

I

THE TEACHING OF ST. ATHANASIUS

St. **ATHANASIUS** taught the right teaching. Whatever he taught was, and still is the right and exact Orthodox teaching of the Church. In spite of the fact he lived in the Fourth Century and that there were not many christian books in his time, yet he was able to absorb the teaching of Christ transmitted to the Church through tradition and the Holy Scriptures, to understand it and to assimilate it, and to express it rightly and accurately and honestly.

ATHANASIUS was a good recipient of the Holy Spirit. He was a sound instrument to receive the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. How few and rare are those who can be good instruments, who can honestly and perfectly transmit the inspirations and effects of the Holy Spirit without being changed or even coloured by one factor or another which might distort the clarity thereof.

A prophet or an apostle or a teacher in the Church is likened unto a musical instrument which a musician blows. If the instrument is not in good condition, no sound tone could be transmitted through it, however competent the musician may be. An apostle or a teacher in the Church may be also likened unto a brush in the hand of a painter on a piece of paper or cloth or even on a wall. He may be likened moreover unto a pen or pencil with which a writer or a scribe writes. If the brush or the pen be not in good condition or fit enough for its purpose it could be, because of that, a hindrance to presenting a fine art.

St. **ATHANASIUS** was one of the very few people who was really a good and fit instrument that could receive easily and without hindrance that which the Holy Spirit wished to say to the people of his time, and he could honestly and accurately and without distortion transmit what the Holy Spirit wished to communicate.

St. **ATHANASIUS** was not merely among the fathers of the Church but he was of the few who gained the title of a teacher and doctor of the Church. He was the one to speak out of the whole Universal Church of the Christ. Whatever he said has been

adopted by the Church Universal as the sound and perfect teaching of the Church. In a word, he was and still is recognized as the spokesman of the Church Universal of Christ.

It is an established biblical fact that no human being by nature is infallible, but we may say that St. Athanasius was protected by a special grace from falling into heresy or deviation from the Orthodox faith in the Christ. We may say without hesitation that he did not err in all that he taught and said. He was indeed an honest witness to the Christ. And it was the Christ who protected him from erring because the Christ promised to safeguard His Church and that He would not permit « the gates of hell to prevail against it ¹ ». The Christ is the guarantee of the infallibility of the Church. Blessed be Athanasius who was to the Church in his time the honest guardian and keeper of the vineyard that has but one Lord and he did not make of himself except an honest and loyal servant and steward only.

II

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF ST. ATHANASIUS

ATHANASIUS was a saintly man, a holy man of God.

ATHANASIUS was one among the few who are recognized by the Church as teachers and saints at the same time.

1. The science which Athanasius learned of God and of godly things was not that kind of science which man receives from books or teachers in schools, although Athanasius himself was a pupil and a student of the School of Alexandria, the science which he received was rather of the kind of which St. John in his first epistle describes as the science coming directly from God ². Because the teaching which St. Athanasius taught was wholly and perfectly pure, right, correct, sound and true, it could never emerging from a human source. Also because the teaching of St. Athanasius was and still is the right and true expression of the Faith of the whole Church Universal it could not come out of a human mind nor of human knowledge or a human experience.

After sixteen centuries, the teaching of St. Athanasius still prevails dominating our Christian thinking and still acknowledged as the full expression of the Faith of the Universal Church. We may even add that Christians nowadays recognize more than

1. *St. Matthew* XVI, 18.

2. *I. John* II, 27.