

when Easter is. But we are not all astronomers, and we can all buy a calendar and look ahead. But somebody has to make the calendar, and you have to know when the moon is going to be full in order to know when Easter is going to be. And if you don't know that, there is no way of figuring when Easter is, except to look at the calendar. So at the Council of Nicea they decided that the bishop of Alexandria should, each year, announce to the Christian world what the date of Easter was. And the letters, an annual letter, after that, all through Athanasius' life, even when he was in exile, every year he wrote a letter, and they called it a ~~festal~~ ^{festal} letter. There is a letter which announced the date of the feast, the date of Easter. Sometimes they were called the Easter-letter. And in these letters, Athanasius gives word of advice and admonitions to the Christian world, deals with various doctrines. A set of these letters, in the new ~~a~~ edition, has just arrived in our library, I notice. His festal letters dealing with the Holy Spirit. He took up different doctrines in these letters, but the occasion of the writing of the letters was to tell what the date of Easter was. And this shows us the prominence of the bishop of Alexandria.

Many said that the bishop of Alexandria is, of course, the head of the whole Christian church, he has the most prominent important position. The bishop of Alexandria, some say, was called by the term pope, long before the bishop of Rome ever had that title applied to him. It is a little hard to prove, actually, because in the early stage the title pope seemed to have been applied to every priest in the east, and to every bishop in the west, and you remember Cyprian, he was actually addressed by the presbyters in the church of Rome as the Pope of Carthage. And pope was just a rather general title which came to be more and more special. Well, at this time, it seems to have been specialized a good bit, but it had been given to the man of Alexandria, rather than to the bishop^y of Rome. That was quite logical. It did not ascribe to any claim of authority, Athanasius claimed no authority over the church, but the Council of Nicea had simply asked that he ~~it~~ determine the date of Easter, according to the principles which were established