

**LATER TREATISES OF S.
ATHANASIUS, ARCHBISHOP OF
ALEXANDRIA: WITH NOTES, AND
AN APPENDIX ON S. CYRIL OF
ALEXANDRIA AND THEODORET**

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Later treatises of S. Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria: with notes, and an appendix on S. Cyril of Alexandria and Theodoret by Saint Athanasius

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SAINT ATHANASIUS

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HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH,

ANTERIOR TO THE DIVISION OF THE EAST AND WEST:

TRANSLATED BY MEMBERS OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH.



YET SHALL NOT THY TEACHERS BE REMOVED INTO A CORNER ANY MORE, BUT
THINE EYES SHALL SEE THY TEACHERS. *Isaiah XXX. 20.*

PARKER & CO.,
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TO THE MEMORY
OF THE
MOST REVEREND FATHER IN GOD
WILLIAM
LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,
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AND
CARRIED ON FOR TWELVE YEARS UNDER HIS SANCTION,
UNTIL HIS DEPARTURE HENCE IN PEACE,
IS
GRATEFULLY AND REVERENTLY
INSCRIBED.

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1881.

Observations.

The times, for which God raised up S. Athanasius, have, in many respects, a counterpart in our own. There is, now too, earnest, ever-enlarging, adherence to the faith, in those who hold it. But there is also a wide-spread dislike of definite doctrine, such as found a vent in the different shades of Arianism. They framed eleven Creeds, to satisfy themselves or others, over-against the one faith, put forth at Nicæa and accepted by the whole Church. They swung to and fro, at times approximating nearer to the truth; but their secret maxim, unknown to themselves, was, 'anything but the Truth.'

The human mind, in matters of faith as well as practice, hates restraint. Revelation has disclosures of Divine truth which man's intellect may search out in adoring love, while it can never fathom the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. Still, it is a restraint. It is a promise of the Gospel, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." So then to those, who do not openly break with it, yet still cling to their own individual conceptions of God, there are the old Semi-Arian

temptations to take so much of it as will satisfy their consciences in parting with the rest. The world is in one wide rebellion; speaking, in the Name of God, against truths of God; setting His Infinite Love against His awful Holiness, and renewing the Serpent's question, "Hath God indeed said?" With the Serpent too, it misrepresents what God did say.

So far, 'The Prophet of Truth's Creed^b,' five times banished for the truth's sake, at other times, compelled, like Elijah, to flee for his life, hiding in dens and caves of the earth, hunted by those who sought it, says, in all which he does say;

"One only way to life:

One Faith, delivered once for all^c."

But S. Athanasius speaks more nearly to us, who would defend that faith. Wide as differences now are, the adherence to the maxims and principles of S. Athanasius may prevent their being wider, or may win many to the whole truth. It is a great step to understand one another. "S. Athanasius looked through words into meanings." "One of the characteristic points in S. Athanasius," said Card. Newman 40 years ago, 'is his constant attention to the *sense* of doctrine, or the *meaning* of writers, in preference to the words used.'

S. Athanasius knew that the Nicene Creed contained "the faith once delivered to the saints;" that "which they who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word" handed down to us; that "*the Word of the Lord* spoken through the Œcumenical Council of Nicæa abideth

^b Lyra Apostolica. No. 94. Athanasius.

^c Ib. No. 100. Dissent.

^d below p. 11.

^e Nicene Def. p. 17. note m.

^f Ad Afr. § 2; below p. 26.

for ever;’ that the Arians worshipped a different God from the true God^g; that those who worshipped a different God were not really Christians^h; that for an Arian to worship Christ was an act of idolatryⁱ.

Still, neither in his own defences of the truth against Arianism does he put forward the word which specially condemns it, nor does he require it of those who were finding their way back to the faith.

The Church could not have dropped the word ‘homoousios’ without forfeiting the faith. There was nothing to induce her to abandon this statement of the truth, if she still held the truth itself. Arianizers or Semi-Arians, who in their various Creeds tried to displace it, did hold a different faith. Still, there was no occasion to put in the front just the word, against which minds were most set. S. Cyril of Jerusalem, we all know, never used it in his Catechetical lectures, but a term ‘like in all things^k,’ which at first sight suggests too much and too little; too much, because the Father is the Father, and the Son is the Son; too little,

^g ‘They do not believe the God that is, and there is none other but He.’ adv. Serapion. iv. 6.

^h ‘They who call these men [Arians] Christians are in great and grievous error, as neither having studied Scripture, nor understanding Christianity at all, and the faith which it contains.’ Ag. Arians i. 1. p. 179. O. T. ‘How can they be any longer Christians, since they conceive of a different God from the existing God?’ (Ad Epict. n. 9; below p. 56.)

ⁱ ‘Who told them, after abandoning the worship of creatures, after all to draw near and worship a creature and a work?’ Orat. i. § 5. p. 191. Oxf. Tr. Add Orat. ii. § 14. p. 301 O.T., Letter to Eg. Lib. § 4 (Hist. Tr. p. 129), § 13. (Ib. p. 141.) Letter to Adelph. (below p. 63, and note g ib.)

^k *κατὰ πάντα ὅτι ἐν πάντων ὁμοιον* Catech. iv. 7; xi. 4 and 10.

because we use the word 'like,' of things which have a separate existence. Yet one¹ who had made S. Athanasius one of his almost life-long studies says ;

"He introduces the word, I think, only once into his three celebrated Orations, and then rather in a formal statement of doctrine than in the flow of his discussion, viz. *Orat.* i. 4. [3.] Twice he gives utterance to it in the Collection of Notes which make up what is called his fourth Oration (*Orat.* iv. 9. 12.) [pp. 523, 527. O.T.] We find it indeed in his *de Decretis Nic. Conc.* and his *de Synodis*; but there it constitutes his direct subject, and he discusses it, in order, when challenged, to defend it. And in his work against Apollinaris he says, *ὁμοούσιος ἢ τριάς*, i. 9. [below p. 96.] But there are passages of his Orations, in which he omits it, when it was the natural word to use; *vid.* the notes on *Orat.* i. 20, 21, [p. 210. O.T.] and 58 *fin.* [p. 264. *Ib.*] Moreover the word does not occur in the *Catecheses* of S. Cyril of Jerusalem, A. D. 347, nor in the recantation made before Pope Julius by Ursacius and Valens A. D. 349, nor in the cross-questionings to which S. Ambrose subjected Palladius and Secundianus A. D. 381."

"^m Indeed no better illustration can be given of that intrinsic independence of a fixed terminology which belongs to the Catholic Creed, than the writings of Athanasius himself, the special Doctor from whom the subsequent treatises of Basil, the two Gregories, and Cyril are derived. This great author scarcely uses any of the scientific phrases which have since been received in the Church and have become dogmatic; or if he introduces them, it is to give them senses which have long been superseded. A good instance of his manner is afforded by the long passage, *Orat.* iii. 30—58, which is full of theology, with scarcely a dogmatic word. The case is the same with his treatment of the Incarnation.

¹ Card. Newman, 'On S. Cyril's formula of the *μία φύσις*,' *Tracts Theol. and Eccl.* pp. 291, 292.

^m *Ib.* p. 293.