

Chapter 1 : Athanasius of Alexandria - Wikipedia

Famous Festal Letter Perhaps Athanasius's single most influential writing, however, was his Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter of It had been customary after Epiphany each year [the Christian.

Blog Festal Letter 1 Come, my beloved, the season calls us to keep the feast. For thus the God of all, after the manner of wise Solomon, distributes everything in time and season, to the end that, in due time, the salvation of men should be everywhere spread abroad. At one time, as has been said, they called to the feasts; at another time to fasting and to war. And this was not done without solemnity, nor by chance, but this sound of the trumpets was appointed, so that every man should come to that which was proclaimed. For beyond any other voice or instrument, the trumpet is awakening and terrible; so Israel received instruction by these means, because he was then but a child. But in order that the proclamation should not be thought merely human, being superhuman, its sounds resembled those which were uttered when they trembled before the mount; and they were reminded of the law that was then given them, and kept it. For the law was admirable, and the shadow was excellent, otherwise, it would not have wrought fear, and induced reverence in those who heard; especially in those who at that time not only heard but saw these things. Now these things were typical, and done as in a shadow. Sometimes the call is made to fasting, and sometimes to a feast. For not all those who call upon God, hallow God, since there are some who defile Him; yet not Him—that is impossible—but their own mind concerning Him; for He is holy, and has pleasure in the saints. And, to mention nothing else, there are many who exalt themselves above their neighbors, thereby causing great mischief. For the boast of fasting did no good to the Pharisee, although he fasted twice in the week, only because he exalted himself against the publican. It is required that not only with the body should we fast, but with the soul. Now the soul is humbled when it does not follow wicked opinions, but feeds on becoming virtues. For virtues and vices are the food of the soul and it can eat either of these two meats, and incline to either of the two, according to its own will. Therefore, in order to withdraw and turn them from vices, He commands them to be nourished with the food of virtue; namely, humbleness of mind, lowliness to endure humiliations, the acknowledgment of God. For not only does such a fast as this obtain pardon for souls, but being kept holy, it prepares the saints, and raises them above the earth. And indeed that which I am about to say is wonderful, yea it is of those things which are very miraculous; yet not far from the truth, as ye may be able to learn from the sacred writings. That great man Moses, when fasting, conversed with God, and received the law. The great and holy Elijah, when fasting, was thought worthy of divine visions, and at last was taken up like Him who ascended into heaven. And Daniel, when fasting, although a very young man, was entrusted with the mystery, and he alone understood the secret things of the king, and was thought worthy of divine visions. But because the length of the fast of these men was wonderful, and the days prolonged, let no man lightly fall into unbelief; but rather let him believe and know, that the contemplation of God, and the word which is from Him, suffice to nourish those who hear, and stand to them in place of all food. For the angels are not otherwise sustained than by beholding at all times the face of the Father, and of the Savior Who is in heaven. And thus Moses, as long as he talked with God, fasted indeed bodily, but was nourished by divine words. When he descended among men, and God was gone up from him, he suffered hunger like other men. For it is not said that he fasted longer than forty days—those in which he was conversing with God. And, generally, each one of the saints has been thought worthy of similar transcendent nourishment. Wherefore, my beloved, having our souls nourished with divine food, with the Word, and according to the will of God, and fasting bodily in things external, let us keep this great and saving feast as becomes us. Even the ignorant Jews received this divine food, through the type, when they ate a lamb in the Passover. But not understanding the type, even to this day they eat the lamb, erring in that they are without the city and the truth. As long as Judea and the city existed, there were a type, and a lamb, and a shadow, since the law thus commanded: These things shall not be done in another city; but in the land of Judea, and in no place without [the land of Judea]. And besides this, the law commanded them to offer whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices, there being no other altar than that in Jerusalem. For on this account, in that city alone was there an altar and temple built, and in no other city were they permitted to

perform these rites, so that when that city should come to an end, then those things that were figurative might also be done away. Now observe; that city, since the coming of our Savior, has had an end, and all the land of the Jews has been laid waste; so that from the testimony of these things and we need no further proof, being assured by our own eyes of the fact there must, of necessity, be an end of the shadow. For they shall no more go to that which is old; it is finished; it is taken away: He is gone up Who breathed upon the face, and delivered thee from affliction. But as soon as He went up, it was finished. Who was He then, O Jews, as I said before? If Moses, the assertion would be false; for the people were not yet come to the land in which alone they were commanded to perform these rites. But if Samuel, or any other of the prophets, even in that case there would be a perversion of the truth; for hitherto these things were done in Judea, and the city was standing. For it was necessary that while that stood, these things should be performed. So that it was none of these, my beloved, Who went up. And casting away all hypocrisy and fraud, putting far from us all pride and deceit, let us take upon us love towards God and towards our neighbor, that being new [creatures], and receiving the new wine, even the Holy Spirit, we may properly keep the feast, even the month of these new [fruits]. We begin the holy fast on the fifth day of Pharmuthi March 31 , and adding to it according to the number of those six holy and great days, which are the symbol of the creation of this world, let us rest and cease from fasting on the tenth day of the same Pharmuthi April 5 , on the holy Sabbath of the week. And when the first day of the holy week dawns and rises upon us, on the eleventh day of the same month April 6 , from which again we count all the seven weeks one by one, let us keep feast on the holy day of Pentecostâ€”on that which was at one time to the Jews, typically, the feast of weeks, in which they granted forgiveness and settlement of debts; and indeed that day was one of deliverance in every respect. Let us keep the feast on the first day of the great week, as a symbol of the world to come, in which we here receive a pledge that we shall have everlasting life hereafter. May we be judged worthy to be partakers in these things. Let us remember the poor, and not forget kindness to strangers; above all, let us love God with all our soul, and might, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. So may we receive those things which the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, and which have not entered into the heart of man, which God hath prepared for those that love Him, through His only Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; through Whom, to the Father alone, by the Holy Ghost, be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Salute one another with a kiss. All the brethren who are with me salute you.

Chapter 2 : Athanasius Defines the New Testament | Christian History Magazine

*In the fragment of the thirty-ninth Festal Letter he also speaks of the work of Hermas as not being one of the canonical books, *ibid.* p. , and in the Syriac version, p. * Literally, "Son of our Ministry."*

The pope summoned a synod of bishops to meet in Rome. During this time, Gregory of Cappadocia was installed as the Patriarch of Alexandria, usurping the absent Athanasius. Athanasius did, however, remain in contact with his people through his annual Festal Letters, in which he also announced on which date Easter would be celebrated that year. Pope Julius I called a synod in Rome in to address the matter, which proclaimed Athanasius the rightful bishop of Alexandria. Together they set out for Sardica, Sofia. The travel was a mammoth task in itself. At this great gathering of prelates, leaders of the Church, the case of Athanasius was taken up once more, that is, Athanasius was formally questioned over misdemeanours and even murder, a man called Arsenius and using his body for magic "an absurd charge. It was called according to Socrates, E. One hundred and seventy six attended. Eusebian bishops objected to the admission of Athanasius and other deposed bishops to the Council, except as accused persons to answer the charges brought against them. Their objections were overridden by the orthodox bishops, about a hundred were orthodox, who were the majority. The Eusebians, seeing they had no chance of having their views carried, retired to Philoppopolis in Thrace, Philippopolis Thracia , where they held an opposition council, under the presidency of the Patriarch of Antioch, and confirmed the decrees of the Synod of Antioch. Two conciliar letters were prepared, one to the clergy and faithful of Alexandria, the other to the bishops of Egypt and Libya, in which the will of the Council was made known. Meanwhile, the Eusebian party had gone to Philippopolis, where they issued an anathema against Athanasius and his supporters. The persecution against the orthodox party broke out with renewed vigour, and Constantius was induced to prepare drastic measures against Athanasius and the priests who were devoted to him. Orders were given that if the Saint attempt to re-enter his see, he should be put to death. Athanasius, accordingly, withdrew from Sardica to Naissus in Mysia, where he celebrated the Easter festival of the year Gregory, an Arian bishop, had taken over the See of Alexandria. The emissary to the Emperor Constantius sent by the bishops of the Sardica Council to report the finding of the Council, who had been met at first with most insulting treatment, now received a favourable hearing. Constantius was forced to reconsider his decision, owing to a threatening letter from his brother Constans and the uncertain conditions of affairs on the Persian border, and he accordingly made up his mind to yield. But three separate letters were needed to overcome the natural hesitation of Athanasius. He was accorded a gracious interview by the Emperor, and sent back to his See in triumph, and began his memorable ten years of peace, which lasted to the third exile, For two years Liberius had been favourable to the cause of Athanasius; but driven at last into exile, he was induced to sign an ambiguous formula, from which the great Nicene text, the "homoousion", had been studiously omitted. In a council was held at Milan, where in spite of the vigorous opposition of a handful of loyal prelates among the Western bishops, a fourth condemnation of Athanasius was announced to the world. With his friends scattered, the saintly Hosius in exile, and Pope Liberius denounced as acquiescing in Arian formularies, Athanasius could hardly hope to escape. On the night of 8 February , while engaged in services in the Church of St. Thomas, a band of armed men burst in to secure his arrest. It was the beginning of his third exile. The fathers terrified of the threats of the Emperor, an avowed Arian, they consented to the condemnation of Athanasius. The Pope refused to accept their decision, and requested the Emperor to hold another Council, in which the charges against Athanasius could be freely investigated. To this Constantius consented, for he felt able to control the Council in Milan. They met in the Church of Milan. Shortly, the Emperor ordered them to a hall in the Imperial Palace, thus ending any free debate. He presented an Arian formula of faith for their acceptance. He threatened any who refused with exile and death. All, with the exception of Dionysius bishop of Milan , and the two Papal Legates, viz. Those who refused were sent into exile. The decrees were forwarded to the Pope for approval, but were rejected, because of the violence to which the bishops were subjected. Through the influence of the Eusebian faction at Constantinople, an Arian bishop, George of Cappadocia , was now appointed to rule the see of Alexandria. Athanasius, after remaining

some days in the neighbourhood of the city, finally withdrew into the desert of Upper Egypt, where he remained for a period of six years, living the life of the monks, devoting himself to the composition of a group of writings; "Apology to Constantius", the "Apology for his Flight", the "Letter to the Monks", and the "History of the Arians". This was followed, in , by an attempt to arrest Athanasius during a vigil service. During this period, Athanasius completed his work Four Orations against the Arians and defended his own recent conduct in the Apology to Constantius and Apology for His Flight. He was ordered into banishment to Beroea, in Thrace. He sent expensive presents if he were to accept the Arian position, which Liberius refused. He sent him five hundred pieces of gold "to bear his charges" which Liberius refused, saying he might bestow them on his flatters; as he did also a like present from the empress, bidding the messenger learn to believe in Christ, and not to persecute the Church of God. Attempts were made to leave the presents in The Church, but Liberius threw them out. Constantius hereupon sent for him under a strict guard to Milan, where in a conference recorded by Theodore, he boldly told Constantius that Athanasius had been acquitted at Sardica, and his enemies proved calumniators see: The emperor was reduced to silence on every article, but being the more out of patience, ordered him into banishment. Constantius, after two years went to Rome to celebrate the twentieth year of his reign. The ladies joined in a petition to him that he would restore Liberius. He assented, upon condition that he should comply with the bishops, then, at court. He subscribed the condemnation of Athanasius, and a confession or creed which had been framed by the Arians at Sirmium. And he no sooner had recovered his see that he declared himself for the Creed of Niceae, as Theodoret testifies. So did the bishops at his court. Athanasius stuck by the orthodox creed. The Arians sought the approval of an Ecumenical Council. They sought to hold two councils. Constantius, summoned the bishops of the East to meet at Seleucia in Isauria, and those of the West to Rimini in Italy. A preliminary conference was held by the Arians at Sirmium, to agree a formula of faith. A "Homoeon" creed was adopted, declaring The Son to be "like the Father". The two met in autumn of At Seleucia, one hundred and fifty bishops, of which one hundred and five were semi-Arian. The semi-Arians refused to accept anything less than the "Homoiousion", see: Homoiousian, formulary of faith. The Imperial Prefect was obliged to disband, without agreeing on any creed. At Rimini were over four hundred of which eighty were Arian, the rest were orthodox. The orthodox fathers refused to accept any creed but the Nicene, while the others were equally in favour of the Sirmian. Each party sent a deputation to the Emperor to say there was no probability to agreement, and asked for the bishops to return to their dioceses. For the purpose of wearing-down the orthodox bishops; Sulpitius Severius says, Constantius delayed his answer for several months, and finally prevailed on them to accept the Sirmian creed. It was after this Council that Jerome said: The Emperor Constantius, who had been the cause of so much trouble, died on 4 November and was succeeded by Julian. George, the usurping Bishop, was flung into prison and murdered. An obscure presbyter of the name of Pistus was immediately chosen by the Arians to succeed him, when fresh news arrived that filled the orthodox party with hope. An edict had been put forth by Julian permitting the exiled bishops of the "Galileans" to return to their "towns and provinces". Athanasius received a summons from his own flock, and he accordingly re-entered his episcopal capitol on 22 February Athanasius appealed for unity among all those who had faith in Christianity, even if they differed on matters of terminology. This prepared the groundwork for his definition of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. Mild measures were agreed on for those heretic bishops who repented, but severe penance was decreed for the chief leaders of the major heresies. To clear up the misunderstandings that had arisen in the course of the previous years, an attempt was made to determine still further the significance of the Nicene formularies. In the meanwhile, Julian, who seems to have become suddenly jealous of the influence that Athanasius was exercising at Alexandria, addressed an order to Ecdicius, the Prefect of Egypt, peremptorily commanding the expulsion of the restored primate, on the ground that he had never been included in the imperial act of clemency. The edict was communicated to the bishop by Pythicodorus Trico, who, though described in the "Chronicon Athanasianum" XXXV as a "philosopher", seems to have behaved with brutal insolence. Athanasius returned in secret to Alexandria, where he soon received a document from the new emperor, Jovian, reinstating him once more in his episcopal functions. Early in September he set out for Antioch on the Orontes, bearing a synodal letter, in which the pronouncements of this council had been embodied. At Antioch he had an interview with the new

emperor, who received him graciously and even asked him to prepare an exposition of the orthodox faith. The following February Jovian died; and in October, , Athanasius was once more an exile. This time Athanasius simply left for the outskirts of Alexandria, where he stayed for only a few months before the local authorities convinced Valens to retract his order of exile. He issued a decree banishing the bishops who had been deposed by Constantius, but who had been permitted by Jovian to return to their sees. The news created the greatest consternation in the city of Alexandria itself, and the prefect, in order to prevent a serious outbreak, gave public assurance that the very special case of Athanasius would be laid before the emperor. But Athanasius seems to have divined what was preparing in secret against him. He quietly withdrew from Alexandria, 5 October, and took up his abode in a country house outside the city. Valens, who seems to have sincerely dreaded the possible consequences of another popular outbreak, within a few weeks issued orders allowing Athanasius to return to his episcopal see.

Chapter 3 : NPNF Athanasius: Select Works and Letters - Christian Classics Ethereal Library

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He gives, in a paragraph corresponding to each Easter in the episcopate of Athanasius, a summary of the calendar data for the year, a notice of the most important events, and especially particulars as to the Letter for the Easter in question, viz. The variations of practice which had rendered the Paschal Feast a subject of controversy from very early times see Dict. Easter had given rise to the custom of the announcement of Easter at a convenient interval beforehand by circular letters. In the third century the Bishops of Alexandria issued such letters e. This is doubted in the learned article Paschal Letters D. The only doubt is, whether the real reference is to Sardica, see Index xv. The Easter letters of Athanasius were, until , only known to us by allusions in Jerome de V. But in Archdeacon Tattam brought home from the Monastery of the Theotokos in the desert of Skete a large number of Syriac mss. Another consignment of mss. It is therefore unassailably established on our existing evidence that the last Easter letter of Ath. This clinches the reckoning of the Index and Hist. Moreover it corroborates, and is rivetted firm by, the statement of Cyril. This is doubtless often the result of accidental loss. Often when unable to write this, he sent a few cordial lines to some friend Letter 12 or to the clergy 17, 18 or people 29? But occasionally the Index is either corrupt or mistaken, e. The same warmth, vigour, and simplicity pervades them as we find elsewhere in his writings, especially in such gems as the letter to Dracontius Ep. Their interest, however apart from chronology , is mainly personal and practical. Naturally the use and abuse of Fast and Festival occupy a prominent place throughout. We gather from Ep. He insists not only upon fasting, but upon purity and charity, especially toward the poor Ep. We trace the same ready command of Scripture, the same grave humour in the unexpected turn given to some familiar text Ep. The Eucharist is a feeding upon the Word 4. Of special importance is the Canon of Holy Scripture in Ep. It should be observed that the interval before Easter at which notice was given varied greatly. The statement of Cassian referred to below note to Ep. Its special value is in the points where it agrees with the Hist. The writer undoubtedly makes occasional slips cf. Firstly, his year is not the Julian but the Egyptian year infr. Table C from Aug. Each year is designated by the new consuls who come into office in the fifth month. Secondly, in each year he takes a leading event or events, round which he groups antecedent or consequent facts, which often belong to other years. Two or three examples will make this clear. His departure for Tyre July 11, , at end of previous Egyptian Year. Further examples in Gwatkin, Studies, p. Bearing this in mind, the discriminating student will derive most important help from the study of the Index: This is the principle followed in the Prolegomena ch. On the main points in dispute, as strewn above, we have to reckon with a compact uniform chronological system, checked and counter-checked by careful calculations Hist. The Latin Version from an Italian translation of Card. Mai is in Migne, xxvi. The following Tables bear specially on the Festal Index. After the final settlement of Egypt by Augustus as a province of the Roman Empire, the use of the Julian form of computation was established in Alexandria, the first day of the new Calendar being fixed to the 28th of August, the 1st of Thot of the year in which the innovation took place; from which period, six, instead of five, supplementary days were added at the end of every fourth year; so that the form of the Alexandrian year was as follows. The months from Phamenoth 5 Mar.

Chapter 4 : Festal Letter 1 | Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Los Angeles

Festal letters were used in Alexandria primarily to announce the beginning of Lent and the date of Easter. They also served a catechetical purpose, however, allowing the Patriarch an annual opportunity to write pastorally not just about issues facing the entire see, but also about the theological issues of the day.

The artist and date are unknown. A larger version is available. Saint Athanasius, theologian, ecclesiastical statesman, and Egyptian national leader, was the chief defender of Christian orthodoxy in the 4th-century battle against Arianism, the heresy that the Son of God was a creature of like, but not of the same, substance as God the Father. Athanasius attended the Council of Nicaea and shortly thereafter became bishop of Alexandria. For the rest of his life he was engaged in theological and political struggles with the Emperor and with Arian churchmen, being banished from Alexandria several times. He wrote many important works, including his major theological treatises, *The Life of St. Antony* and *Four Orations against the Arians*, and a number of letters on theological, pastoral, and administrative topics. A Catholic Encyclopedia article is online at St. Here the threefold division of Origen or Eusebius is abandoned. Over against them are set the apocrypha fabricated by the heretics. Only the *Didache* and *Shepherd of Hermas* -- besides a few OT apocrypha -- are permitted for reading by those newly received into the Church, since the Fathers have so appointed. But these writings are not "canonical". We may however infer from the concession that the two writings mentioned still enjoyed very great esteem. It is important that Athanasius turns sharply against all apocrypha, so that the lines are drawn as sharply as possible between canonical and apocryphal writings. This book only achieved its firm place in the canon of the Greek Church in the 10th century. The 39th Festal Letter of Athanasius CE It was an ancient custom for the bishop of Alexandria to write, if possible, every year soon after Epiphany a so-called Festal Epistle to the Egyptian churches and monasteries under his authority, in which he informed them of the date of Easter and the beginning of the Lenten fast. By fixing the date of Easter, this yearly epistle fixed also the dates of all Christian festivals of the year. In view of the reputation of Alexandrian scholars who were devoted to astronomical calculations, it is not surprising that other parts of Christendom should eventually come to rely on the Egyptian Church for information concerning the date of Easter, made available to the Western Church through the bishop of Rome, and to the Syrian Church through the bishop of Antioch. Since, however, we have spoken of the heretics as dead but of ourselves as possessors of the divine writings unto salvation, and since I am afraid that -- as Paul has written to the Corinthians [2 Cor. It being my intention to mention these matters, I shall, for the commendation of my venture, follow the example of the evangelist Luke and say [cf. Since some have taken in hand to set in order for themselves the so-called apocrypha and to mingle them with the God-inspired scripture, concerning which we have attained to a sure persuasion, according to what the original eye-witness and ministers of the word have delivered unto our fathers, I also, having been urged by true brethren and having investigated the matter from the beginning, have decided to set forth in order the writings that have been put in the canon, that have been handed down and confirmed as divine, in order that every one who has been led astray may condemn his seducers, and that every one who has remained stainless may rejoice, being again reminded of that. Athanasius now in the first place enumerates the scriptures of the Old Testament. Continuing, I must without hesitation mention the scriptures of the New Testament; they are the following: In addition there are fourteen epistles of the apostle Paul written in the following order: Yet further the Revelation of John These are the springs of salvation, in order that he who is thirsty may fully refresh himself with the words contained in them. In them alone is the doctrine of piety proclaimed. Let no one add anything to them or take anything away from them But for the sake of greater accuracy I add, being constrained to write, that there are also other books besides these, which have not indeed been put in the canon, but have been appointed by the Fathers as reading-matter for those who have just come forward and which to be instructed in the doctrine of piety: And although, beloved, the former are in the canon and the latter serve as reading matter, yet mention is nowhere made of the apocrypha; rather they are a fabrication of the heretics, who write them down when it pleases them and generously assign to them an early date of composition in order that they may be able to draw upon them as supposedly ancient writings and have

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in them occasion to deceive the guileless. Pages created by Glenn Davis, For additions, corrections, and comments send e-mail to gdavis@ntcanon.com.

And, generally, each one of the saints has been thought worthy of similar transcendent nourishment. 7. Wherefore, my beloved, having our souls nourished with divine food, with the Word, and according to the will of God, and fasting bodily in things external, let us keep this great and saving feast as becomes us.

The Festal Letters Last Updated on Fri, 19 Feb Bishop Alexandria It was customary for bishops of Alexandria to write a Festal Letter as Easter approached, and two recent studies have done much to solve the chronological problems posed by the Festal Letters which Athanasius wrote for the Easters during his long episcopate, from the Easter of to the Easter of Two basic propositions must be set out starkly and very clearly at the start: It is one of the greatest merits of the studies of both Lorenz and Camplani that these fundamental points are allowed due weight. The text of this manuscript was published by William Cureton in in a disordered state: Unfortunately, Cureton originally overlooked two leaves of the manuscript, which he consequently omitted from his edition. Although he soon noticed his oversight and drew the two leaves to the attention of Henry Burgess, who printed their text as an appendix to his English translation of ,9 the missing portions of Letters X and XI were unknown to Mai, and, since Migne too omitted them, they remained unknown outside the English-speaking world until recently, so that far-reaching deductions have sometimes been based on the supposed lacunae. The fragments known in were edited with a French translation by L. Lefort,¹⁵ whose edition has recently been supplemented with further fragments from the same codices. It includes the text of two leaves published in as part of the Festal Letter for Easter , which have a different provenance from the manuscripts which preserve the Festal Letters. Besides the letters themselves, the Syriac corpus includes three scholarly aids: The Syriac corpus of the Festal Letters thus comprises elements of quite disparate origin and value: Since the text of the extant letters nowhere states in any form the year in which it was written, the number and the date of each letter must reflect editorial judgement. There are some patent contradictions between the Index and the corpus of letters to which they are prefixed,²² and both Cosmas Indicopleustes Hence a serious question inevitably poses itself: The transmitted chronology of the Festal Letters stood unchallenged until , when Adolf Jilicher adumbrated a proof that some of the letters must be wrongly dated, a proof which Eduard Schwartz restated clearly and succinctly in Since it is impossible that the church of Alexandria varied its practise in this matter inconsistently from year to year, the Festal Letters which prescribe a pre-Easter fast beginning on the Monday of Holy Week must be all earlier than those which prescribe or assume a fast of forty daysâ€”despite the numbers and dates assigned to them by the ancient editor or editors. Schwartz explained how the editorial process of producing a corpus almost inevitably led to chronological errors. The editor or editors deduced the date of each Festal Letter from the only evidence availableâ€”the date of the forthcoming Easter stated in its text, which was collated with a table of the dates at which Easter was celebrated in Alexandria between and Such collation with a Paschal cycle sufficed to establish the dates of some letters with complete certainty. For most letters, however, two or more Rasters were theoretically open. The ancient editor or editors were thus compelled to invoke other criteria and to exercise judgement, so that it is in no way surprising if the resulting choice of year was occasionally mistaken. Ten years after Schwartz had systematically redated the Festal Letters, F. Cross surveyed the progress of modern scholarship on Athanasius and proclaimed that Schwartz had for the first: Lefort argued that the Coptic fragments furnish a decisive refutation of his attempt at redating. Between and the Alexandrian Easter fell on 19 April only in , , and Lorenz analysed the formulaic wording which Athanasius uses to announce both the six-day and the forty-day fast and showed, on form-critical grounds, that the reference to a forty-day fast in Letter XXIV is a later interpolation. It should be accepted, therefore, that the western practise of observing a forty-day fast before Easter was introduced into Egypt after Athanasius had written Festal Letter V for Easter , and hence that Festal Letters II and III must be redated to reflect this fact. Peri noted that the Index for relates to the notification of the date of Easter About 1 the Index was added to the Alexandrian collection; 2 headings were added to each of the letters in the other collection. In the second half of the fifth century 1 Timothy Aelurus quoted from a copy of the collection available to him in Alexandria; 2 the other collection was

translated into Coptic but without the heading to each letter; 3 someone prefixed the Alexandrian Index to the other collection. On this hypothesis, the numbering of the Festal Letters in the Syriac corpus derives from an editor outside Alexandria, so that Timothy Aelurus, the bishop of Alexandria, could quote letters with correct numbers and dates, whereas Severus of Antioch and Cosmas Indicopleustes repeated incorrect ones from the non-Alexandrian collection. The Syriac corpus of which the first half survives is translated from an edition which combined the Alexandrian Index with the other collection of letters—a collection significantly different from the one for which it was originally composed. In the present context, it is not necessary to decide on the correct date of every Festal Letter of which the whole text or significant fragments survive. It will suffice to tabulate, separately for the brief notifications of the date of the next Easter which survive and the Festal Letters proper, the following information:

Chapter 6 : The Festal Letters - Bishop Alexandria - Wilmington For Christ

The manuscript tradition has made us aware of a series of 29 festal letters of Cyril, numbered They announce the Paschal feast from to Since Cyril was bishop from October 17, , until June 27, , we are only missing letters from , , and it is evident in the dates of the letters that there is no gap in the.

Like many of his annual Easter letters, the thirty-ninth was fairly long, but only a small portion of the text survives in Greek. Most studies of the formation of the Christian canon, including very recent ones, examine only this Greek fragment and so discuss only the contents of the lists. But already in the late-nineteenth-century fragments of the much more extensive Coptic translation had been published, and a few scholars, such as Carl Schmidt and Theodor Zahn, used them to write penetrating studies of the letter. I presented an earlier version of this paper to the annual meeting of the North American Patristics Society; the questions and criticisms of the colleagues there, as well as those of the anonymous reviewer, helped me to clarify my points. I am grateful to these people and institutions. This paper introduces the new fragment to Anglophone scholars, discusses some problems with its text and translation, assesses how it may affect our understanding of the context and purpose of the letter as a whole, and presents an English translation of all the known text. Text, Translation, and Contents The new fragment is preserved in the A. Deichert, 1â€”36; idem, Grundriss der Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons Leipzig: Our fragment belongs to MONB. Moreover, the leaf appears to be poorly preserved. Short of going to Moscow or acquiring digital photographs, the best that one can do is examine the plates that Elanskaya helpfully included in her book. Indice delle lettere festali Milan: Labor et Fides, â€” Athanasius, Orationes contra Arianos 1. Athanasius, Epistulae festales 41, in Lefort, Lettres festales, It is interesting that Athanasius appears to consider the status of the Creator-God to be the distinctive impiety of the Manichaeans. The use of the masculine singular pronoun in lines 42 and 48 to refer to the person who makes this argument is strange. How does Athanasius respond to the citation of 1 Corinthians 2: Subsequently, in paragraph 27, a previously known section of the letter, Athanasius argues that heretics composed the apocryphal books recently and placed these words of Paul in one of their texts in order to make their work appear to be older than Paul. And in this case Athanasius claims that Paul has paraphrased a portion of Isaiah 29, which refers to blind and deaf people and people without any hope. In what follows I review my earlier position and then turn to the objections to it and the relevance of the Moscow fragment. In the letter as we now know it, including the new fragment, Athanasius makes a variety of arguments against the use of non-canonical books, but he devotes considerable attention to two particular themes. The Word of God is the only true Teacherâ€”after all, he is Truth itself, and he never needed anyone to teach him. My reading contextualized these two themes by associating them with two forms of Christian spirituality, authority, and social organization that were traditional in Egyptian Christianity, but which Athanasius opposed. Heresy and Tradition London: Discovered in an Ancient Syriac Version ed. Society for the Publication of Oriental Texts, 24â€” My argument met with some criticism even before the appearance of the new fragment. To be sure, such a spirituality was frankly elitist, as any reader of Clement or Origen will readily seeâ€”some people are more advanced than othersâ€”but that does not mean it could not be genuinely popular and religious, as Arius by all accounts was. Another objection is that I have allowed the rhetoric of people like Irenaeus, Athanasius, and Epiphanius to shape my understanding of their opponents as charismatic teachers. Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World ed. Margalit Finkelberg and Guy G. Gregg, review of R. Williams, Arius, JTS n. Matthew Zyniewicz; 6 vols. Scholars Press, 3: DAVID BRAKKE 53 Moreover, we must keep in mind the disingenuous self-representations of these bishops, who were themselves teachers and therefore doing some of the same things that their opponents were, as some of my critics have helpfully pointed out. Athanasius claims this about himself in our letter: Personal qualities of learning and insight do not legitimate what the bishop says, but rather his place in a trustworthy succession. When others teach, in contrast, they invent ideas and lead Christians astray. These claims, however, require interrogation and do not rule out that other Christian leaders taught in other contexts and legitimated their teaching in other ways, as I have argued Arius did. As Camplani phrases it, Origen and other early Alexandrians exhibit a

pattern of spiritual growth in which an initial ethical distancing from the world facilitated increasingly advanced study of the Scriptures, which led to contemplation of God. Athanasius revised this pattern to place less emphasis on textual study and more on control of the body, and Christian spirituality took on a more explicitly social dimension in the form of a church inclusive of both monastic and married Christians, clergy and lay people. But Camplani objects to my mapping of these two forms of spirituality onto the social fabric of fourth-century Alexandrian Christianity. Instead, this new concept of orthodoxy embraced the whole of Christian piety, including a canon of Scripture, its orthodox dogmatic exegesis, proper observance of the cult of the saints, and a closer connection with the monastic movement. The small heresiological catalogue in the new fragment, which looks beyond the Arians to a wider range of heretical groups, indicates one facet of this new concept of orthodoxy. So, Camplani argues, it is not really an episcopal spirituality that Athanasius promotes, but rather an orthodoxy. See now also the summary portrait in Edward J. University of California Press, "In fact, I cited Eusebius as an example of the former. Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship Urbana: University of Illinois Press, Aragione '95, at " Although most scholars remain focused on the lists of books, the greater importance of the letter is that it reveals the role of canon formation in supporting one form of Christian piety and authority and undermining others. Different scriptural practices accompany different modes of authority and spirituality, and we should not take the bounded canon of episcopal orthodoxy as either the inevitable telos of early Christian history or the only way that Christians construed and used sacred writings. The line numbers in the Coptic text have no relation to the lines in the manuscript, which arranges the text in two columns. The paragraph numbers are those that Camplani established in his translation. In addition to adding the new fragment, I have revised slightly my translation of by correcting a few errors, adding some biblical references, using American spelling, and conforming the paragraphing to that which Camplani established. I have used the following editorial signs in the Coptic text: In this way those who did not seek him found him, and he was made manifest to those who did not ask him. For the teaching of piety does not come from human beings; rather, it is the Lord who reveals his Father to those whom he wills because it is he who knows him. Not they alone, brothers and sisters, are the ones to whom the Lord has become a teacher by revealing the mystery to them; rather, he is a teacher to us all. For Paul rejoices with his disciples that they have been taught about the gospel in this way: Follow him into the house that he enters 38 See Isa For who is to be trusted to teach human beings about the Father, except he who exists always in his bosom? Therefore, he charged his disciples, just as Matthew said: And the great one among you will be your servant. While I was examining these passages , a thought occurred to me that requires your scrutiny. What I thought is this: The task of the teacher is to teach, and that of the disciple is to learn. Therefore, even if it is Paul who teaches, it is nevertheless Christ who speaks in him. For the nature of everyone who is of the created order is to be taught, but our Lord and Demiurge is by nature a teacher. And, following them, those from the heresies who have caught up to them, namely the wretched Melitians, by denying him, have walked in waterless places and have abandoned the spring of life. Release to us Barabbas! As for them, it is no surprise that they have remained dead in their unbelief by being bound by their evil thoughts, just as the Egyptians were bound by their own axles. As I begin to mention these things, in order to commend my audacity, I will employ the example of Luke the evangelist and say myself: Inasmuch as certain people have attempted to set in order for themselves the so-called apocryphal books and to mix these with the divinely inspired Scripture, about which we are convinced it is just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and assistants of the Word handed down to our ancestors, it seemed good to me, because I have been urged by genuine brothers and sisters and instructed from the beginning, to set forth in order the books that are canonized, transmitted, and believed to be divine, so that those who have been deceived might condemn the persons who led them astray, and those who have remained pure might rejoice to be reminded of these things. There are, then, belonging to the Old Testament in number a total of twenty-two, for, as I have heard, it has been handed down that this is the number of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet. In order and by name they are as follows: After these are First and Second Chronicles, likewise reckoned as one book; then First and Second Esdras, likewise as one. To this point are the books of the Old Testament. Again, one should not hesitate to name the books of the New Testament. For these are the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; than after these, Acts of

the Apostles and seven letters, called catholic, by the apostles, namely: After these there are fourteen letters by Paul, written in this order: And besides, the Revelation of John. In these books alone the teaching of piety is proclaimed. Let no one add to or subtract from them. But for the sake of greater accuracy, I add this, writing from necessity. There are other books, in addition to the preceding, which have not been canonized, but have been appointed by the ancestors to be read to those who newly join us and want to be instructed in the word of piety: Nevertheless, beloved, the former books are canonized; the latter are only read; and there is no mention of the apocryphal books. Rather, the category of apocrypha is an invention of heretics, who write these books whenever they want and then generously add time to them, so that, by publishing them as if they were ancient, they might have a pretext for deceiving the simple folk. Great is the hardheartedness of those who do this and who do not fear the word that is written: On what basis will they say that there is an apocryphal book of Isaiah? He is the one who published Deuteronomy with heaven and earth as witnesses. No, this can be nothing except itchy ears, trading in piety, and the pleasing of women. For even if a useful word is found in them, it is still not good to trust them. For this is work of the wickedness of those who have conceived of mixing one or two inspired texts, so that, through such deception, they might somehow cover up the evil teachings that they have clearly created. For what do the spiritual Scriptures lack that we should seek after these empty voices of unknown people? It is appropriate for us to cite the text that is written about them:

Chapter 7 : Cyril of Alexandria: Festal Letters 1â€“12 - Verbum

52 FESTAL LETTER TWO A.D. EJOICE IN THE LORD always; again I say, rejoice!"1 Our discourse hastens to this starting-point, and quite un-derstandably, for it is a feast which is proclaimed. For when our message has as its purpose to announce that we should take delight in our Savior's deeds, one can hardly think of a better way to begin it.

Athanasius, which I had discovered; and of adding, at the same time, an English translation, and such notes and illustrations as I might deem requisite. At the time that I made this announcement the text was already printed, and I only waited for the leisure necessary to enable me to complete my task. In the meanwhile, the whole of the impression of the Syriac version of St. Ignatius having been exhausted, and great demand having been made for a new edition, both in England and on the Continent, I have found it necessary to devote all the time which I could command to prepare and carry through the press, not so much a new edition, as an entirely new work on the subject of the Ignatian Epistles. As this time can at most amount to no more than a very few hours in each week, and even these few hours stolen from those which ought justly to be dedicated to repose and relaxation after the daily labours of my official duties, I feel that I have some claim to the indulgence of the learned if I be more tardy in accomplishing what I have promised than my announcement may have led them to expect, or my own zeal have anticipated. In the case of these Festal Letters of St. Athanasius this delay has been attended with advantage, for I am now able to give to the world, not only a greater number of these Epistles of the great champion of orthodoxy, but also to exhibit in a perfect state several which previously were mutilated and incomplete. As the text of these letters alone now forms not an inconsiderable volume, I have been unwilling to withhold them from the learned for the long and indefinite period which, with my present occupation and engagements, must elapse before I could venture to hope for sufficient leisure to complete the translation, and to make the researches which would be necessary to enable me to add such notes as I intended to accompany the work. In some other country, perhaps, where this branch of literature is more encouraged, and consequently better cultivated and understood, some scholar may be found who will be ready to undertake the task of presenting these Letters to the public in an European dress, before I can find the leisure requisite to do so. He will have my full concurrence and my best wishes, It will be no mean honour for him to be the first, after the lapse of centuries, to offer to the theologians of Europe the Letters in which St. Athanasius, through a series of succeeding years, exhibited to those under his spiritual superintendence a notification of the day on which they were to celebrate the annual commemoration of the Resurrection of our Lord. I shall be content to have extracted the ore from the mine, to be wrought and polished by another. But that my book may not in the meanwhile be altogether useless, and without, interest to such as have not directed their attention to the same branches of study as myself. I have given in my Preface a statement of the exact day, both according to the Roman and Egyptian months, upon which Easter was celebrated, as indicated by Athanasius, during the whole period of his patriarchate; and I have added such other chronological or historical facts, supplied by these Epistles, as seemed to me to be most deserving of notice. With regard to the text, I have endeavoured to exhibit it in every respect as I found it. Having but one manuscript, I have felt it to be my duty to alter nothing, but to present even the obvious errors of the transcriber exactly as they occur. This is one reason why I more particularly regret publishing the text without a translation; and without notes in which I might have pointed out such mistakes as evidently belong to the copyist, while I now run the risk of having them attributed to myself. Even with all the care and pains that I could bestow, I find that some errors of my own have been committed; Indeed, the state of this copy, which, among the hundreds of Syriac manuscripts that have passed through my hands, is certainly the most difficult to read of any that I ever saw, would render it not unpardonable were they more numerous; but nevertheless, I am unwilling to have those errors laid to my charge which I certainly have not committed. I have elsewhere observed, that nothing can be more irregular, in the generality of manuscripts, than the orthography of Greek words adopted into the Syriac, and of the foreign names of persons and places exhibited in that language. I have seen no manuscript which afforded more examples of this abundant and extreme irregularity than that from which I have copied these Letters of Athanasius. If the part of this volume first printed prove to be more correct than the other, it is due

to Dr. To both I beg to offer my very sincere thanks. It is also my gratifying duty to express the great obligations I am under to the Committee of the Society for the Publication of Oriental Texts for defraying the expense of printing this volume. Tullberg with the means of visiting this country for the purpose of extending his researches in Oriental literature. Upon the last occasion he has drawn largely from our treasures of Syriac lore. His own zeal, animated by national encouragement, affords us good ground to hope that no long period will intervene, before the learned of Europe generally will derive much advantage from his last visit to England. AMONG numerous other remains of some of the most eminent writers of the early Christian Church, which, having long been supposed to have perished, I have discovered still to exist in the literature of the East, the work which I now give to the public would merit the full attention of theologians, even were it only the celebrity of the author that gave it a title to demand their consideration. Some interest, therefore, will naturally be felt, upon its being now brought to light for the first time after the lapse of centuries, to learn how and where it was discovered. I will endeavour to satisfy any curiosity which may arise on this head in a few words. In the course of official duties, the task of classifying the volumes, of gathering together, collating, and arranging the numberless fragments and loose leaves of which this ii collection consisted, and of drawing up a summary of their contents, devolved upon me. At the first sight of such an immense mass of broken, scattered, and confused materials, the labour appeared to be enormous; and I almost shrank from the task as one too great for me to hope to accomplish within the utmost limit of that portion of my life which I could wish to pass in this kind of occupation. But a warm zeal in the cause which I had in hand, strengthened and encouraged by the satisfaction of having had the expectation 2 which I had entertained, even while they were in the desert, of seeing and handling these precious volumes thus realized, the delight of becoming acquainted with their contents, and the hope of obtaining leisure at some subsequent period to open their stores to others, tended much to lighten the labour, and enabled me almost to complete the task much sooner than I could have ventured to anticipate. Among other works which time and neglect had rendered iii imperfect, and left but fragments only of them remaining, I discovered a portion of the Festal Letters of St. The volume to which these fragments belonged had originally been composed of a number of quires, each consisting of five pieces of vellum of folio size, laid one upon the other, and then folded and sewed together, so as to form ten quarto leaves, or twenty pages. At the bottom of the first and last page of every quire was a letter, indicating its numerical order in the arrangement of the volume. The portions of the book which I found were, the last leaf of the first quire, marked the eight middle leaves of another, which I have since ascertained to be the fourth quire, the first and last leaves of the fifth, marked , and the whole of the sixth and seventh quires, with the numeral signatures and. In these were comprised a portion of the Introduction, the last part of the sixth and the first part of the seventh, together with a part of the tenth and eleventh, the whole of the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth Letters, and the first part of the twentieth. The fifteenth and sixteenth had been already lost before the Epistles were collected together into one volume. The transcript was made at such intervals of leisure as I could command; and the text was committed to type in the spring of the year The part of the present volume printed at that time is comprised in the pages noted with Syriac numerals. The first fifty embrace the contents of the fragments of the manuscript in which the collection of the Festal Letters had been comprised. The remaining four pages contain extracts from the twenty-seventh, twenty-ninth, and forty-fourth Epistles, cited by Severus 4 in his work against Grammaticus; and also the celebrated passage from the thirty-ninth Letter, exhibiting a list of the Canonical Books of Scripture which has been preserved in the Greek, as cited by Theodoras Balsamon. I believed that the entire Syriac library of the monks of the Convent of St. Mary Deipara had been removed; nor did I suppose that these precious relics of the ancient learning of the Oriental Churches, which I was arranging with affectionate and reverential care in the British metropolis, had left others of their fellows, not less venerable, and equally precious, in the same degraded and neglected v condition as they had occupied for centuries, in a miserable cell in one of the most lonely deserts of the world. So eminently successful had Dr. The event has proved this conclusion to have been ill founded; for although Dr. I avail myself of this as a favourable occasion to record, in a few words, the manner in which the remaining part of this library was rescued from the obscurity of a cell in the monastery of the lonely valley of Nitria, and found a more suitable habitation in the British Museum. Early in the year M. Auguste Pacho, a

native of Alexandria, and nephew of M. Jean-Raimond Pacho, who has left behind him a considerable reputation by the posthumous publication of his travels in Africa 7, made a visit to London, in the hope of obtaining some confidential employment, for which his intimate knowledge of oriental manners and customs, his native acquaintance with the Arabic tongue, and with several European languages, rendered him admirably qualified. He brought a letter of introduction from M. After having remained a few months only in this country, M. Pacho was recommended by his medical advisers to seek some milder climate, as the only means of restoring his health, which had been much impaired during his residence in England, and he at once decided to return to his native country, Egypt. Upon his communicating to me this decision, I thought that a favourable opportunity was hereby presented of endeavouring to obtain additional treasures of literature, which I doubted not might still be lurking in the Egyptian convents, and thus not only to rescue them from obscurity, and perhaps from destruction, but also to add them to the already abundant stores of the Institution to which I have the honour of being attached. I accordingly shewed to M. Pacho the acquisitions which Dr. Tattam had made in Egypt, and entreated him to neglect no opportunity which his residence in that country, and his knowledge of the language and customs of the natives, vii might afford, to acquire ancient manuscripts; by which he would not. With this exhortation, and my best wishes, I bade him farewell. Once or twice a letter, relative to this matter, had reached me in the course of the year In the spring of I was delighted to receive intelligence that he had heard of the existence of a considerable number of Syriac manuscripts, and that he was resolved to use his utmost exertions to endeavour to obtain them. In the month of July another letter brought me the news that he was then in possession of nearly two hundred volumes, with many fragments and loose leaves, which he had succeeded in procuring from the very monastery of St. Mary Deipara, in the Desert of Nitria, from which the manuscripts that he had seen when in London had been obtained; and that they were in fact the remaining part of the collection which had been purchased by Dr. Tattam, that had been concealed and secretly kept back by the Religious Brethren of the Valley of the Ascetics. His letter also stated that he intended to start from Alexandria by the next packet that was to sail for England, and bring the books which he had been so successful in obtaining directly to London. This was indeed a gratifying announcement to me; and I eagerly waited for the arrival of a collection of manuscripts, in which I hoped not only to discover additional treasures, but. Another letter, dated from Malta, following a few weeks later, gave me some apprehension. I learnt thereby that M. Pacho, instead of proceeding immediately to England, viii had determined upon passing through France, and taking Paris in his route; and I was too well acquainted with the zeal of the learned Orientalists of that metropolis, and of the keepers of the Royal Library, not to fear that they might manifest some eagerness to partake in the honour and advantage of possessing a share in one of the most remarkable and important collections of the writings of antiquity which had ever been transported from the east to the west. This diversion of M. Still, however, the result has proved prosperous to all parties. Pacho has had the satisfaction of having rendered an essential service to literature, and a substantial benefit to himself. The manuscripts became the property of the British Nation on Saturday, the 11th of November I will add a few words here, to explain how they came into the possession of M. Tattam 8 by the Rais of the monastery and Mohammed, a servant and interpreter, whom, in conjunction with the Shaikh of the village of Beni Salame, on the border of the Nile, he had employed to negotiate the purchase of ix the entire library belonging to the monastery; but that a part of the volumes had been fraudulently retained, although the strongest asseverations had been made that the whole had been delivered up, according to their agreement. With a most laudable intention, M. Pacho determined to ascertain the truth of this matter, and to visit in person the habitation of the ascetics for that purpose. This resolution, being once taken, was soon put into execution; and he shortly afterwards found himself the guest of the monks, shut up in the dismal walls of their dreary abode, and subject to all the inconveniences which their love of filth, or hatred of cleanliness, must necessarily impose. It now became requisite for him to proceed with the greatest caution, if he wished to ascertain any further tidings respecting the manuscripts. These ascetics of the desert had not dealt uprightly with Dr. Further, their superstitious fears and feelings had been wrought upon; for the very day after they had delivered up the books, and received the payment, they were deprived of the tenure of a tract of land on the borders of the Nile, which they held under the Pasha for the maintenance of their establishment. This loss they looked

upon as a punishment sent from heaven; not, indeed, on account of their having transgressed the heavenly laws in their dealings with Dr. Tattam, but on account of their having sold a part, of the library belonging to their monastery; and they began to look forward with some degree of apprehension to the fulfilment of the solemn imprecations denounced by the various donors of the several volumes upon any who should dare to alienate them, or remove them from the monastery x that their names may be blotted out of the Book of Life, and their portion and lot be cast with Pontius Pilate and Judas Iscariot. But these apprehensions shortly after vanished, when another convenient opportunity of obtaining money occurred. For six weeks M. Pacho remained in the company of these inhabitants of the lonely Valley of the Ascetics; at the end of which period he had so far gained their good will, that they ventured to shew him the remainder of their library, and even to treat with him for the purchase of it. The terms of the bargain were soon concluded. He now ascertained the extent of the fraud practised upon the former occasion. Tattam had despatched Mohammed for the purpose of negotiating, through the intervention of the above-mentioned Shaikh, the purchase of the library from the monks. He believed that the transaction would be more easily accomplished by means of these Orientals, than if he were to appear in the business himself, especially as he must be compelled at last to rely upon Mohammed, on account of his being unable to speak their language, which prevented him from having any direct communication either with the Shaikh or with the monks themselves. Undoubtedly this proceeding of Dr. The bargain was thus concluded for a certain sum to be paid for the entire collection. Tattam went himself with the money to the village of Beni Salame, whither the books were to be sent, and despatched Mohammed with men and donkeys to convey them across the desert. When he arrived at the monastery the brethren felt some reluctance to give up all xi their collection: At the same time they stipulated that they should receive the whole amount that had been agreed upon, and left it to him to represent to his employer that he had executed his task in obtaining the entire library. Tattam, who had inspected the collection during his visit to the monastery in his first excursion into Egypt, upon receiving the portion chosen by Mohammed at once declared his conviction that it did not comprise all the volumes which he had seen; but so strong were the affirmations, both of Mohammed and the Rais who had accompanied him with the books from Nitria to Beni Salame, that he was fain to acquiesce in their assurances. The sum agreed upon for the whole collection was accordingly paid. This amount Mohammed, the Rais, and the Shaikh, divided into two parts: Much disappointment at first was expressed by the Brethren when the Rais returned with only half the amount that they had hoped to receive; but he soon silenced their murmurs by the justice of the observation which he urged upon them that having themselves kept back half of the volumes, it was unreasonable for them to expect that the purchaser should remit to them more than half the sum which had been agreed upon for the whole collection. Fully acquainted with the character of the parties with whom he had to deal, M.

Chapter 8 : CHURCH FATHERS: Letter 39 (Athanasius)

It was customary for bishops of Alexandria to write a Festal Letter as Easter approached, and two recent studies have done much to solve the chronological problems posed by the Festal Letters which Athanasius wrote for the Easters during his long episcopate, from the Easter of to the Easter of '.

Of the particular books and their number, which are accepted by the Church. From the thirty-ninth Letter of Holy Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, on the Paschal festival; wherein he defines canonically what are the divine books which are accepted by the Church. They have fabricated books which they call books of tables , in which they show stars, to which they give the names of Saints. And therein of a truth they have inflicted on themselves a double reproach: In proceeding to make mention of these things, I shall adopt, to commend my undertaking, the pattern of Luke the Evangelist, saying on my own account: There are, then, of the Old Testament , twenty-two books in number; for, as I have heard, it is handed down that this is the number of the letters among the Hebrews; their respective order and names being as follows. Following these there is Joshua, the son of Nun, then Judges, then Ruth. And again, after these four books of Kings, the first and second being reckoned as one book, and so likewise the third and fourth as one book. And again, the first and second of the Chronicles are reckoned as one book. Again Ezra, the first and second are similarly one book. After these there is the book of Psalms, then the Proverbs, next Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. Job follows, then the Prophets, the twelve being reckoned as one book. Then Isaiah, one book, then Jeremiah with Baruch, Lamentations, and the epistle, one book; afterwards, Ezekiel and Daniel, each one book. Thus far constitutes the Old Testament. Again it is not tedious to speak of the [books] of the New Testament. Afterwards, the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles called Catholic , seven, viz. In addition, there are fourteen Epistles of Paul , written in this order. The first, to the Romans; then two to the Corinthians; after these, to the Galatians; next, to the Ephesians; then to the Philippians; then to the Colossians; after these, two to the Thessalonians, and that to the Hebrews; and again, two to Timothy; one to Titus; and lastly, that to Philemon. And besides, the Revelation of John. These are fountains of salvation , that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take ought from these. But for greater exactness I add this also, writing of necessity; that there are other books besides these not indeed included in the Canon, but appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of godliness. But the former, my brethren, are included in the Canon, the latter being [merely] read; nor is there in any place a mention of apocryphal writings. But they are an invention of heretics , who write them when they choose, bestowing upon them their approbation, and assigning to them a date, that so, using them as ancient writings, they may find occasion to lead astray the simple. About this page Source. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Christian Literature Publishing Co. Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. The editor of New Advent is Kevin Knight. My email address is feedback at newadvent. To help fight spam, this address might change occasionally. Dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Chapter 9 : The Development of the Canon of the New Testament - Athanasius

The Festal Letters, and Their Index, Or Chronicon Athanasianum. The latter document is from the hand, it would seem, of the original collector of the Easter Letters of Athanasius (yet see infr. note 6a).

For if I hear that you have hindered anyone from becoming a member, or have debarred anyone from entrance, I shall immediately send someone to have you deposed at my behest and have you sent into exile. Instead, he had insisted upon excluding from the church anyone who did not subscribe to the Creed of Nicea. Consequently, Athanasius was deposed in and exiled to Trier today in West Germany, near the border with Luxembourg. He returned in , only to be exiled three more times for various reasons. Athanasius finally resumed his bishopric in , which he held until his death in , at the age of . Most of his writings defend the orthodox position against the influence of Arianism Three Speeches against the Arians, c. Another lasting contribution to church writings is his Life of St. The book, an early best seller, widely disseminated information on monasticism. It had been customary after Epiphany each year [the Christian festival held twelve days after Christmas] for the bishops of Alexandria to write a letter in which the dates of Lent and Easter were fixed, and thus, all other festivals of the church in that year. These letters were also used to discuss other matters of general interest. Athanasius wrote forty-five festal letters; thirteen have survived complete in Syriac translation. It contains a list of the books of the Old and New Testaments, which Athanasius describes as being canonical. No one may add to them, and nothing may be taken away from them. It would thus predate the festal letter. Even though Athanasius was probably not far away when the Codex Vaticanus was written, one realizes that the establishment of the canon was not a sudden decision made unilaterally by a bishop in Alexandria, but a process of careful investigation and deliberation, documented in a codex of the Greek Bible and, twenty-seven years later, in a festal letter. Some twenty years after that Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter was written, the Alexandrian scholar Didymus the Blind did not accept 2 and 3 John as canonical, but he fully backed and quoted 2 Peter, which still was occasionally disputed by others. Didymus also apparently regarded the Shepherd of Hermas, the Epistle of Barnabas, and even Didache and 1 Clement to be equally authoritative. And there were many such examples of divergence of opinion all over the Empire, both in the East and in the West. However, after the end of the fourth century, such occasional divergences of opinion have not altered the received tradition. Gnostic, theologically unsound writings like the Gospel of Thomas might have crept in, diluting the historical message of Christ with what we would now call New Age elements. Or later pressure groups might have excluded writings that did not suit their purpose—Revelation, for example, or 2 Peter a book the Syriac churches attempted to exclude. Later, Martin Luther would dearly have loved to have excluded James, which he regarded as contradicting Paul. Indeed, why not add Martin Luther King, Jr. And that canon can be traced back to Athanasius, and to the year , which justly remains an important date in church history.