Your Name

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**Written Assignment #2**

**Athanasius of Alexandria**

Athanasius of Alexandria also known as the Confessor, and the Apostolic was a short, dark-skinned man who was tagged as Black Dwarf by his enemies. Born in 293 A.D, he was a Christian theologian, a fourth century Egyptian leader, a Church father, and the chief defender of Trinity against Arianism. Athanasius is believed to be one of the most important people in the history of Christianity as he played a major role in defending the Christian faith and produced a number of wonderful pieces of writing as well. Having plenty of enemies, being exiled five times by four Roman emperors, and spending 17 years of his life in exile, he was a successful theologian and still his teachings were adopted by the church and are used to this day.

A dispute arose between Athanasius and Arius related to the relationship of God the Son and God the Father. Arius was also a Christian theologian and a priest from Libya who claimed that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was sent to Earth for humankind’s salvation but he was not equal to God who is the Divine Power. There was no splitting of the theological beliefs according to Athanasius. Arius announced, “If the Father Begat the Son, then he who was begotten had a beginning in existence, and from this it follows there was a time when the Son was not”(Reeves). Athanasius fought against Arius saying that this belief denied the Trinity, which claimed that Christ was not like a substance of God; rather He was the same substance. Arianism came after the heresy of second century that is Modalism. According to Modalism, God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit were only masks used by God on several occasions. God would sometimes appear as a father, sometimes as a sin, and yet other times as a spirit that means these were just the disguises that God used. Opposing the disbeliefs of Arians Athanasius said, “[While [the Arians], like men sprung from a dunghill, truly "spoke from the earth", the bishops [of Nicea], not having invented their phrases for themselves, but having testimony from their fathers, wrote as they did. For ancient bishops, of the great Rome and our city [i.e., Alexandria, Egypt, where Athanasius was bishop], some 130 years ago, wrote and censured those who said that the Son was a creature and not consubstantial with the Father.](https://www.azquotes.com/quote/580309)”

This controversy spread everywhere in the surroundings and almost 300 bishops came to Nicea to argue and fight on this controversy. They presented their arguments and discussions. Arius was condemned as a heretic and was exiled. It was made a capital offense if someone possessed his writings. His books were also burned. People were pleased that peace is restored to Church and Athanasius was regarded as “the noble champion of Christ.” They were of the view that Arianism was completely defeated and gone but they were wrong.

The supporters of Arianism talked to the Constantine within a few months about ending the exile of Arius. Arius signed the Nicene Creed and Athanasius was ordered to restore heretic to fellowship. Athanasius did not agree and refused to do this upon which his enemies started plotting against him. He was accused of sorcery, illegal taxation, treason, and even murder, which led Constantine to exile him to a German city at present that was known as Trier at that time.

During his years in exile, Athanasius wrote many pieces in defense of the orthodox along with the pagan and Jewish opposition. “Life of St. Anthony” was one of his last contributions that helped in shaping the Monasticism- a famous Christian ideal. After the death of Constantine two years later, Athanasius came back to Alexandria. Upon his return, he came to know that Arianism had gained much power; all the Church leaders stood against him and decided to banish him. He again fled to Rome from where he tried to return and was banished for three more times. Upon his final return, he was seventy years old. He started writing a letter to the churches in diocese that is known as festal letter. Such letters were used for the general matters and constitution for the New Testament. These teachings are considered very important by the Churches and are still used and followed today.

Athanasius is also considered as the father of orthodoxy as he is a patron saint of theologians and a great defender of the Christian faith. Much of his life was devoted to the divinity of Jesus Christ. When he wrote the festal letters, he wrote about 45 festal letters. His 39th letter played a major role in the evolution of the New Testament books. Athanasius was the first person who identified 27 books of the New Testament; these books are still in use. There were several charges against him as he had many enemies. People accused him of having plotted the murder of a Melitian bishop, and using the hands of a dead man for the purpose of magic. He was brave enough that he faced the situations alone when the world was against him. While giving statements in defense of Jesus Christ, Athanasius chose his words very carefully and used images from the Scripture (A.G.Haykin).

The Christian Church was also about to accept Gnosticism, which is a belief that the spiritual things are virtuous and the material things are wicked. Athanasius even rescued the Christian Church from this belief; On the Incarnation displayed that the human body taken by Christ was not evil. His works had a strong effect on the lives of people. He wrote life of Anthony between 356-362 A.D that left a long-lasting influence on people of the society. it set standards of living and inspired many Christians to become nuns and monks (R. Hardy).

Athanasius is an important figure in the history of Church because of his theological ideas. He is a controversial as well as influential and well-reputed person from the Christian history. The positive significance of Athanasius in the Church history depends on three factors. First of them is his writings about the anti-Arian stating that Christ is the Son of God who is the savior of humankind and there is no difference between the Father and the Son. Second is the teaching s and role of Athanasius as an orthodox leader. He contributed a lot for this, but unfortunately he did not live to see this. Third was his enthusiastic and warm support to the Christian monastic movement. His life is an example of grace and great strength at the times of opposition and difficulty. The famous quote of Athanasius is, “He (Jesus) became what we are so that he might make us what he is.” This great orthodox leader defended his true faith, regardless of the consequences and crises that arose as a result. He was a holy bishop, a genius, and a pure soul who endured all the pains patiently for the love and sake of Jesus Christ. Athanasius stands as a pillar for the faith of Christians. He is considered as a hero who fought to every end for the preservation of Trinity, Incarnation, and the teachings of God (Piper).

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