

**TH 6300**  
**Joel Stephen Williams**  
**Day 3**



# Monasticism

Changes due to Constantine

Non-Christian background

Brahmanism & Hinduism

Buddhism & Jainism

Pythagoreans

Gnostics & Manicheans

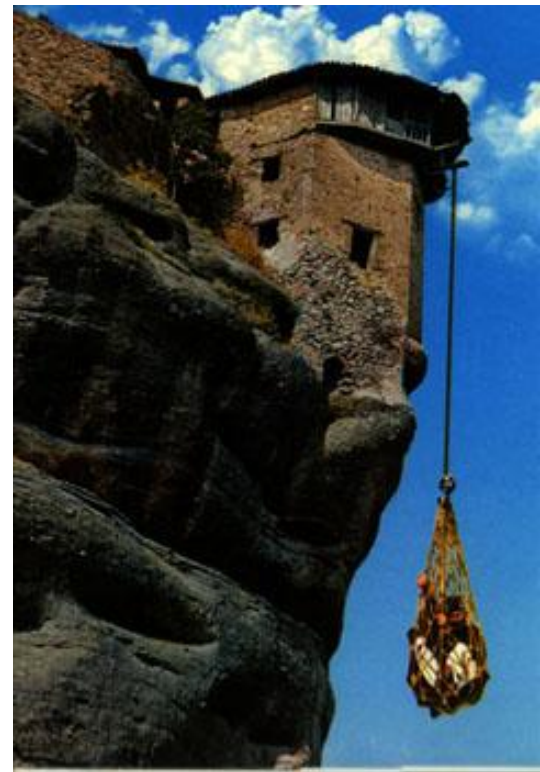
Philo and Origen

Essenes

Heresy, apostasy view

Multiple sources/influences view

Pre-Nicene asceticism



# Four Stages of Monasticism

1. Ascetics within the church

2. Hermit life or anchoretism

Diocletian

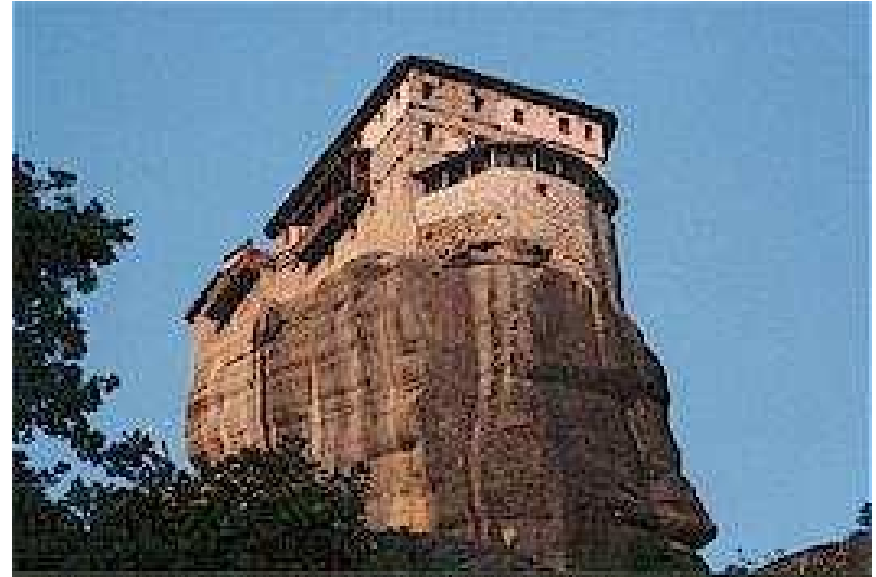
Anthony

3. Cenobitism or communal  
monasticism

Pachomius

Benedict

4. Monastic orders



# Brief History of Monasticism

## 1. Paul of Thebes

Decian persecution

Jerome

Anathas & Macarius

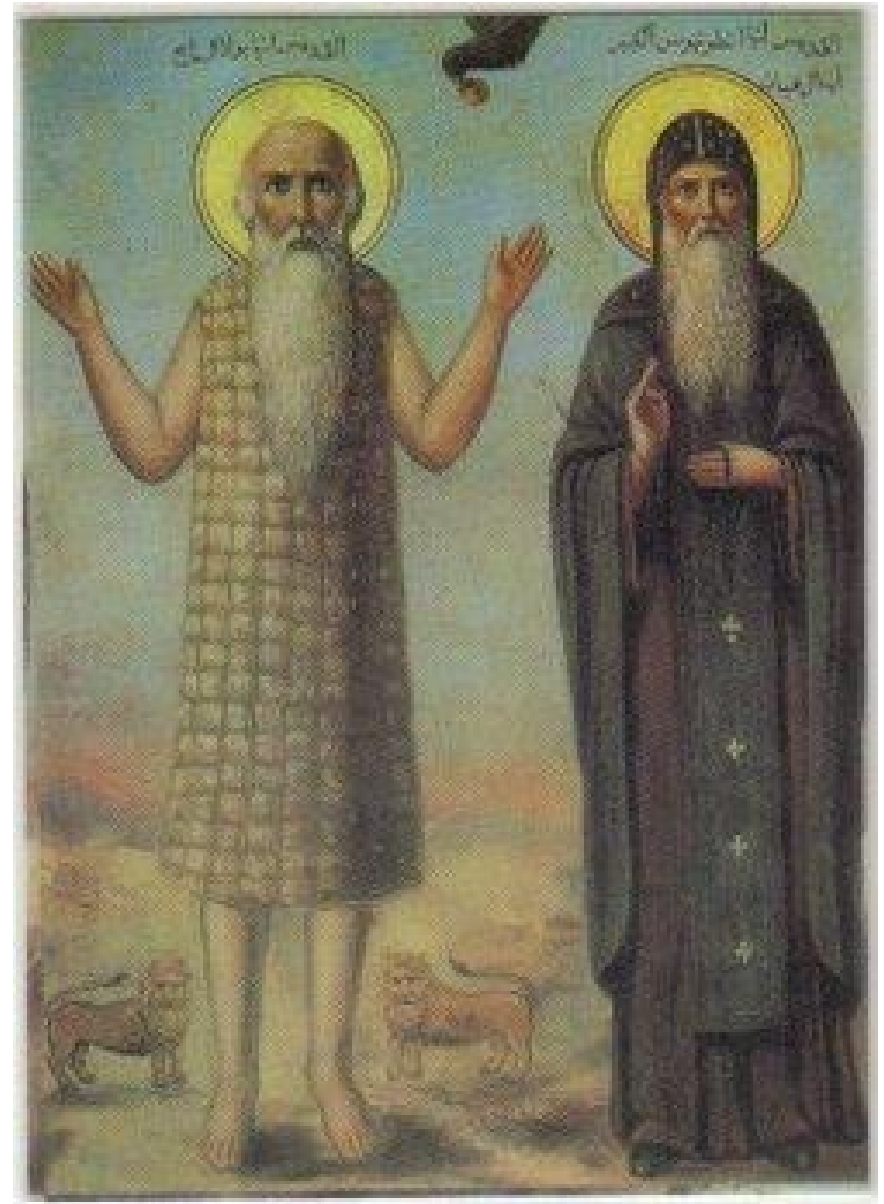
(Coptic icon of Paul of Thebes and Anthony) --->

## 2. Anthony

Mount Colzim

Didymus

“If you take me for a fool, your labor is lost; but if I am a wise man, you should imitate me, and be Christians, as I am.”



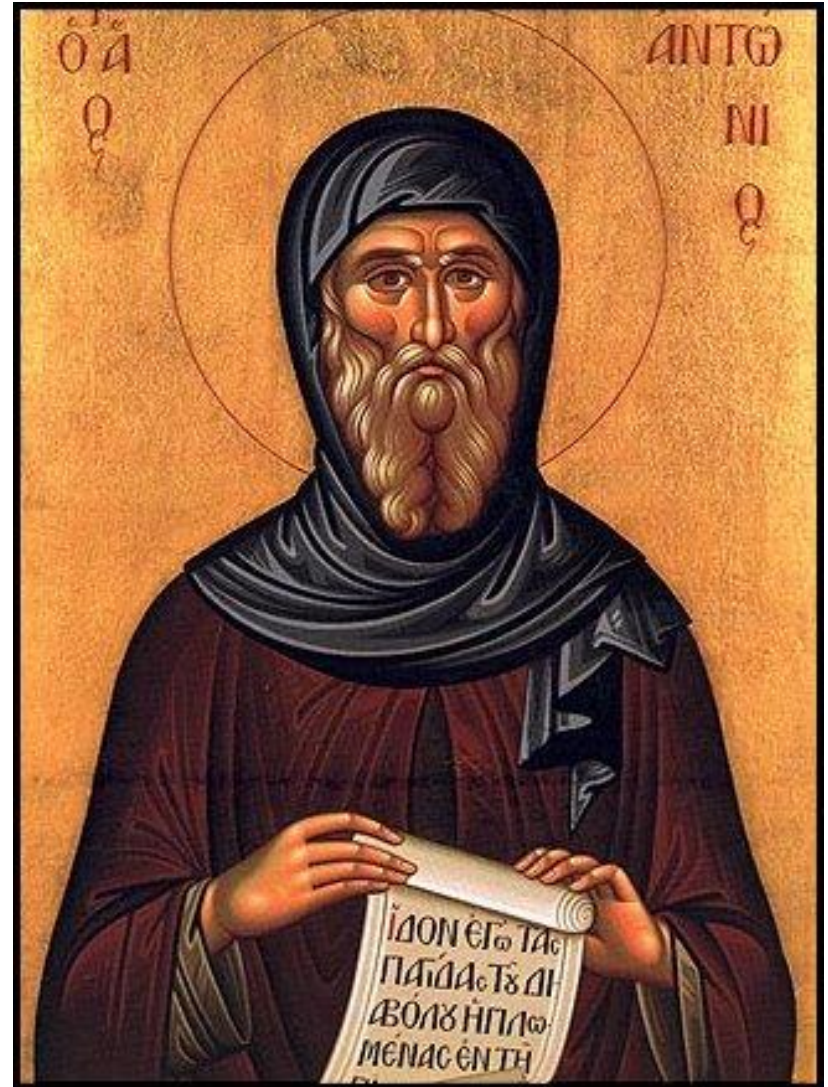
## Brief History of Monasticism

### 2. Anthony (continued)

“My book is the whole creation, which lies open before me, and in which I can read the word of God as often as I will.”

“Don’t be troubled because of the loss of your outward eye, with which even flies see, but rejoice in the possession of the spiritual eye, with which angels behold the face of God and receive his light”

“Happy are you that you worship Christ. Don’t be proud of your earthly power. Think of the future judgment, and know that Christ is the only true and eternal king. Practice justice and love for men. Care for the poor.”



## Brief History of Monasticism

### 2. Anthony (continued)

“Don’t be amazed that the emperor writes to me, because he is just a man. Wonder much more that God has written the law for man, and has spoken to us by his own Son.”

Martianus

“Man, why do you call on me? I am a man like you. If you believe, pray to God and he will hear you.”

Serapion

Athanasius

“What gave him his renown was not learning, nor worldly wisdom, nor human art, but alone his piety toward God....And let all the brothers know that the Lord will not only take holy monks to heaven, but give them celebrity in all the earth, however deep they may bury themselves in the wilderness.”

Chrysostom

Nitria



## Brief History of Monasticism

3. Hilarion

4. Simeon

Lord Alfred Tennyson, St. Simeon Stylites

Although I be the basest of mankind,  
From scalp to sole one slough and crust of sin,  
Unfit for earth, unfit for heaven, scarce meet  
For troops of devils, mad with blasphemy,  
I will not cease to grasp the hope I hold  
Of saintdom, and to clamour, mourn and sob,  
Battering the gates of heaven with storms of  
prayer,  
Have mercy, Lord, and take away my sin.



## Brief History of Monasticism

### 4. Simeon

Lord Alfred Tennyson, St. Simeon Stylites

Let this avail, just, dreadful, mighty God,  
This not be all in vain, that thrice ten years,  
Thrice multiplied by superhuman pangs,  
In hungers and in thirsts, fevers and cold,  
In coughs, aches, stitches, ulcerous throes and cramps,  
A sign betwixt the meadow and the cloud,  
Patient on this tall pillar I have borne  
Rain, wind, frost, heat, hail, damp, and sleet, and snow;  
And I had hoped that ere this period closed  
Thou wouldst have caught me up into thy rest,  
Denying not these weather-beaten limbs  
The meed [merited gift, wages] of saints, the white robe  
and the palm. . . .



## Brief History of Monasticism

### 4. Simeon - Lord Alfred Tennyson, St. Simeon Stylites

O Lord, Lord,  
Thou knowest I bore this better at the first,  
For I was strong and hale of body then;  
And though my teeth, which now are dropped away,  
Would chatter with the cold, and all my beard  
Was tagged with icy fringes in the moon,  
I drowned the whoopings of the owl with sound  
Of pious hymns and psalms, and sometimes saw  
An angel stand and watch me, as I sang.  
Now am I feeble grown; my end draws nigh;  
I hope my end draws nigh: half deaf I am,  
So that I scarce can hear the people hum  
About the column's base, and almost blind,  
And scarce can recognize the fields I know;  
And both my thighs are rotted with the dew;  
Yet cease I not to clamour and to cry,  
While my stiff spine can hold my weary head,  
Till all my limbs drop piecemeal from the stone,  
Have mercy, mercy: take away my sin.



## Brief History of Monasticism

### 4. Simeon - Lord Alfred Tennyson, St. Simeon Stylites

O Jesus, if thou wilt not save my soul,  
Who may be saved? who is it may be saved?  
Who may be made a saint, if I fail here?  
Show me the man hath suffered more than I.  
For did not all thy martyrs die one death?  
For either they were stoned, or crucified, . . .

Bethink thee, Lord, while thou and all the saints  
Enjoy themselves in heaven, and men on earth  
House in the shade of comfortable roofs,  
Sit with their wives by fires, eat wholesome food,  
And wear warm clothes, and even beasts have stalls,  
I, 'tween the spring and downfall of the light,  
Bow down one thousand and two hundred times,  
To Christ, the Virgin Mother, and the Saints....

Theodoret



## Brief History of Monasticism

### 5. Pachomius

Palemon

Basil the Great

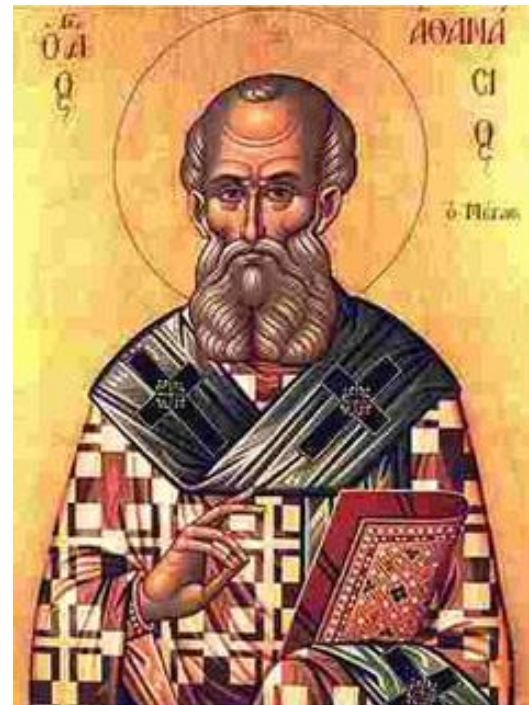
Rufinus



### 6. Athanasius

Ammonius

Isidore



# Brief History of Monasticism

## 7. Jerome

### Eustochium

How often, when I was living in the desert, in the vast solitude which gives to hermits a savage dwelling-place, parched by a burning sun, how often did I fancy myself among the pleasures of Rome. . . . Now, although in my fear of hell I had consigned myself to this prison, where I had no companions but scorpions and wild beasts, I often found myself amid bevvies of girls. My face was pale and my frame chilled with fasting; yet my mind was burning with desire, and the fires of lust kept bubbling up before me when my flesh was as good as dead. Helpless, I cast myself at the feet of Jesus, I watered them with my tears, I wiped them with my hair: and then I subdued my rebellious body with weeks of abstinence (Jerome, *Epistle 22.7*).



## Brief History of Monasticism

### 7. Jerome

I lately saw the noblest lady in Rome—I suppress her name, for I am no satirist—with a band of eunuchs before her in the basilica of the blessed Peter. She was giving money to the poor, a coin apiece; and this with her own hand, that she might be accounted more religious. Hereupon a by no means uncommon incident occurred. An old woman, “full of years and rags,” ran forward to get a second coin, but when her turn came she received not a penny but a blow hard enough to draw blood from her guilty veins (Jerome, *Epistle 22.32*).



# Brief History of Monasticism

## 7. Jerome

A brother, more thrifty than covetous, and ignorant that the Lord had been sold for thirty pieces of silver, left behind him at his death a hundred pieces of money which he had earned by weaving linen. As there were about five thousand monks in the neighborhood, living in as many separate cells, a council was held as to what should be done. Some said that the coins should be distributed among the poor; others that they should be given to the church, while others were for sending them back to the relatives of the deceased. However, Macarius, Pambo, Isidore and the rest of those called fathers, speaking by the Spirit, decided that they should be interred with their owner, with the words: “Thy money perish with thee.” (Jerome, *Epistle 22.33*).



## Brief History of Monasticism

### 7. Jerome - to Heliodorus

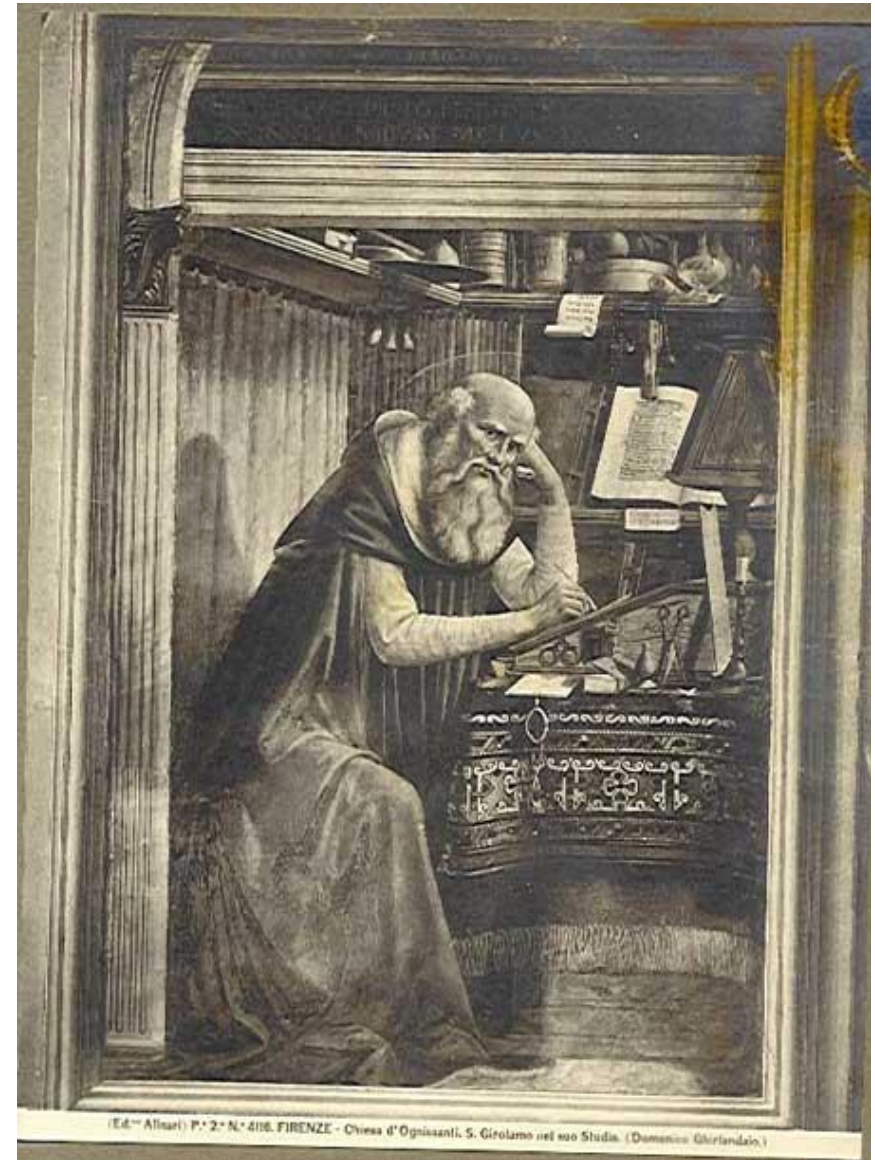
Lo, the enemy is striving to slay Christ in your breast.... Should your little nephew hang on your neck, pay no regard to him; should your mother with ashes on her hair and garments rent show you the breasts at which she nursed you, heed her not; should your father prostrate himself on the threshold, trample him under foot and go your way. With dry eyes fly to the standard of the cross. In such cases cruelty is the only true affection....O desert, bright with the flowers of Christ! O solitude whence come the stones of which, in the Apocalypse, the city of the great king is built! O wilderness, gladdened with God's especial presence! What keeps you in the world, my brother, you who are above the world? (Jerome, *Epistle 14.2*).



# Brief History of Monasticism

## 7. Jerome

Does toil frighten you? No athlete is crowned but in the sweat of his brow. Are you anxious as regards food? Faith fears no famine. Do you dread the bare ground for limbs wasted with fasting? The Lord lies there beside you. Do you recoil from an unwashed head and uncombed hair? Christ is your true head....Does the boundless solitude of the desert terrify you? In the spirit you may walk always in paradise. Do but turn your thoughts thither and you will be no more in the desert. Is your skin rough and scaly because you no longer bathe? He that is once washed in Christ needs not wash again. (Jerome, *Epistle* 14.20, 25).



# Brief History of Monasticism

## 8. Benedict

Nursia

Monte Cassino

The rule



## Brief History of Monasticism

### 8. Gregory of Nazianzus

Cappadocia

Constantius

“There is a danger of the noblest of all offices becoming a by-word among us. For promotion depends not on virtue, but villainy; and the sacred thrones fall not to the most worthy but to the most powerful....Physicians must first study the nature of diseases and painters must gain experience in handling colors and in drawing; but a prelate is easily found, without serious training, with a reputation of recent date, sown and sprung up in a moment” (*Panegyric on Basil*).



## Brief History of Monasticism

### 8. Gregory of Nazianzus (continued)

#### Thecla

“I am of a mind to avoid all gatherings of bishops, for never have I seen one that produced any useful result or composed any difference of opinion. Rather the trouble, whatever it was, was aggravated. For there is ever contention in them, and ambition and talking competitions, and people make accusations against one another rather than come to terms.”

(Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Macrina. Macrina was the sister of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa.)



## Purpose of Monasticism

Three vows - celibacy, poverty, obedience

H. Richard Niebuhr

## Life in the Monastery

Macedonius      Marcarius      Isidore

John Chrysostom

“Before the rising of the sun they rise, hale and sober, sing as with one mouth hymns to the praise of God, then bow the knee in prayer, under the direction of the abbot, read the holy Scriptures, and go to their labors; pray again at nine, twelve, and three o’clock; after a good day’s work, enjoy a simple meal of bread and salt, perhaps with oil, and sometimes with peas (pulse, lentils, beans); sing a thanksgiving hymn, and lay themselves on their pallets of straw without care, grief or murmur. When one dies, they say: ‘He is perfected;’ and all pray to God for a similar end, that they also may come to the eternal Sabbath-rest and to the vision of Christ.”

## Purpose of Monasticism

Schaff - "It forms the romantic shady side of the otherwise so tedious monotony of the secluded life, and contains much material for the history of ethics, psychology, and pathology."

Schaff – "There is more virtue in the temperate and thankful enjoyment of the gifts of God, than in total abstinence; in charitable and well-seasoned speech, than in total silence; in connubial chastity [chaste marital relations], than in celibacy; in self-denying practical labor for the church, than in solitary asceticism, which only pleases self and profits no one else."

## Position of Monks in the Church

Jerome – "A monk has not the office of a teacher, but of a penitent, who endures suffering either for himself or for the world."

Athanasius and Ammonius

# The Significance of the Monastic System on Early Christianity

Dean Milman – “It was not monasticism, as such, which has proved a blessing to the church and the world; for the monasticism of India, which for three thousand years has pushed the practice of mortification to all the excesses of delirium, never saved a single soul, nor produced a single benefit to the race. It was *Christianity* in monasticism which has done all the good, and used this abnormal mode of life as a means for carrying forward its mission of love and peace. In proportion as monasticism was animated and controlled by the spirit of Christianity, it proved a blessing; while separated from it, it degenerated and became a fruitful source of evil.”



## Athanasius

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## Athanasius

“The History of the Church is represented in certain respects by the history of her great men”- Wordsworth, *Church History*

### Significance

#### Early life:

Meletian schism

#### Enters training for ministry:

Alexander - bishop - 312 C.E.

#### Early writings

*Against the Gentiles*

*On the Incarnation*

#### Arius

Became a point of contention

“devils, Antichrists, polytheists, atheists, dogs, wolves, chameleons, hydras, eels, cuttlefrogs, gnats, beetles, and leeches.”



# Athanasius

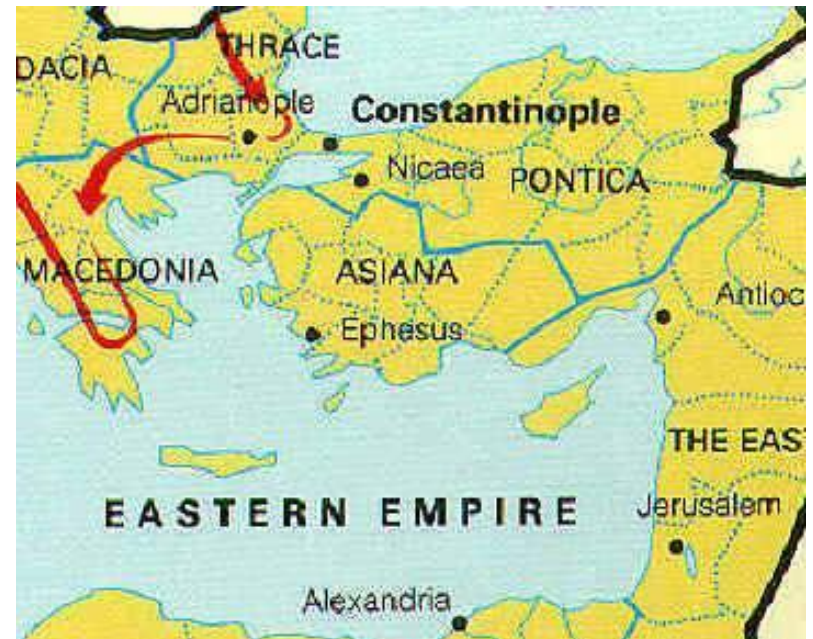
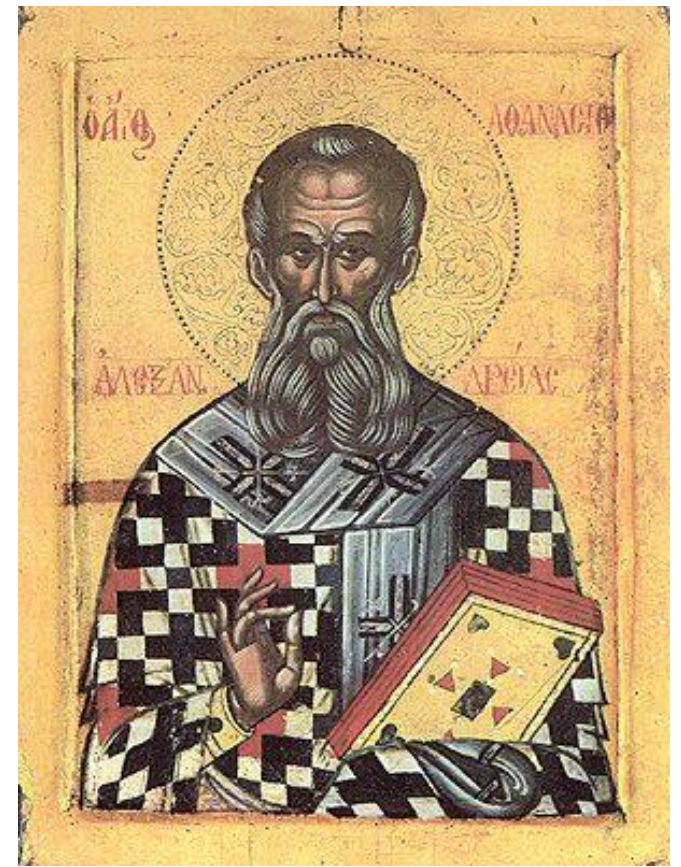
Farrar - "To brand an opponent with the worst motives, and to injure his character with baseless accusations has been a crime only too common among religious champions"

Erasmus - "If I had lived in the time of Hilary [the Athanasius of Gaul] I would have uttered warnings and teachings against the Arians, but I would not have called them satans or Antichrists."

Lucian Sabellianism

Jerome - "The world groaned and marvelled at finding itself Arian."

Council of Nicea





## Athanasius

Farrar - “And here we cannot but pause to deplore once again the spirit of slanderous violence which, in age after age, has been the disgrace of the Church of Christ.

Prevalent in every epoch, it shows how the fuglemen [forefront of a group or party] of parties are apt to forget the most elementary graces of true holiness, the first and most universal commandment of Christian love. They conceal the bitterness of personal malevolence under the conceit of supposed infallibility.”

Some happy events from his life

