

ATHANASIUS



CONTENDING

FOR THE DEITY OF CHRIST

**There are doctrines in
the Bible that are
worth dying for and
living for.**

**They are the ground of
our life. They are the
heart of our worship.**





**The divine and human nature
of Christ in one person is one
of those doctrines.**


In other words, the deity of the incarnate Son of God is essential because the gospel of our salvation is essential.

There is no **salvation if Jesus Christ was not God.**

“You are what you believe.”



**What you believe is very vital
to entering into the reality
of God and His fullness**



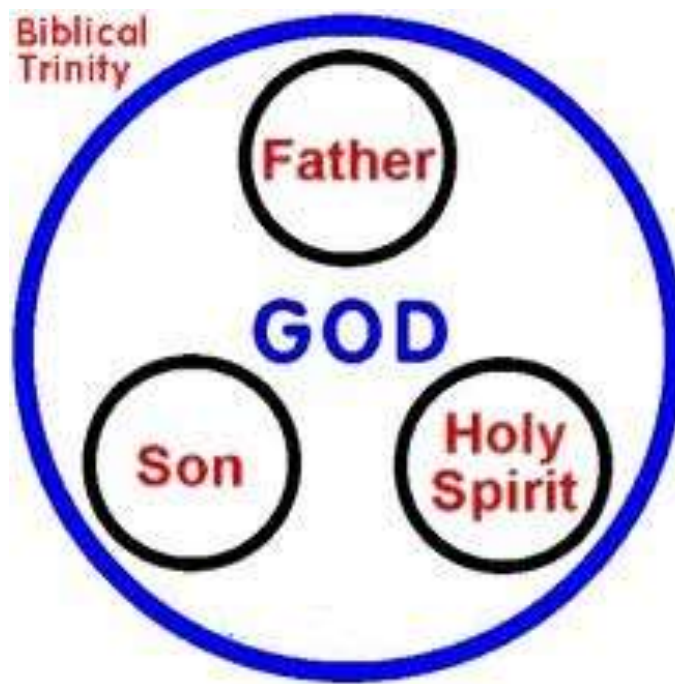
**This particular
truth ignites the
war of what to
believe in respect
to who we
believe, the Lord
Jesus Christ.**

**In the times of the Apostolic
Fathers the battle was there.**

Circumcision!

**A Church Council in
Act Chapter 15 helped
resolved it.**

**And it has raged on ever
since on other vital aspect
of the Christian Faith.**



THE TRINITY

– the biggest theological battle in the history of the church.

**The relationships between the
Father and the Son and the
Holy Spirit had not received
formal statement in any
representative council before
the time of ATHANASIUS.**

**Meaning the issue of Trinity
was questionable.**



**This was the war Athanasius
fought for 45 years.**

It lasted all his life.

**No one comes close to his
influence in the cause of
biblical truth during his lifetime.**

**After the death of the Apostolic
Fathers and their earlier
disciples arose the question
about the deity of Christ.**

SATAN attacked the church
from within instead of
from without using a
priest **Arius**.



Arius assumed that God is
one, eternal, unbegotten,
and perfect.

**Furthermore, God
cannot change because
what is perfect cannot
change.**

To **Arius, the doctrine of the
Trinity threatened the unity
of God and the idea of the
Son being fully God
threatened the perfect,
unchanging nature of God.1**

Arius believed Jesus is not eternal but only a creature very close to God, a 'super-creature.'"

At today his views are held by the group Jehovah Witness.

Arius was a persuasive personality and rallied many Christians, Bishops, and Emperors to his side and so began an ecclesiastical war for truth that engulfed the entire Christendom of AD 300.



**This can be shown as
the Arian controversy.**


**He died in 336, igniting
theological war that will
engulf empires and
hoards of Bishops and lay
people over 50 years. . . .**



**leaving behind many martyrs
who **died** defending the
deity of Christ.**

The Council of Nicaea (AD 325)

Emperor Constantine had
seen the sign of the cross
during a decisive battle 13
years earlier and was
converted to Christianity.



**He was concerned with
the deeply divisive effect
of the **ARIAN CONTROVERSY**
in the kingdom.**

A white and gold bishop's mitre is positioned in the top left corner of the slide.

Bishops had tremendous influence, and when they were at odds

(as they were over this issue), it made the unity and harmony of the empire more **FRAGILE.**



**So in 325 Con e called the
Council at Nicaea across the
Bosporus from Constantinople
(today's Istanbul).**

**He pulled together,
according to tradition, 318
bishops plus other attendees
like Arius and Athanasius.**

He fixed the order of the council and enforced its decisions with civil penalties.



**It was the Council of Nicea
which formulated what we
now confess as the
orthodox language
concerning the Trinity,
that God is one being with
three distinct persons, each
equal and eternal.**

**The Son was not made,
but was “eternally
begotten” of the Father.**

Nicene Creed:



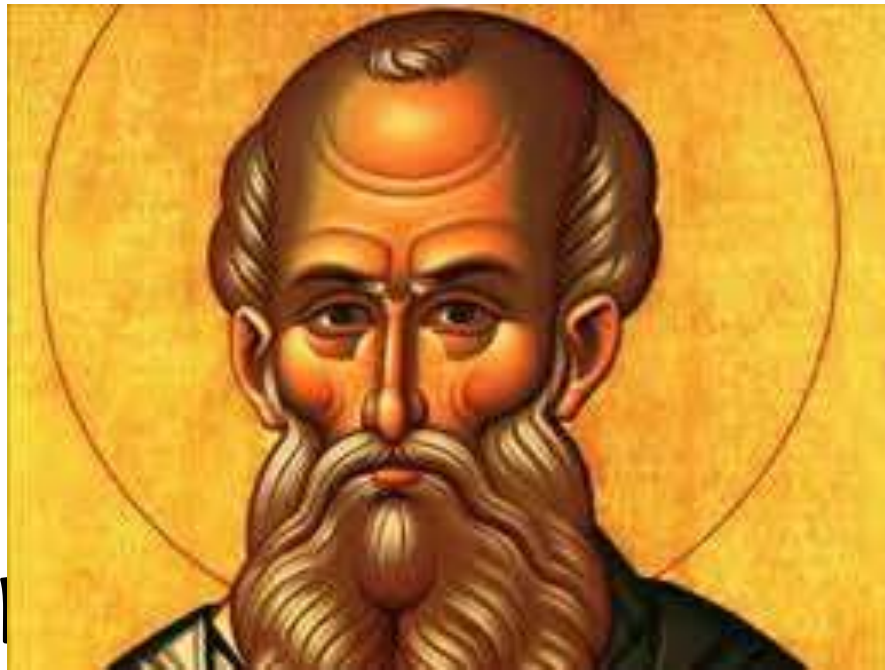
*I believe in one God, the Father
Almighty, Maker of heaven and
earth, and of all things visible and
invisible. And in one Lord Jesus
Christ, the only-begotten Son of
God;*

*. . . . begotten of the Father
before all worlds; God of God,
Light of Light, very God of very
God; begotten, not made, being of
one substance (homoousios) with
the Father, by whom all things
were made.*



About this time **Athanasius
was 27 years and a priest.**

**He will spend nearly 50
years defending this
Creed.**



Athanasius

**—The Father of Orthodoxy—
Contra Mundum**

**Athanasius [Contra Mundum
– Against the world], is
rightly a title for a man
that stood against the
world when it was drifting
away from the orthodox
truth of the Trinity and the
deity of Christ.**

Athanasius was born in AD 298 in Egypt and became the bishop of Alexandria, Egypt on June 8, 328 at the age of 30.

The people of Egypt viewed him as their bishop until he died on May 2, 373 at the age of 75.

He was “viewed” by the people as their bishop during these years because Athanasius was driven out of his church and office five times by the powers of the Roman empire.

**Seventeen (17) of his 45
years as bishop were
spent in exile.**

**But the people never
acknowledged the validity
of the other bishops sent to
take his place.**

**He was always bishop in
exile as far as his flock was
concerned.**



**Athanasius, the Patriarch
of Alexandria, is known
for his popular saying;
“God became man, that
man might become god.”**

**He is remembered because
he defended the teaching
that Jesus is the eternal
God, equal to the Father—
even when defending that
truth meant that he had to
leave his country and risk
his life.**

**This is the teaching that
many of you confess in
church when you recite the
Nicene Creed [the Trinity
Creed], the creed that
Athanasius helped craft,
and that he embraced and
spent his life defending.**

**We get a glimpse of his
important contributions,
especially through his
writings, a fugitive living
and writing within inches of
his death.**



**He stood against four deadly
emperors [all four sent him
on exile].**

**He stood against an army of
Bishops and a mob of lay
people to preserve the truth
for successive generation,
that Jesus Christ was God in
the flesh.**

**A belief that was odious and
offensive to the prevailing
spirit of the times.**

**One individual said,
“Whether a person realizes
it or not, every Christian
owes a debt of gratitude to
Saint Athanasius,**



**whose courage and battle
for the truth saved the
Church from **DISASTER.**”**

**To the Emperor and the
Bishops, Athanasius
powerful personality and
ready pen affirming the
truth of the Trinity must be
stopped.**

**Even graves were searched
looking for Athanasius to
show the desperation of the
times.**



**Protected by an
absolutely faithful
army of desert
monks, no one could
find the wandering
fugitive based upon
the devoted fidelity
of Egypt to its
pastor.**



**Towns and villages, deserts
and monasteries, the very
tombs were scoured by the
Imperial inquisitors **in the
search for Athanasius**; but
all in vain; not once do we
hear of any suspicion of
betrayal.**

**Athanasius stared down
murderous intruders into
his church.**

**He stood before emperors
who could have killed him
as easily as exiled him.**

**He risked the *wrath* of
parents and other clergy
by consciously training
young people to give their
all for Christ, including
martyrdom.**

**He celebrated the fruit of
his ministry with these
words about his people:**

***“in youth they are self-restrained,
in temptations endure,
in labors persevere,
when insulted are patient,
when robbed make light of
it:***

**and, wonderful as it is, they
despise even death and
become martyrs of Christ”
—martyrs not who kill as
they die, but martyrs who
love has they die.**



Gregory of Nazianzus

**(AD 330-389), one of early
Church fathers wrote:**

**Let one praise him in his
fastings and prayers . . . ,
another his tirelessness and
zeal for vigils and psalmody,
another his support of the
needy, another his
fearlessness towards the
powerful, or his condescension
to the lowly**

**• • • [He was to] the
unfortunate their
consolation, the hoary-
headed their staff, youths
their instructor, the poor
their help, the wealthy their
steward.**

**Even the widows will . . .
praise their protector,
even the orphans their
father,
even the poor their
supporter,**

strangers their host,
brethren the man of
brotherly love,
the sick their physician.

**In the whole of our minute
knowledge of his life there is
a total lack of self-interest.**

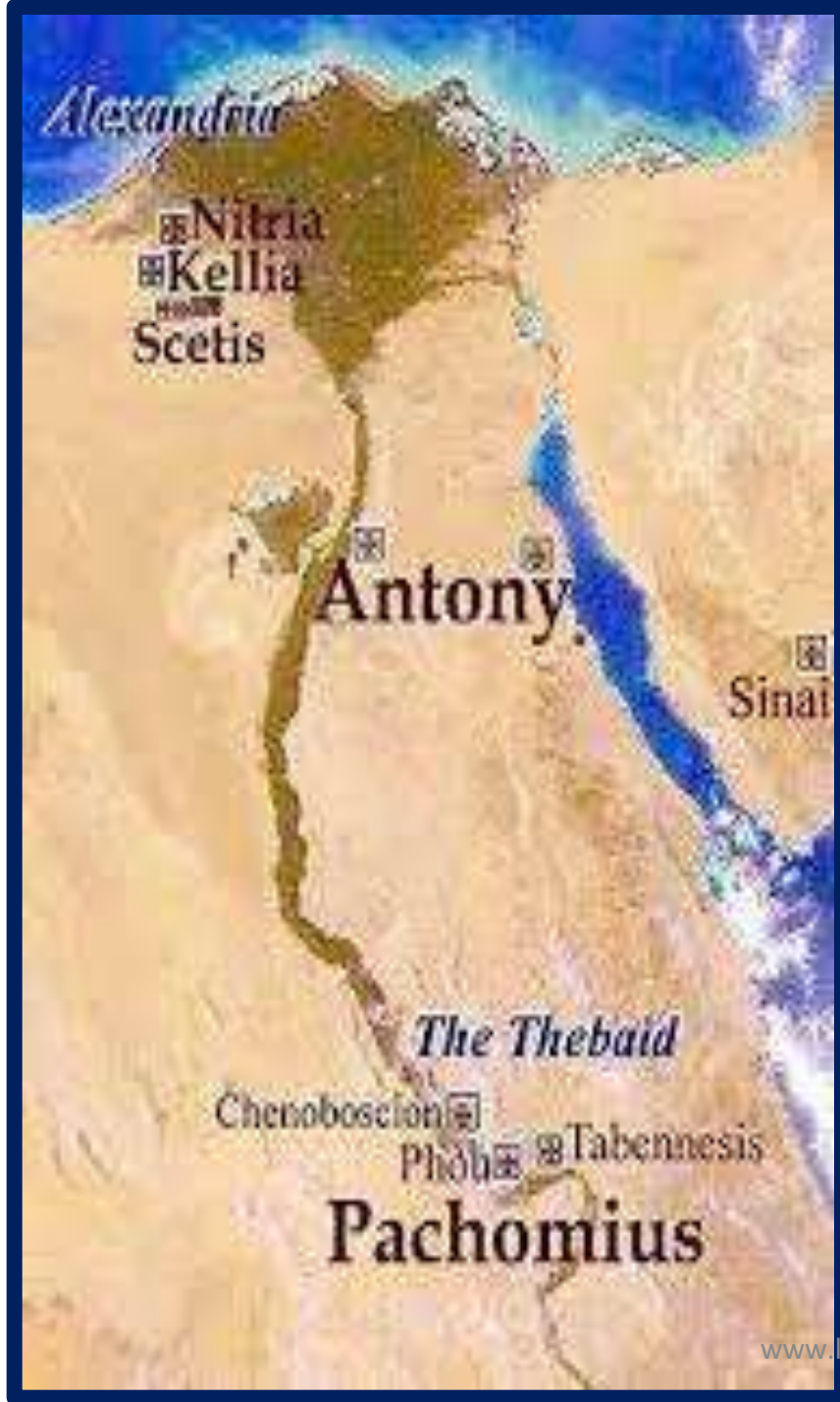
**The glory of God and the
welfare of the Church
absorbed him fully at all
times. . . .**

**The Emperors recognized
him as a political force of
the first order . . . but on
no occasion does he yield
to the temptation of
using the arm of flesh.
Almost unconscious of his
own power**

**• • • his humility is the more
real for never being
conspicuously paraded**

**. . Courage, self-sacrifice,
steadiness of purpose,
versatility and resourcefulness,
width of ready sympathy,
were all harmonized by deep
reverence and the discipline of
a single-minded lover of
Christ.**

ATHANASIUS, THE DESERT MONKS, AND ANTONY



**Athanasius
made a visit to
the Thebaid,
the desert
district in upper
Egypt where he
came in contact
with the early
desert monks**

**who lived lives of
celibacy, solitude,
discipline, prayer,
simplicity, and service of
the poor.**

Athanasius was deeply affected by this visit and was “set on fire by the holiness of their lives.”

For the rest of his life there was an unusual bond between the city bishop and the desert monks.

They held him in awe, and he admired them and blessed them.

The relationship became a matter of life and death because when Athanasius was driven out of his office by the forces of the empire, there was one group he knew he could trust with his protection.

**One in particular
captured Athanasius'
attention, affection, and
admiration:**

Antony.



**He was born in
AD 251. At 20
he sold all his
possessions and
moved to the
desert but
served the poor
nearby.**

ANTHONY:

**At 35 he withdrew for 20
years into **total solitude**
and no one knew if he
were alive or dead.**

**Then at 55 he returned
and ministered to the
monks and the people
who came to him for
prayer and counsel in the
desert until he died at
age 105**



Athanasius *wrote*

the biography of Antony.

**Athanasius' biography of
Antony is significant for
another reason.**

**It led to St. Augustine's
eventual conversion.**

“Athanasius’ purpose in writing Antony’s Life had gained its greatest success: St. Augustine would become the greatest theologian in the church for the next 1,000 years.”

CONTROVERCY AND EXILE

**Within two years after
taking office as Bishop of
Alexandria, Athanasius
was embroiled in
controversy, defending
the deity of Christ.**

Most of the 316 Bishops who had signed the Creed of Nicaea did not like calling people heretics who disagreed. They wanted to get rid of Athanasius and his passion for this cause.

**Athanasius was accused of
levying illegal taxes, that
he was too young when
ordained Bishop at only
age 30, that he used
magic, that he subsidized
treasonable persons, and
more.**

Emperor Constantine

**did not like his hard-line
either and called him to
Rome in AD 331.**

The First Exile of Athanasius (336– 338)

Finally his enemies
resorted to intrigue.

**They bribed Arsenius, a
Bishop in Hypsele (on the
Nile in southern Egypt),**

**to disappear so that the
rumor could be started
that Athanasius had
arranged his murder and
cut off one of his hands
for magic.**



**Emperor
Constantine
was told
and asked
for a trial to
be held in
Tyre.**

**Meanwhile one of
Athanasius' trusted deacons
had tracked Bishop
Arsenius to a monastery in
hiding and taken him
captive and brought him
secretly to Tyre at the trial.**

**As clear as this seemed,
Athanasius was still
condemned at this
Council and fled in a
boat with four bishops
and came to
Constantinople.**

**Constantine ordered
Athanasius banished to
Treveri (Trier, near
today's Luxemborg).**

**Athanasius left for exile
on February 8, 336.**

Constantine died the next year, and the empire was divided among his three sons,

Constantine the Great / Children / Constantius II



Constantius II
Son



Crispus
Son



Constans
Son

Constantius

(taking the East),

Constans

(taking Italy and Illyricum),

and Constantine II

**(taking the Gauls and
Africa).**

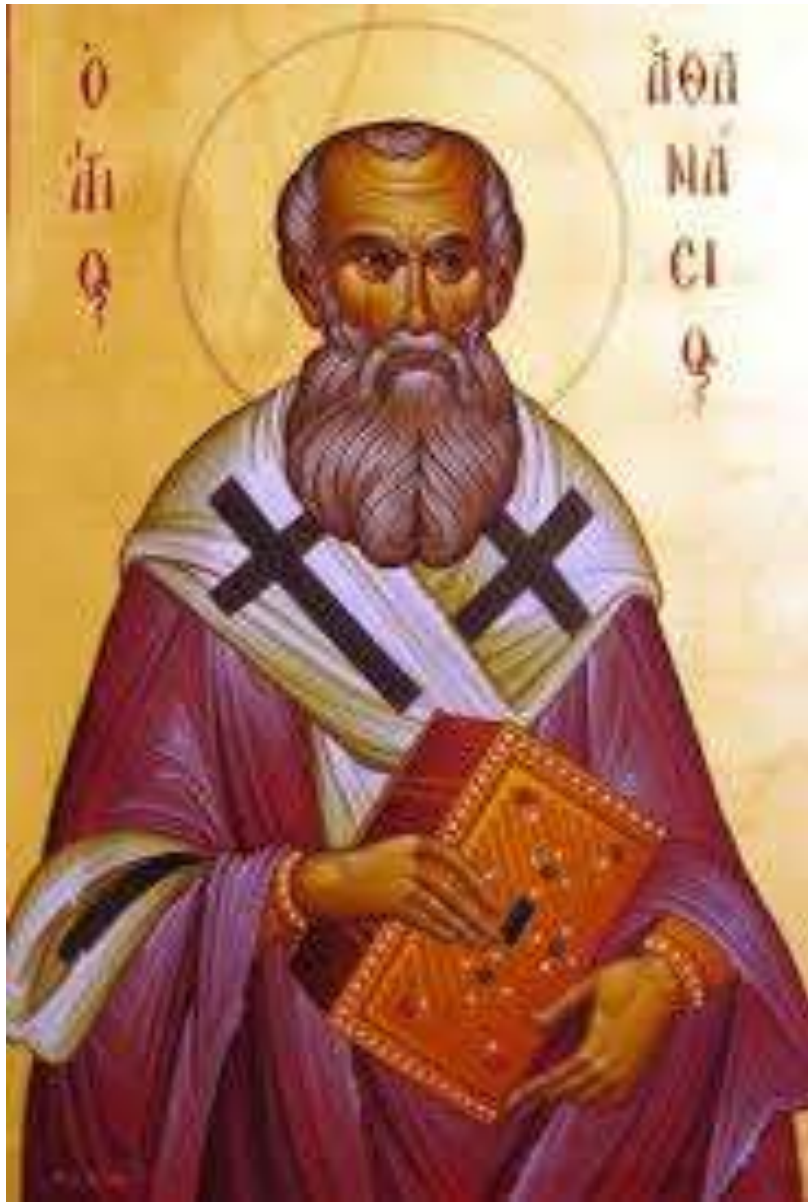
**One of Constantine II's first
acts was to restore
Athanasius to his office in
Alexandria
(November 23, 327).**

This first exile was only a
foretaste of what would
come as he fought for the
**Nicene Orthodoxy [Trinity
truth]** for the next thirty-six
years.

**And the three emperors
[Constantine's sons]
divided over him,
threatening war.**

THE SECOND EXILE OF ATHANASIUS (339–346)

**Two years later Eusebius
the leader of the Arians
had persuaded
Constantius to get rid of
Athanasius.**



**He took the
ecclesiastical
power into his
hands, declared
Gregory the
bishop of
Alexandria,**

**and put his own secular
governor in charge, and
used force to take the
bishop's quarters and the
churches. Athanasius was
forced to leave the city to
spare more bloodshed.**

This was the beginning of his **second exile—the longest time away from his flock.**

He left on April 16, 339 and didn't return until October 21, 346, over **seven(7) years in exile.**

**Constantine's other two
sons supported
Athanasius and called
the Council of Sardica
(now Sophia in Bulgaria)**

**which vindicated him in
August of 343.**

**So Athanasius was
restored to his people
with rejoicing after seven
years away (346).**

Letters and Revival



**While in exile Athanasius
wrote letters of peace
that sparked revivals
across Alexandria.**

**During this season of exile
Alexandria and the
surrounding districts
seemed to have experienced
something of a revival, with
a strong desire for the holy
life.**

Athanasius wrote

(in the book,

“History of the Arians”):

***How many **unmarried**
women, who were before
ready to enter upon
marriage, **now remained**
virgins to Christ***

**How many young men,
seeing the examples of
others, embraced the
monastic life, becoming
monks!**

. . . How many widows and how many orphans, who were before hungry and naked, now through the great zeal of the people, were no longer hungry, and went forth clothed!

In a word, so great was their emulation in virtue, that you would have thought every family and every house a Church, by reason of the goodness of its inmates, and the prayers which were offered to God.



And in the Churches there was a profound and wonderful peace, while the Bishops wrote from all quarters, and received from Athanasius the customary letters of peace.

The Third Exile of Athanasius (356–362)

**On January 18, 350 Constans
was murdered, and so the
political support for
Athanasius murdered
again.**

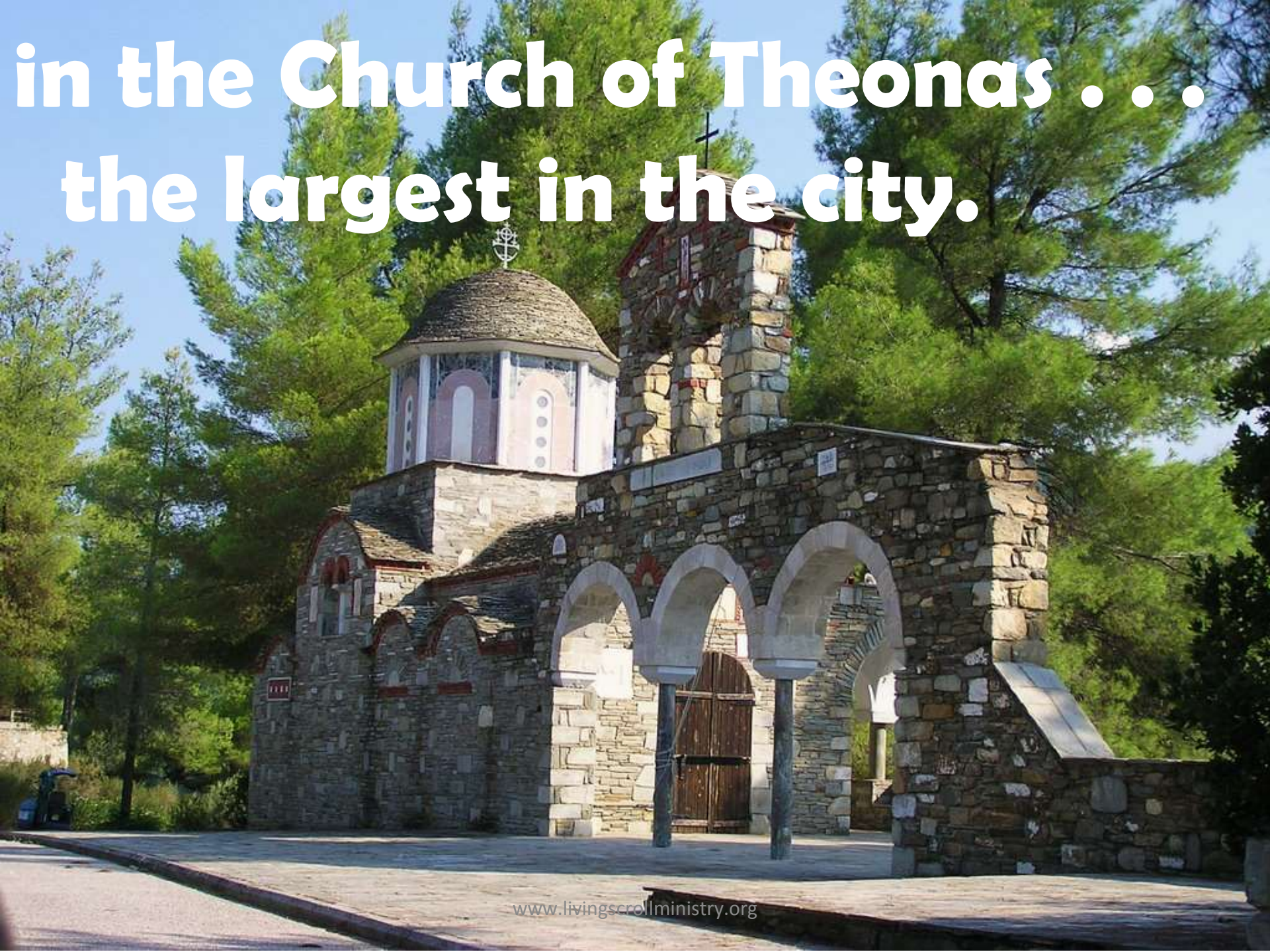
**This freed Constantius
to solidify his power
and to oppose
Athanasius and the
Nicene theology
unopposed.**

**Constantius sent Syrianus
his military commander
with about 5,000 soldiers
to arrest Athanasius.**



**On Thursday night, Feb. 8
[356], Athanasius was
presiding at a crowded
service of preparation for a
Communion on the
following morning . .**

**in the Church of Theonas . . .
the largest in the city.**



**Suddenly the church was
surrounded and the doors
broken in, and just after
midnight Syrianus . . .
“entered with an infinite
force of soldiers.”**

**Athanasius . . . calmly took
his seat upon the bishop's
throne,**



**and ordered the deacon to
begin the 136th psalm, the
people responding at each
verse “for His mercy
endureth for ever.”**



**Meanwhile the soldiers
crowded up to the altar,
and in spite of entreaties the
bishop refused to escape
until the congregations were
in safety.**

**He ordered the prayers to
proceed, and only at the
last moment a crowd of
monks and clergy seized the
Archbishop [Athanasius]**

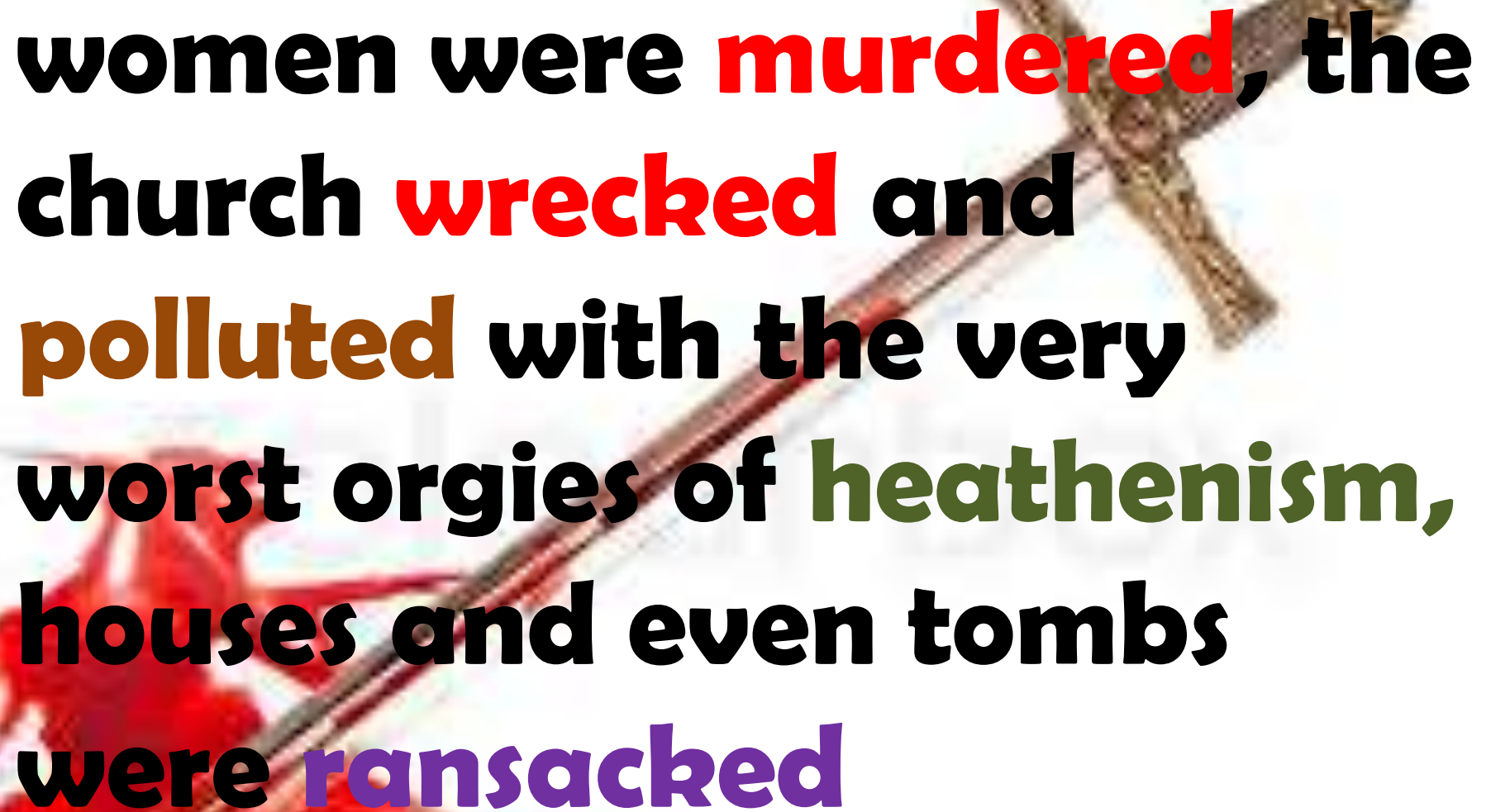


**and managed to convey him
in the confusion out of the
church in a half-fainting
state – invincible to the
surrounding crowd of soldiers**

**... but thankful that he
had been able to secure
the escape of his people
before his own.**

**From that moment
Athanasius was lost to
public view for “six years
and fourteen days.”
(6yrs & 14days)**

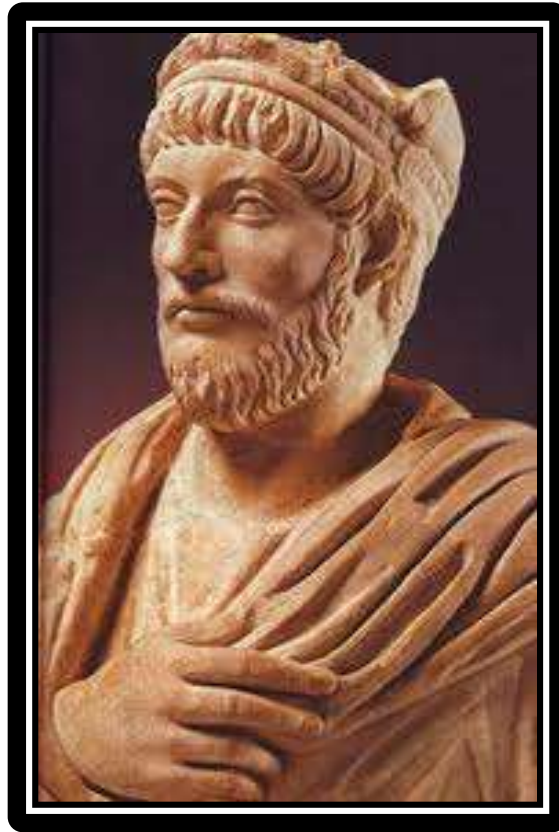
**But eight months(8months)
later, while Athanasius was
on exile, the church of
Theonas was stormed and
violences perpetrated,**



**women were murdered, the
church wrecked and
polluted with the very
worst orgies of heathenism,
houses and even tombs
were ransacked**

**throughout the city and
suburbs on pretence of
“seeking for Athanasius.”**

The new and openly pagan emperor, Julian,



PAGAN EMPEROR
JULIAN

**reversed all the banishments
of Emperor Constantius and
Athanasius returned to
Alexandria on February 21,
362.**

The Fourth Exile of Athanasius (362–364)

**But in October of 362
Athanasius was again
driven from his office by the
emperor's wrath when he
realized that Athanasius
took his Christianity
seriously enough to reject
the pagan gods.**

**Again he spent the
next 15 months among
the desert monks.**

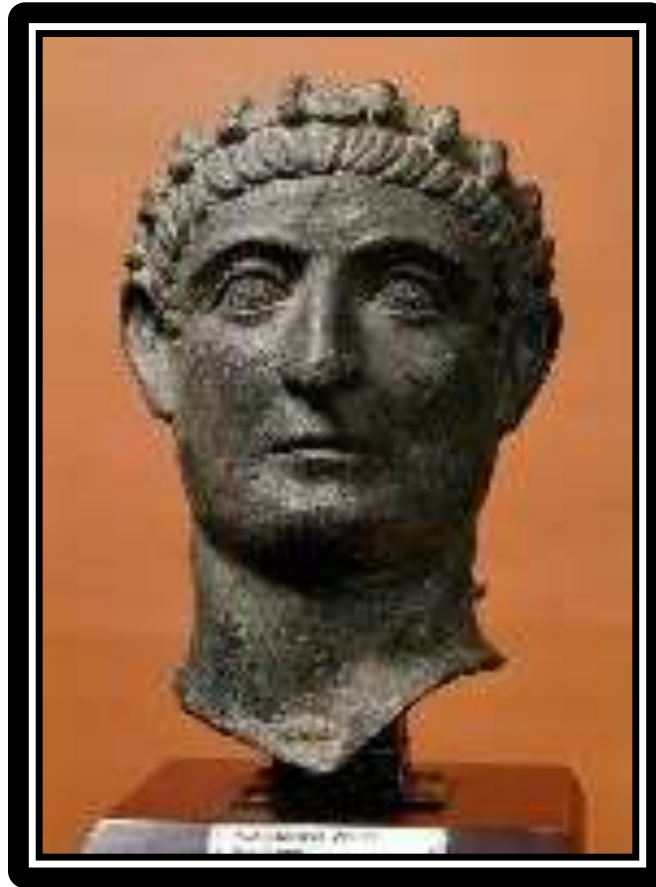


The story goes that he was freed to return by a prophecy by one of the monks that Julian had that very day fallen in battle in Persia.

**It proved true, and
Athanasius was restored
to his ministry on
February 14, 364.**

The Fifth Exile of Athanasius (365– 366)

**A year and a half later the
new **Emperor Valens** gave
order**

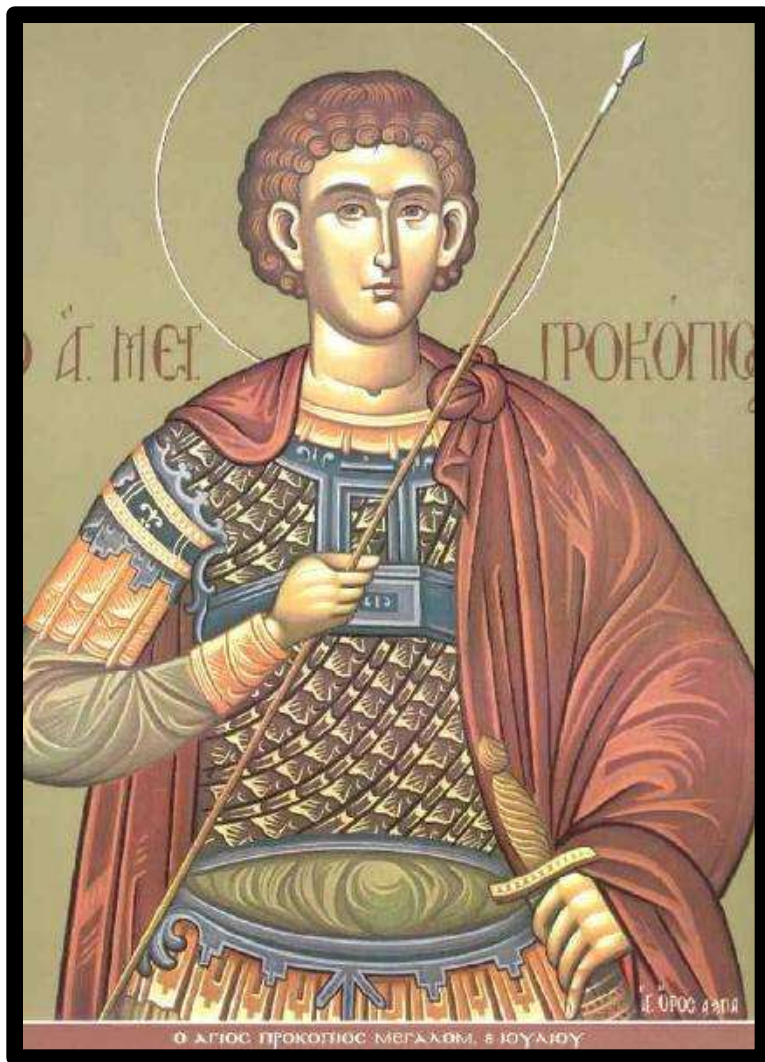


Emperor Valens

**that all the bishops
expelled under late
Emperor Julian should be
removed by the civil
authorities.**

**On October 5, 365 the
Roman Prefect broke
into the church and
searched the apartments
of the clergy,**

**but the 67-year-old
Athanasius had been
warned and escaped one
last time—his fifth exile.**



**It was short
because a
dangerous
revolt led by
Procopius had
to be put
down by
Valens**

Procopius

**and it was not time to
allow popular discontent
to smolder in Alexandria.**

**Athanasius was brought
back February 1, 366.**

The Last Years of Athanasius' Life

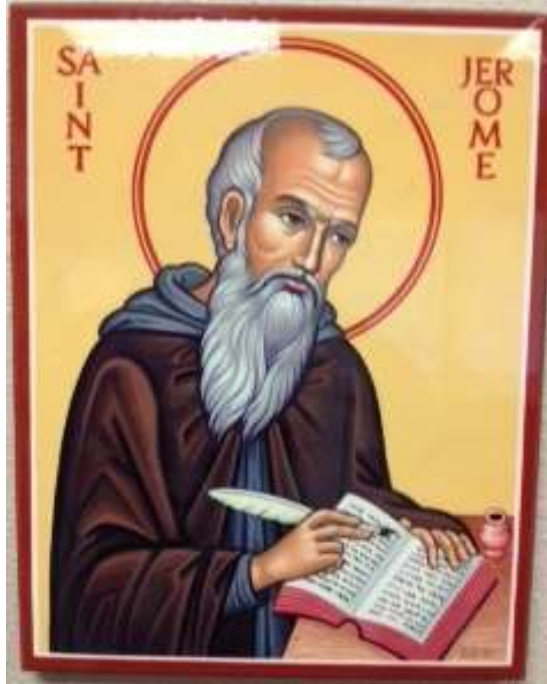
**He spent the last years of
his life fulfilling his calling
as a pastor and overseer of
pastors.**

He carried on extensive correspondence and gave great encouragement and support to the cause of orthodoxy around the empire.

**Athanasius, the
theologian used by God to
save Christianity and
preserve the doctrine of
Trinity died on May 2, 373.**



**The Christ Church
celebrates his memory
on 2 May.**



Saint Jerome

Saint Jerome says
that through
Athanasius God
“**snatched the**
whole world from
the jaws of
Satan.”

Orthodox Church

**Orthodox Church came to
be because of
Athanasius.**

One writer said;

“His defense of the Council of Nicaea (325) for nearly five decades, in spite of being in the minority and suffering religious and political persecution, is one of the most heroic chapters in Christian history.”

Athanasius contra mundum
[against the world] should
inspire every pastor, leader,
believer to stand your
ground meekly and humbly
and courageously whenever
a biblical truth is at stake.

God bless you

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