

and formulated countless professions of faith, that always came near to calling Jesus God, and yet made him but a creature. These formulas satisfied Constantine, who ordered Athanasius to admit Arius to his communion. The saint refused the compromise and was banished. Five times in all, under Constantine, Julian and Valens, was a like sentence passed on the intrepid defender of our Lord's honor. He was exiled into Thrace and into Gaul, he wandered about the deserts of Thebais, sharing the frugal meals of the Anchorets, and lay concealed in tombs and caverns, his haunts known only to his clergy. He was driven from his cathedral and dragged from his native city, forced to stand before judges who had no jurisdiction to try his case, and accused of crimes that only such monsters could commit, as invented the charges against him. Before the Emperor he was accused of withholding the corn supply, of misappropriating revenue, and of favoring a rival to the throne, and before the Bishops he was charged with rape, simony, witchcraft and murder! Divine Providence baffled his accusers on one occasion. A suborned woman fixed her charges on a deacon whom she mistook for the saint, to the chagrin of the Arians, and Bishop Arsenius whom they had accused Athanasius of murdering, walked into the court alive to confound their hideous malice. Nevertheless the Patriarch was judged guilty and deposed. He appealed to the Pope and after a trial was acquitted of all charges brought against him. Christ's Vicar even upheld him while the world struggled to cast him down. And this struggle lasted almost half a century.

There are two reasons why Athanasius was so persistently assailed, even after the death of his personal foe, Arius. First, the Alexandrine See was nearest to Rome in honor—the Patriarchate of Egypt, established by St. Mark. If a heretic were

bishop of this See his influence would speedily establish Arianism in the East. Hence the struggle to get rid of the orthodox pastor. Second, a vast number of irregularly ordained bishops, intruders in the Sees of exiled Catholic bishops, feared the great champion who upheld Catholic unity, and by implication condemned them. It was their interest to protect their livings, no matter what the cost. But the saint never faltered in his course. He knew no compromise, welcomed no truce, spared no energy, feared no danger. The asperity of exile only whetted his pen to keener logic, and isolation in the desert served but to etherealize and refine his style. His daily meditation of the scriptures, which he knew by heart, and his filial obedience and attachment to the centre of Christian authority buoyed him in his struggles for the right and gave depth, solidity and order to his prolific writings. Had the doctrine of Christ's divinity fallen at that time, the church could not have presented a united front to the barbarians in the next century. The motive would have been taken away from Christian endeavor to convert these savages, and letters, arts and religion would have shared the fate of civil government, a fate we read in the moss grown ruins that cover Italy and Gaul. The life work of Athanasius was the providential lion in the path of heresy. Many of his persecutors, struck by his unselfish heroism, returned to the faith and rejoiced the church by their penances. His obstinacy, as his enemies called his steadfastness, revived serious thought, and thought conversion. It abashed the proud, nerved the weak, encouraged the timid, and aroused the dormant martyr spirit in the faithful at large. While unyielding in faith, our saint was merciful in discipline, pardoning and sparing where others would have exacted more prolonged penances.

Thus we see this great athlete made a spectacle to angels and men, like his Divine