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*Sir David Brewster Sir*

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Excerpt from The Edinburgh Encyclopedia, Vol. 3 of 18

Athanasius, saint, flourished in the fourth century, and was the renowned champion of orthodoxy against the Arians. We have no certain accounts of his parentage; and all that we know of his younger years, is, that he was a native of Egypt, and probably distinguished by his proficiency in theological learning. He accompanied the bishop of Alexandria to the council of Nice, in the capacity of secretary; and though then only a deacon, distinguished himself greatly by his real and his eloquence against Arius, and his party. He recommended himself so much to his patron and employer, that, in the year 326, he succeeded him in the see of Alexandria, by his special nomination. He immediately devoted his time and his talents to a zealous support of the catholic doctrine of the Trinity, against the innovations of Arius; and never had any cause more intrepid advocate. He was five times driven into exile, or forced to abdicate his episcopal see, by the intrigues of his enemies but his zeal was never diminished by his misfortunes, and he at last triumphed over all his Opponents, dying in quiet possession of his see in the year 373. He was first banished by the Emperor Constantine, on the unfounded accusation of detaining at Alexandria the ships which supplied Constantinople with corn. The place of his exile was Treves, in Gaul, where he remained about eighteen months, when he was honourably restored to his see by an edict of Constantius. A council of Arian bishops, held at Antioch, represented this restoration of Athanasius as an encroachment on synodical authority, and confirmed his former deposition. Upon this he fled to Julius, bishop of Rome, and was patronized by the Emperor Constantine, who threatened to make war on his brother Constantius if Athanasius was not restored. The eastern emperor complied with this demand; but Athanasius was soon assailed by the violence of his adversaries, and, being again deprived of his episcopal authority, was forced to seek an asylum in the desert of Thebais, where he remained unheard of for the space of six years. He was again restored to his see under Julian, and afterwards banished by the same emperor, to whom he was particularly obnoxious. He was afterwards restored by Jovian, and again banished by Valens; he was finally restored under the latter emperor, and ended his days in tranquillity.

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