and sometimes even a precept, to fly under persecutions. His treatise *On Synods*, in 359, gives some account of what had passed in those of Seleucia and Rimini. His *tome, or Letter, to the Church of Antioch*, was written by him from his council at Alexandria, in 362, to exhort all to union, and to receive the Arians who were converted, only requiring from them a profession of the Nicene faith, and of the divinity of the Holy Ghost. The life of St. Antony was written in 365. His letter to the emperor Jovian, two letters to St. Orsisius, abbot of Tabenna, and several other epistles, are extant. His book, *On the Incarnation and against the Arians*, proves also the divinity of the Holy Ghost; and was writ after the year 360. His two books against Apollinaris, appeared about the year 372. His imperfect commentary *On the Psalms* shows his extraordinary abilities for that kind of writing. The fragments *On Saint Matthew* are judged genuine by Montfaucon, (in *Collect. Patr.*) but appear doubtful to Tournely and some others. The book, *On the Incarnation of the Word of God: that, For the Consubstantiality of the Three Persons: that, On Virginity*, an excellent work: the *Synopsis of the Scriptures*, also very well penned, and judged genuine by Tillemont, &c. are usually ranked among his doubtful works. The history of a crucifix bleeding, when pierced by the Jews of Berytus, is a mean performance; Baronius attributes it to one Athanasius of Syria. The Creed which bears the name of St. Athanasius, can only deserve that title, because it explains the mystery of the Trinity, which he expounded and maintained with such zeal. It was compiled in Latin in the fifth century. Dr. Waterland hath made a learned collection of what several judicious critics have written on this subject, in his dissertation concerning this Creed.

by studying them devoutly and assiduously in the sacred life, and in the divine heart of Jesus. And in the simplicity of faith he adored the incomprehensible greatness of the Divinity, his infinite wisdom, justice, and sanctity, with the boundless treasures of his love and mercy, in the mystery of his adorable Incarnation. If we have a holy ambition to improve ourselves in this saving knowledge, in this most sublime and truly divine science, which will not only enlighten our understanding, but also reform all the affections of our hearts, and be in us a source of unspeakable peace, joy, love, light, and happiness, we must study in the same school. We must become zealous lovers and adorers of our most amiable Redeemer; we must meditate daily on his admirable life, penetrating into the unfathomed abyss of his love, and his perfect sentiments of humility, meekness, and every virtue in all his actions, and join our homages with those which he paid in his divine heart, and still continues to offer to his Father: we must sacrifice to him our affections in transports of joy and fervour, adoring, praising, loving, and thanking him, and must continually beg his mercy and grace, that we may be replenished with his spirit of humility and every virtue; and, above all, that his love may take absolute possession of our hearts, and of all our faculties and powers. "The Son of God," says St. Athanasius, "took upon him our poverty and miseries, that he might impart to us a share of his riches. His sufferings will render us one day impassible, and his death immortal. His tears will be our joy, his burial our resurrection, and his baptism is our sanctification, according to what he says in his gospel: *For them I sanctify myself, that they also may be made holy in fruits.*"