

POPULAR PATRISTICS SERIES



On the Incarnation

SAINT ATHANASIUS

with an Introduction by C. S. Lewis

ST ATHANASIUS THE GREAT OF ALEXANDRIA

On the Incarnation

ST VLADIMIR'S SEMINARY PRESS
Popular Patristics Series
Number 44b

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ST ATHANASIUS THE GREAT
OF ALEXANDRIA

On the
Incarnation

Preface by
C.S. LEWIS

Translation and Introduction by
JOHN BEHR

ST VLADIMIR'S SEMINARY PRESS
YONKERS, NEW YORK

2011

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Athanasius, Saint, Patriarch of Alexandria, d. 373, author.

[De incarnatione. English]

On the incarnation : English translation / St. Athanasius the Great of Alexandria ; preface by C.S. Lewis ; translation and introduction by John Behr.

p. cm. — (Popular patristics series ; no. 44b)

ISBN 978-0-88141-427-1

1. Incarnation—Early works to 1800. I. Behr, John, translator, writer of added commentary. II. Title.

BR65.A443D413 2011b

232'.1—dc23

2011049324

Introduction by C.S. Lewis copyright © C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd 1944

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ST VLADIMIR'S SEMINARY PRESS
575 Scarsdale Road, Yonkers, NY 10707

1-800-204-2665

www.svspress.com

ISBN 978-088141-427-1

ISSN 1555-5755

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

*For His Eminence
Archbishop Demetrios*

Πιστὸς ὁδηγός,
ἀληθινὸς διδάσκαλος,
γνήσιος φιλόλογος



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Preface

from the First Edition

There is a strange idea abroad that in every subject the ancient books should be read only by the professionals, and that the amateur should content himself with the modern books. Thus I have found as a tutor in English Literature that if the average student wants to find out something about Platonism, the very last thing he thinks of doing is to take a translation of Plato off the library shelf and read the *Symposium*. He would rather read some dreary modern book ten times as long, all about “isms” and influences and only once in twelve pages telling him what Plato actually said. The error is rather an amiable one, for it springs from humility. The student is half afraid to meet one of the great philosophers face to face. He feels himself inadequate and thinks he will not understand him. But if he only knew, the great man, just because of his greatness, is much more intelligible than his modern commentator. The simplest student will be able to understand, if not all, yet a very great deal of what Plato said; but hardly anyone can understand some modern books on Platonism. It has always therefore been one of my main endeavours as a teacher to persuade the young that firsthand knowledge is not only more worth acquiring than secondhand knowledge, but is usually much easier and more delightful to acquire.

This mistaken preference for the modern books and this shyness of the old ones is nowhere more rampant than in theology. Wherever you find a little study circle of Christian laity you can be almost certain that they are studying not St. Luke or St. Paul or St. Augustine or Thomas Aquinas or Hooker or Butler, but M. Berdyaev or M. Maritain or M. Niebuhr or Miss Sayers or even myself.

Now this seems to me topsy-turvy. Naturally, since I myself am a writer, I do not wish the ordinary reader to read no modern books. But if he must read only the new or only the old, I would advise him to read the old. And I would give him this advice precisely because he is an amateur and therefore much less protected than the expert against the dangers of an exclusive contemporary diet. A new book is still on its trial and the amateur is not in a position to judge it. It has to be tested against the great body of Christian thought down the ages, and all its hidden implications (often unsuspected by the author himself) have to be brought to light. Often it cannot be fully understood without the knowledge of a good many other modern books. If you join at eleven o'clock a conversation which began at eight you will often not see the real bearing of what is said. Remarks which seem to you very ordinary will produce laughter or irritation and you will not see why—the reason, of course, being that the earlier stages of the conversation have given them a special point. In the same way sentences in a modern book which look quite ordinary may be directed *at* some other book; in this way you may be led to accept what you would have indignantly rejected if you knew its real significance. The only safety is to have a standard of plain, central Christianity (“mere Christianity” as Baxter called it) which puts the controversies of the moment in their proper perspective. Such a standard can be acquired only from the old books. It is a good rule, after reading a new book, never to allow yourself another new one till you have read an old one in between. If that is too much for you, you should at least read one old one to every three new ones.

Every age has its own outlook. It is specially good at seeing certain truths and specially liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore, need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. And that means the old books. All contemporary writers share to some extent the contemporary outlook—even those, like myself, who seem most opposed to it. Nothing strikes me more when I read the controversies of past ages than the fact that both sides were usually assuming without question a good deal

which we should now absolutely deny. They thought that they were as completely opposed as two sides could be, but in fact they were all the time secretly united—united with each other and against earlier and later ages—by a great mass of common assumptions. We may be sure that the characteristic blindness of the twentieth century—the blindness about which posterity will ask, “But how could they have thought that?”—lies where we have never suspected it, and concerns something about which there is untroubled agreement between Hitler and President Roosevelt or between Mr. H.G. Wells and Karl Barth. None of us can fully escape this blindness, but we shall certainly increase it, and weaken our guard against it, if we read only modern books. Where they are true they will give us truths which we half knew already. Where they are false they will aggravate the error with which we are already dangerously ill. The only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds, and this can be done only by reading old books. Not, of course, that there is any magic about the past. People were no cleverer then than they are now; they made as many mistakes as we. But not the same mistakes. They will not flatter us in the errors we are already committing; and their own errors, being now open and palpable, will not endanger us. Two heads are better than one, not because either is infallible, but because they are unlikely to go wrong in the same direction. To be sure, the books of the future would be just as good a corrective as the books of the past, but unfortunately we cannot get at them.

I myself was first led into reading the Christian classics, almost accidentally, as a result of my English studies. Some, such as Hooker, Herbert, Traherne, Taylor and Bunyan, I read because they are themselves great English writers; others, such as Boethius, St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Dante, because they were “influences.” George Macdonald I had found for myself at the age of sixteen and never wavered in my allegiance, though I tried for a long time to ignore his Christianity. They are, you will note, a mixed bag, representative of many Churches, climates and ages. And that brings me to yet another

reason for reading them. The divisions of Christendom are undeniable and are by some of these writers most fiercely expressed. But if any man is tempted to think—as one might be tempted who read only contemporaries—that “Christianity” is a word of so many meanings that it means nothing at all, he can learn beyond all doubt, by stepping out of his own century, that this is not so. Measured against the ages “mere Christianity” turns out to be no insipid interdenominational transparency, but something positive, self-consistent, and inexhaustible. I know it, indeed, to my cost. In the days when I still hated Christianity, I learned to recognise, like some all too familiar smell, that almost unvarying something which met me, now in Puritan Bunyan, now in Anglican Hooker, now in Thomist Dante. It was there (honeyed and floral) in Francois de Sales; it was there (grave and homely) in Spenser and Walton; it was there (grim but manful) in Pascal and Johnson; there again, with a mild, frightening, Paradisial flavour, in Vaughan and Boehme and Traherne. In the urban sobriety of the eighteenth century one was not safe—Law and Butler were two lions in the path. The supposed “Paganism” of the Elizabethans could not keep it out; it lay in wait where a man might have supposed himself safest, in the very centre of *The Faerie Queene* and the *Arcadia*. It was, of course, varied; and yet—after all—so unmistakably the same; recognisable, not to be evaded, the odour which is death to us until we allow it to become life:

an air that kills
From yon far country blows.

We are all rightly distressed, and ashamed also, at the divisions of Christendom. But those who have always lived within the Christian fold may be too easily dispirited by them. They are bad, but such people do not know what it looks like from without. Seen from there, what is left intact despite all the divisions, still appears (as it truly is) an immensely formidable unity. I know, for I saw it; and well our enemies know it. That unity any of us can find by going out of his

own age. It is not enough, but it is more than you had thought till then. Once you are well soaked in it, if you then venture to speak, you will have an amusing experience. You will be thought a Papist when you are actually reproducing Bunyan, a Pantheist when you are quoting Aquinas, and so forth. For you have now got on to the great level viaduct which crosses the ages and which looks so high from the valleys, so low from the mountains, so narrow compared with the swamps, and so broad compared with the sheep-tracks.

The present book is something of an experiment. The translation is intended for the world at large, not only for theological students. If it succeeds, other translations of other great Christian books will presumably follow. In one sense, of course, it is not the first in the field. Translations of the *Theologia Germanica*, the *Imitation*, the *Scale of Perfection*, and the *Revelations* of Lady Julian of Norwich, are already on the market, and are very valuable, though some of them are not very scholarly. But it will be noticed that these are all books of devotion rather than of doctrine. Now the layman or amateur needs to be instructed as well as to be exhorted. In this age his need for knowledge is particularly pressing. Nor would I admit any sharp division between the two kinds of book. For my own part I tend to find the doctrinal books often more helpful in devotion than the devotional books, and I rather suspect that the same experience may await many others. I believe that many who find that “nothing happens” when they sit down, or kneel down, to a book of devotion, would find that the heart sings unbidden while they are working their way through a tough bit of theology with a pipe in their teeth and a pencil in their hand.

This is a good translation of a very great book.¹ St. Athanasius has suffered in popular estimation from a certain sentence in the “Athanasian Creed.” I will not labour the point that that work is not exactly a creed and was not by St. Athanasius, for I think it is a very fine piece of writing. The words “Which Faith except every one do keep whole

¹Lewis refers here to an earlier translation of the work, but the remark may be applied equally to the present version.

and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly” are the offence. They are commonly misunderstood. The operative word is keep; not acquire, or even believe, but keep. The author, in fact, is not talking about unbelievers, but about deserters, not about those who have never heard of Christ, nor even those who have misunderstood and refused to accept Him, but of those who having really understood and really believed, then allow themselves, under the sway of sloth or of fashion or any other invited confusion to be drawn away into sub-Christian modes of thought. They are a warning against the curious modern assumption that all changes of belief, however brought about, are necessarily exempt from blame. But this is not my immediate concern. I mention “the creed (commonly called) of St. Athanasius” only to get out of the reader’s way what may have been a bogey and to put the true Athanasius in its place. His epitaph is Athanasius *contra mundum*, “Athanasius against the world.” We are proud that our own country has more than once stood against the world. Athanasius did the same. He stood for the Trinitarian doctrine, “whole and undefiled,” when it looked as if all the civilised world was slipping back from Christianity into the religion of Arius—into one of those “sensible” synthetic religions which are so strongly recommended today and which, then as now, included among their devotees many highly cultivated clergymen. It is his glory that he did not move with the times; it is his reward that he now remains when those times, as all times do, have moved away.

When I first opened his *De Incarnatione* I soon discovered by a very simple test that I was reading a masterpiece. I knew very little Christian Greek except that of the New Testament and I had expected difficulties. To my astonishment I found it almost as easy as Xenophon; and only a master mind could, in the fourth century, have written so deeply on such a subject with such classical simplicity. Every page I read confirmed this impression. His approach to the Miracles is badly needed today, for it is the final answer to those who object to them as “arbitrary and meaningless violations of the laws of Nature.” They are here shown to be rather the re-telling in capital

letters of the same message which Nature writes in her crabbed cursive hand; the very operations one would expect of Him who was so full of life that when He wished to die He had to “borrow death from others.” The whole book, indeed, is a picture of the Tree of Life—a sappy and golden book, full of buoyancy and confidence. We cannot, I admit, appropriate all its confidence today. We cannot point to the high virtue of Christian living and the gay, almost mocking courage of Christian martyrdom, as a proof of our doctrines with quite that assurance which Athanasius takes as a matter of course. But whoever may be to blame for that it is not Athanasius.

The translator knows so much more Christian Greek than I that it would be out of place for me to praise her version. But it seems to me to be in the right tradition of English translation. I do not think the reader will find here any of that sawdusty quality which is so common in modern renderings from the ancient languages. That is as much as the English reader will notice; those who compare the version with the original will be able to estimate how much wit and talent is presupposed in such a choice, for example, as “these wise-acres” on the very first page.

C.S. Lewis

Introduction

St Athanasius the Great of Alexandria

Already during his own lifetime, St Athanasius had become a legendary figure.¹ He was probably born in the latter half of 299, for soon after he was consecrated as bishop of Alexandria, on 8 June 328, succeeding Alexander, whom he had accompanied as a young deacon to the Council of Nicaea, his election was contested on various grounds, amongst which was that he was too young. By the time of his death, on 2 May 373, Athanasius had been bishop of Alexandria for forty-six years, during which he had been exiled five times, for a total of some seventeen years.² These lengthy periods of exile proved felicitous for Athanasius. His time in the West gave him the opportunity to forge strong links with those he encountered there, especially with Julius of Rome and his fellow exile Marcellus of Ancyra. The time he spent in the Egyptian desert provided occasion to develop close relationships with the ascetics living in the desert, a bond which was to be mutually beneficial. Antony himself made an appearance in Alexandria in a show of support for Athanasius, and thereafter the monks of Egypt were amongst the most loyal support-

¹For a more comprehensive introduction to Athanasius and his theology, see John Behr, *The Nicene Faith* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2004), 163–259, and the further studies cited therein, from which much of this introduction has been drawn. For further treatment of his theology, see K. Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1998); for his life and the politics of the empire, see T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

²Following Barnes (*Athanasius*, xi–xii) Athanasius was in exile: 1) 7 November 335 to June 337; 2) 16 April 339 to summer 345, though he returned to Alexandria only on 21 October 346; 3) February 356 to 26 February 362; 4) October 362 to 14 February 364; 5) 5 October 365 to February 366.

ers of the bishops of Alexandria. And, in return, through such works as the *Life of Antony*, Athanasius contributed significantly to ascetic theology, so making his own contribution to the development of monasticism, as well as popularizing its ideals and propagating them far beyond the borders of Egypt. Even more important was the theology that Athanasius expounded during the stormy course of his life, developing the central intuitions of his predecessor, Alexander, into a full exposition of Nicene theology.

These factors and others projected a *persona* that commanded universal respect. A few years before his death, Athanasius received a series of very flattering letters from St Basil the Great (who was born after Athanasius had become bishop), requesting that he support his plans to reconcile the splintered supporters of Nicaea. But, by this time, Athanasius was no longer engaged in affairs outside Egypt and declined even to respond. Then seven years after his death, on 2 May 380, St Gregory the Theologian delivered a eulogy on "The Great Athanasius," to demonstrate, with an eye to the Egyptians who had arrived in the capital, his alignment with the renowned bishop of Alexandria. Thus, on the eve of the Council of Constantinople, Athanasius was canonized and an image of him enshrined that portrayed him as a steadfast saint, a model pastor and an unerring theologian, whose very name was synonymous with orthodoxy.

Scholarship over the past century has tended to be more critical of Athanasius' character, highlighting the various charges brought up against him, those for which he was exiled by various councils and regarding which papyrological evidence has newly been brought to light. However, despite all this new work, the older assessment of Harnack, who was not predisposed at all towards Athanasius, remains the most just: "If we measure him by the standard of his time, we can discover nothing ignoble or mean about him."³ He certainly displayed courage and tenacity of purpose. In addition he was also capable of being extremely congenial when needed, so that he was able,

³A. von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. N. Buchanan from the 3rd German ed. (London and Edinburgh: Williams & Norgate, 1894-8), vol. 4, 62.

through personal meetings, to win over the emperors Constantine and Constantius. The standards of his time may have tolerated more violence in the exercise of his purpose than we might do, yet there is no indication of vindictiveness, but rather a desire to make peace, so that by the time of his death he had become reconciled with most of his earlier enemies. The shadow side to the legendary figure by no means reduces his significance for Christian history and theology: Nicene Christianity exists by virtue of his constancy and vision.

Against the Gentiles

The work translated here, *On the Incarnation*, is one of the classic texts of early Christianity. Its influence on all later theology cannot be understated. It could be described as the defining exposition of Nicene theology, certainly as understood by the later Byzantine tradition. And for this reason it requires to be read very carefully and sensitively. In a comprehensive and compelling manner, Athanasius expounds the central mystery of Christian theology, the incarnation, but in a manner that embraces all aspects of God's work, from creation to recreation. The works themselves are almost catechetical pieces. Towards the end of *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius claims to have provided "an elementary instruction and an outline of the faith in Christ and his divine manifestation to us" (*Inc.* 56). And, indeed, the work is not a treatise on disputed points of abstract theology, but presents, in simple yet elegant prose, a clear exposition of Athanasius' theological vision, one which is based on key intuitions that he had learnt from the earlier Alexandrian tradition that had been upheld at Nicaea, and which continued thereafter to drive his struggle to give fuller expression to Nicene theology. Here, if anywhere, is the "real" Nicene theology, the "notional" presented, in Newman's terms, in images that are capable of inspiring "Real Assent" in real men and women, so giving flesh, as it were, to the words of doctrine.⁴

⁴J.H. Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, ed. I.T. Ker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 63–8 (=89–97).

As the opening words of *On the Incarnation*—"In what preceded we have sufficiently treated . . ."—clearly indicate, it was written as the second part of a double treatise, following on from his work *Against the Gentiles*. Both need to be considered together, for the first work sets up the problem that the second resolves. The first task of understanding an author, especially an ancient one, whose perspectives and presuppositions may differ even more considerably from our own than a contemporary, is to pay attention to what he himself says about his text. *Against the Gentiles* opens with Athanasius affirming that although "the knowledge of religion and of the truth of things" can be learnt without human teachers, since it is revealed every day, shining more brightly than the sun through the teaching of Christ, yet as he has been asked to expound a little of the Christian faith he will do so. Moreover, while it can be discovered from the words of Holy Scripture, "for the sacred and divinely inspired Scriptures are sufficient for the exposition of the truth," there are also many treatises of blessed teachers, which "if one happens upon them he will gain some notion of the interpretation of the Scriptures and will be able to attain the knowledge he desires." This setting of the learning of the knowledge of God in the context of the interpretation of the Scriptures is picked up again at the end of *On the Incarnation*, when Athanasius directs his readers back to Scripture so that they "can learn from them more completely and more clearly the accuracy of what has been said" (*Inc.* 56).

Athanasius then continues, in *Against the Gentiles*, by stating his aim:

But since we do not have the works of these teachers to hand, we must expound for you in writing what we have learnt from them—I mean the faith in Christ the Savior—that no one may regard the teaching of our doctrine (*logos*) as worthless, or suppose faith in Christ to be irrational (*alogos*). Such things the pagans misrepresent and scorn, greatly mocking us, though they have nothing other than the cross

of Christ to cite in objection. It is particularly in this respect that one must pity their insensitivity, because in slandering the cross they do not see that its power has filled the whole world, and that through it the effects of the knowledge of God have been revealed to all. For if they had really applied their minds to his divinity they would not have mocked at so great a thing, but would rather have recognized that he was the Savior of the universe and that the cross was not the ruin but the healing of creation. For if, after the cross, all idolatry has been overthrown, and all demonic activity is put to flight by this sign, and Christ alone is worshipped, and through him the Father is known, and opponents are put to shame while he every day invisibly converts their souls—how then, one might reasonably ask them, is this matter still to be considered in human terms, and should one not rather confess that he who ascended the cross is the Word of God and the Savior of the universe? (*Gent.* 1)

On the Incarnation, as we will see, opens with a similar statement. These works are clearly, first and foremost, understood by their author to be an apology for the cross: they will show that “he who ascended the cross is the Word of God” and that therefore the Christian faith is not “without its word,” “irrational” (*alogos*). The order of identification in this sentence, and elsewhere in Athanasius’ works, is vitally important: the starting point is the one who ascended the cross, and the account then is given from this perspective. It is through this that the knowledge of God, and all that this effects, has been revealed.

Of greatest importance here, for Athanasius, is that the demonic activity of idolatry which formerly prevailed everywhere has been vanquished by the cross, so that now Christ alone is worshipped. Idolatry, especially that of the body, is for Athanasius a kind of barometer, measuring the perversity into which humans have fallen, the degree to which their knowledge of God has been lost, and the

extent to which the image of God in them obscured, the consequence of which is corruption and death. The bulk of *Against the Gentiles* describes the prevalence of idolatry prior to the coming of Christ, a situation which demands the drastic solution presented in *On the Incarnation*. The death of idolatry since the advent of Christ demonstrates the power of Christ and his cross, a power which has filled the whole world, overcoming whatever has separated human beings from God, recreating them and restoring them to communion with God. The Christian faith therefore does indeed have its own *Logos*, the teaching of which requires the application of the mind, even if the divinity of Christ cannot be perceived when understood in merely human terms.

With this in mind, we are perhaps able to date the works. This has been a matter of some debate. His words, quoted above, that speak of not having the work of his teachers to hand, has been taken as an indication that they were written while in exile, most plausibly his first, in Trier from 335 to 337. As it is only in the following decade that he began to write against the Arians, such a date for these works would also explain the absence of any mention of the Arians in them. However, it is also possible that these words could be a literary affectation, explaining why he is himself now writing a treatise when many other works already exist, and perhaps wishing to correct what may be found in them. The absence of any reference to Arius in *Against the Gentiles* and *On the Incarnation* has been taken by others to indicate a date for the works prior to the outbreak of the controversy, though this would mean that they were written at an exceptionally young age. Most likely, as has recently been argued, given what we have seen of their character and intended purpose, these works should be placed in the period after the conversion of Constantine and after the Council of Nicaea, when the various controversies had apparently at least been settled and Athanasius was elevated to the episcopate. Even more specifically, one could see them as a reaction to the praise of the Emperor effusively given by Eusebius of Caesarea, with Athanasius wanting to revise this imperi-

alist triumphalism, “by making sure that the triumph of Constantine is strictly attributed to Christ, to the point of not even mentioning the emperor.”⁵ The occasion for this final triumph may have come about through Constantine, but, Athanasius insists, the victory is Christ’s alone.

In the course of recounting at great length the variety and perversity of pagan idolatry, *Against the Gentiles* also lays a number of structural elements that are of great importance for understanding *On the Incarnation*, the second part of the work, and that need to be discussed in some detail here to prepare for a proper reading for its sequel. Especially important is his treatment, in the opening chapters, of the origin of idolatry, and, towards the end of the work, the relationship between the Creator and creation. Athanasius begins his exposition of the Word of the Cross with the origin of idolatry, emphasizing that idolatry, and evil more generally, is not “from the beginning,” that is, is not a proper characteristic of created existence, but is rather a deviation from the right relationship between God and creation:

Evil has not existed from the beginning, nor even now is it found among the holy ones nor does it exist at all with them. But it was human beings who later began to conceive of it and imagine it in their own likeness. Hence they fashioned for themselves the notion of idols, reckoning what was not as though it were. For God, the creator of the universe and king of all, who is beyond all being and human thought, since he is good and exceedingly noble, has made the human race according to his own image through his own Word, our Savior Jesus Christ. He also fashioned the human being to be perceptive and understanding of reality through his similarity to himself, giving him also a conception and knowledge of his own eternity, so that preserving this identity he might

⁵ Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 29. Cf. p. 216, n. 19: “Athanasius may be trying to transfer what Eusebius rendered to Caesar back to God.”

never abandon his concept of God or leave the company of the holy ones, but, retaining the grace of him who bestowed it, having also [God's] own power from the Paternal Word, he might rejoice and converse with the divine, living an idyllic and truly blessed and immortal life. For having no obstacle to the knowledge of the divine, he continuously contemplates by his purity the image of the Father, the God Word, after whose image he was made; he is awestruck when he grasps the providence which, through the Word, extends to the universe, being raised above the sensual and every bodily appearance, cleaving instead, by the power of his mind, to the divine and intelligible realities in heaven. For when the mind of human beings has no intercourse with bodies, nor has mingled with it, from outside, anything of their desires, but is entirely above them, as it was in the beginning, then, transcending the senses and all human things, it is raised up on high, and beholding the Word sees in him also the Father of the Word, taking pleasure in contemplating him and being renewed by its desire for him. Just as the Holy Scriptures say that the first created of human beings, who was called Adam in Hebrew, at the beginning had his mind fixed on God in unembarrassed boldness, and lived with the holy ones in the contemplation of intelligible reality, which he enjoyed in that place which the holy Moses figuratively called paradise; so purity of soul is sufficient to [reflect and] behold, through itself, God [cf. 2 Cor 3.18] as the Lord himself said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." (*Gent.* 2)

This passage introduces us to a number of important themes and terms at work in both treatises. Most important is the relationship between creation and Jesus Christ. God is transcendent to all creation, "beyond all being and human thought." Yet this transcendence is not such that it makes his presence in creation, nor the creatures knowledge of God, impossible. As God is good, Athanasius affirms,

he created all things “by his Word our Savior Jesus Christ,” so that through likeness to him knowledge of their Creator might be granted to human beings; had they preserved this grace, receiving also thereby God’s “own power from the Paternal Word,” they might contemplate the Word and in him behold the Father. Ignorance, evil, and death, are therefore not part of God’s creation, but are brought into some kind of phantasmagorical existence when human beings turn from what is truly real to that which is not, that which has no real existence but is conjured up by our own invention.

It is very striking that Athanasius speaks here, and throughout the work, of “our Savior Jesus Christ” as the one by whom God has made the human race, fashioning it into his own image. Athanasius, it must be remembered, is expounding the Word of the Cross, and, as a preliminary aspect of this task, describes the proper character of human existence, as a contrast to the idolatrous state which had predominated prior to the cross. Athanasius characterizes the proper state of human existence from the point of view of what has been revealed by Christ in his work of salvation: human beings were created for communion with God through contemplation of his Word and Image, the Savior Jesus Christ. That is, Athanasius’ analysis is more concerned to determine, in the light of Christ, what is the proper characteristic or state of human existence, in contrast to what we have actually seen throughout history, rather than to speculate about primordial beginnings. In fact, it is only after such reflection that Athanasius then brings in “the first created of human beings” *as an example* of what he has outlined: the case of Adam is brought in to exemplify the theological point being made. Moreover, the place in which Adam enjoyed this contemplation is specifically said to be “figuratively called paradise,” for, as Athanasius makes clear, contemplation of God is not found in any geographical location, either in heaven or on earth, but in and through similarity with the Savior Jesus Christ.

This point also qualifies what it is to be in the image of God. In the passage above, Athanasius describes God as creating human

beings in his own image through “his own Word (*Logos*), our Savior Jesus Christ”. To be in the image of God is to be *logikos*, a term which can only be translated into English, but very unsatisfactorily, as “rational.” For while the term “rational” brings to mind notions of rationality, and often gets cast into an opposition between body and mind, the term *logikos* must be understood in terms of its relation to the *Logos*, in whose image human beings have been created and after whose pattern of life they should live if they wish to live “rationally.”⁶

Another important term and tension alluded to in the passage above is the contrast between what is “proper,” what belongs to something as its “own” (*idios*), and what is “outside.” Christ is the “proper” Son and Word of God, in contrast to those who, from “outside” God, are adopted as sons, who, by participation in his “own” Word share in the property of being “rational.” It is “proper” to human beings, in turn, to be in the image of God—“rational”—contemplating the Word of God and through him knowing the Father. It is “proper” to human beings, Athanasius says in the above passage, that their minds should be directed in this way rather than be directed towards things “outside,” to the body and its desires. The human condition depends on the orientation of the mind, whether it is pursuing the contemplation of the things which transcend the senses and are “proper” to it or whether it is turned to the body, receiving impressions “from outside.” It is very important to note that although Athanasius affirms quite clearly that living, as Adam, in an “unembarrassed boldness,” the human mind would have transcended the senses, contemplating the Word, there is, nevertheless, no indication at all that the human being would have been in any kind of disembodied state. In this condition, human beings would not live by or for the body, and their minds would not have been driven by what comes from outside the mind, sensual impressions and bodily desires. That this ascetic thrust is not aimed at the body

⁶Cf. Origen, *Commentary on John*, 2.114: “We could say that the saint alone is rational.”

itself, but at the image of the body which is forced upon the mind from outside itself, is made clear in the following chapter, when Athanasius considers further what is involved when human beings change their orientation.

This, then, is the condition in which God created the human race, and, in the language of the Gospel of John, it is in this condition that he wished them “to remain” or “to abide.” However, human beings chose otherwise, and so now “remain” caught in corruption and death, until, through the salvific work of Christ, they are enabled “to remain” in immortality. It is with this point that Athanasius begins the next chapter of *Against the Gentiles*:

In this way then, as has been said, did the Creator fashion the human race, and such did he wish it to remain. But human beings, contemptuous of the better things and shrinking from their apprehension, sought rather what was closer to themselves—and what was closer to them was the body and its sensations. So they turned their minds away from intelligible reality and began to consider themselves. And by considering themselves and holding to the body and the other senses, and deceived as it were in their own things, they fell into desire for themselves, preferring their own things to the contemplation of divine things. Spending their time in these things, and being unwilling to turn away from things close at hand, they imprisoned in bodily pleasures their souls which had become disordered and mixed up with all kinds of desires, while they wholly forgot the power they received from God in the beginning.

One could also see that this was so from the first created man, as the Holy Scriptures relate of him. For he also, as long as he fixed his mind on God and contemplation of him, kept away from the contemplation of the body. But when, by the counsel of the serpent, he abandoned his thinking of God and began to consider himself, then they fell into

the desire of the body, and knew that they were naked, and knowing were ashamed. They knew that they were not so much naked of clothing, but that they had become naked of the contemplation of divine things, and that they had turned their minds in the opposite direction. For abandoning the consideration of and desire for the one and the real, I mean God, from then on they gave themselves up to various and separate desires of the body. (*Gent.* 3)

God wished human beings to remain in the state that he had created them, but they chose otherwise, preferring what is closer to themselves, and this, Athanasius specifies, is their body. Thus far from denigrating the bodily reality of human existence, the body, for Athanasius, is in fact “closer” to human beings, it is their “own” or what is “proper” to them. As we have seen, God intended human beings to transcend their bodies, with their minds set on high, in contemplation of the Word. If Athanasius does not speak of human beings transcending their minds or souls, it is not because these are somehow more divine, but rather that their mind or soul is the faculty whose orientation effects this transcendence. As human beings were to transcend themselves, not being concerned about “their own things,” that is, the things of the body and this life, but rather occupying themselves with the Word of God, the body can even be said to be the locus of “the ‘selfness’ of being human.”⁷ However, human beings turned their attention towards themselves, to the body and its sense perception, receiving impressions from outside itself, and have consequently ended up being deceived even in “their own things.” In this way, humans fell into the chaos of the fleshly desires of the body, forgetting what they had originally received from God. With their souls directed towards the body, in, by, and for itself, the body is now the very point of human separation from God, not because of its materiality, but because it has become an idol.

⁷Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 64.

After reflecting in this way on the origin of idolatry in human preference for their own, their body, Athanasius again brings in the Genesis account as an example of the truth that he has expounded in his demonstration of the Word of the Cross. Rather than coming to know, by eating of the tree, that they were already naked, Athanasius plays upon the image of a garment of contemplation, which they lost when they succumbed to their own desire, thus becoming truly naked. Athanasius also heightens the dramatic effect of this, by changing from the singular (he had his mind fixed on God, which he then abandoned) to the plural (they fell into the desire of the body, becoming naked). The plurality into which each human being has descended, given over to a multiplicity of desires, reverberates in the plurality of multiple conflicting voices, each asserting itself.

In the following thirty or so chapters of *Against the Gentiles*, the bulk of the work, Athanasius describes the history of idolatry and perversity into which the human race has fallen. Despite the prevalence of idolatry, Athanasius suggests that it was still possible for human beings to know God. If the soul were to turn back to God, casting off all desires and every accretion it has acquired from outside, so that it “keeps pure only what is in the image, then when this shines forth, it can truly contemplate as in a mirror the Word, the image of the Father, and in him meditate on the Father, of whom the Savior is the image” (*Gent.* 34). Yet such “teaching,” Athanasius also acknowledges, may not be adequate, “because of the external influences which disturb the mind and prevent it from seeing the better course” (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, Athanasius continues, following Paul (quoting Rom 1.20), human beings could still have learnt about God through their sense perception, for “he so ordered creation that although he cannot be seen by nature, yet he can be known from his works” (*Gent.* 35). The order and harmony of creation demonstrate not only that there was a creator, but that there is one creator. More specifically, as his argument has refuted all idolatry, Athanasius claims that:

... the pious religion must be ours, and the only true God, he whom we worship and preach, [must be] the Lord of all creation and demiurge of all existence. Who then is he, if not the all-holy Father of Christ, beyond all created being, who, as supreme steersman, through his own Wisdom and his own Word, our Lord and Savior Christ, guides and orders the universe for our salvation, and acts as seems best to him? ... For if the movement of creation was meaningless (*alogos*) and the universe was carried about haphazardly, one could well disbelieve our statements. But if it was created with reason (*logos*), wisdom, and understanding, and has been arranged with complete order, then he who governs and ordered it can be none other than the Word (*Logos*) of God. (*Gent.* 40)

Athanasius again affirms that it is by “his own Word, our Lord and Savior Christ” that the Father acts to govern and order the universe. The creative and providential work of God cannot be separated from the salvific work of Christ. The Word he refers to is not, therefore, the word that is “involved and innate in every creature, which some are accustomed to call seminal,” for such a word has no life of its own, but merely expresses the art of the Creator (*Gent.* 40). Nor does he mean “such a word as belongs to rational beings, consisting of syllables and expressed in the air” (*ibid.*). Rather he is speaking of “the living and powerful Word of the good God of the universe, the very Word that is God, who, while other than all created things and all creation, is the Father’s own and only Word, who ordered all this universe and illuminates it by his providence” (*ibid.*).

Athanasius then continues by analyzing the constitution of this creation itself, both in relation to the Word by whom it was brought into being and who now governs and regulates it, and, equally importantly, in relation to the nothingness from which it was created. Athanasius is very clear that creation itself has been brought into being by the will of God. Creation is not derived from some preexisting matter, such that it would have its own independent sub-

sistence: “He, the power and wisdom of God, turns the heaven, has suspended the earth, and by his own will has set it resting on nothing” (*Gent.* 40). Created from nothing, creation rests upon nothing; it depends totally for its existence upon the will of God alone, by which it was called into being. Yet rather than allowing it to relapse into nothingness, God acts to ensure its stability:

And the cause why the Word of God really came to created beings is truly wonderful, and shows that things should not have occurred otherwise than as they are. For the nature of created things, having come into being from nothing, is unstable, and is weak and mortal when considered by itself. But the God of all is good and excellent by nature; therefore he also loves humankind—for a good being would be envious of no one, so he envies nobody existence but rather wishes everyone to exist, in order to exercise his kindness. So, seeing that all created nature according to its own definition is in a state of flux and dissolution, therefore, lest it suffer this and the universe be dissolved back into non-being, making everything by his own eternal Word and giving substance to creation, he did not abandon it to be carried away and be tempest-tossed through its own nature, lest it run the risk of returning to nothing. But, being good, he governs and establishes the whole world through his Word, who is himself God, in order that creation, illumined by the leadership, providence and the ordering of the Word, may be able to remain firm, since it participates in the Word who is truly from the Father, and is aided by him to exist, and not thus suffer what would otherwise have happened, I mean a relapse into non-existence, were it not protected by the Word, “who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, for through him and in him all things subsist, things visible and invisible, and he is the head of the Church,” as the servants of the truth teach in the holy writings. (*Gent.* 41; cf. Col 1:15–18)

The previously sketched pattern of the relationship between God and human beings, with God granting human beings a share in the power of his Word so that they might remain in communion with him, is now used by Athanasius to explain God's creation as a whole. That is, Athanasius reads back into the framework of creation as a whole the pattern established by the Savior Jesus Christ in his work of salvation. Coming into being from nothing, created nature, considered in itself, is inherently unstable, corruptible, tending to dissolve back into non-existence.⁸ However, God, who loves humankind, envied no-one a share in existence, and so did not abandon his creation once it was made by his own Word, but instead governs and establishes this world through his Word, so that, guided and ordered by the Word, it is enabled to remain firm. This should not be thought of as two separate and sequentially distinct actions. Rather, as everything has been created by God through his Word, the order of the Word is, as it were, imprinted upon everything, so that every aspect of his creation manifests the creative work, the power, of the Word. Bearing the imprint of the Word, and so making the Word present, the cosmos is maintained in existence by the Word, and this creation Athanasius identifies, following Colossians, as the Church.

Finally, having explored the relationship between the Word of God and created reality, Athanasius can insist that the Word of God belongs to the divine realm: Jesus Christ is himself what it is to be God. Created beings, brought into being from non-existence, are intrinsically "from outside", external to God, though they can come

⁸In a very different context, S. Pétrement makes the interesting suggestion that it is, in fact, the cross that provides the stimulus for this teaching about creation: "In the Old Testament the world was so narrowly and directly dependent upon God that God himself . . . was in turn almost tied up with and chained to the world. . . . The image of the cross is an image that liberates. . . . *The cross separates God from the world.* If it does not separate him absolutely, at least it puts him at a very great distance. It puts him much further away than the distinction between Creator and creature could do. . . . It is indeed, as Paul sees, something that is profoundly new, 'a scandal to the Jews and folly to the Greeks.'" S. Pétrement, *A Separate God: The Christian Origins of Gnosticism*, trans. C. Harrison (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 37, emphasis in original.

to participate in God. The Son, on the other hand, is God's "own" Word, and so is divine, not by participation, but in himself:

His holy disciples teach that everything was created through him and for him, and that being a good offspring of a good Father, and true Son, he is the Power of the Father and his Wisdom and Word; not so by participation, nor do these properties accrue to him from outside in the way of those who participate in him and are given wisdom by him, being strong and rational in him; but he is Wisdom-in-himself, Word-in-himself, himself the Father's own Power, Light-in-himself, Truth-in-himself, Righteousness-in-himself, Virtue-in-himself, yes, and the Stamp and Effulgence and Image. In short, he is the supremely perfect fruit of the Father, and is alone Son, the exact image of the Father. (*Gent.* 46)

All the attributes usually only applied to the one God—wisdom, truth, light, righteousness, virtue—the Son is, not as properties that he has acquired from "outside" himself nor as if he were himself merely an attribute of God, but he is these things in himself: He is what it is to be God, and so is the exact image of the Father, his perfect fruit. This is, in fact, the central affirmation of the Council of Nicaea, that the Son is himself true God of true God by being the Father's own Son. Finally, Athanasius concludes by returning to the main theme of *Against the Gentiles*, pointing out that "this being so, and nothing being outside him, but both heaven and earth and all that is in them is dependent upon him, nevertheless humans in their folly, setting aside the knowledge of and piety towards him, have honored things that are not instead of things that are" (*Gent.* 47). Their folly is shown specifically in that they do not recognize God and do not worship "his Word, the Savior of all, our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the Father orders the universe and contains and provides for all things" (*ibid.*). Athanasius' account of the constitution of created being, the universe as a whole, has its starting point

in the salvific work of Christ and is intended to provide a means of understanding who he is, that is, “that he who ascended the cross is the Word of God.”

On the Incarnation

Athanasius opens his work *On the Incarnation*, the second part of his double treatise, in very much the same key as he had *Against the Gentiles*. Noting that he has discussed the origin of idolatry and made a few comments concerning the divinity of the Word and the dependency of all things upon him, he then outlines his project for this work:

Come now, blessed one and true lover of Christ, let us, with the faith of our religion, relate also the things concerning the Incarnation of the Word and expound his divine manifestation to us, which the Jews slander and the Greeks mock, but we ourselves venerate, so that, all the more from his apparent degradation, you may have an even greater and fuller piety towards him, for the more he is mocked by unbelievers by so much he provides a greater witness of his divinity, because what human beings cannot understand as impossible, these he shows to be possible (cf. Matt 19.26), and what human beings mock as unseemly, these he renders fitting by his own goodness, and what human beings through sophistry laugh at as merely human, these by his power he shows to be divine, overturning the illusion of idols by his own apparent degradation through the cross, invisibly persuading those who mock and disbelieve to recognize his divinity and his power. (*Inc.* 1)

This is the first time that Athanasius mentions the “incarnation” of the Word, his divine “manifestation,” yet he does so alluding to Paul’s

words on the folly of preaching Christ crucified (cf. 1 Cor 1.23). In doing this, Athanasius is not replacing the “scandal of the cross” with a “scandal of incarnation” or the “scandal of particularity,” but instead uses the word “incarnation” in a broader sense than has since become customary in theology. The “apparent degradation of the Word” is not simply a kenotic or self-deprecating act of a divine person assuming human nature, but is “his apparent degradation through the cross.” By connecting the “incarnation” and “manifestation” of the Word to the cross in this way, Athanasius emphasizes, once again, that it is only as “the one who ascended the cross” that we know the Word of God, for the more he is mocked, the more his divinity is made manifest, and the absolute limit of such degradation, the ultimate humiliation, is his death on the cross, which is also, thereby, only an “apparent degradation” for it is in truth the high point of his manifestation to us as the Word of God.

The most renowned statement from this work, “He was incarnate that we might be made god,” though a passing comment in a section of the treatise devoted to the refutation of the Gentiles (*Inc.* 54), summarizes well theme of the work as a whole. However, because this statement is usually taken in isolation from the larger scope and purpose of this work, its full meaning is often overlooked. Thus, for instance, one recent commentator asserted that “one of the curious results of this theology of the incarnation is that it almost does away with a doctrine of the atonement. Of course Athanasius believes in the atonement, in Christ’s death as saving, but he cannot really explain why Christ should have died.”⁹ Referring to Athanasius’ discussion about why Christ should have died on the cross (in *Inc.* 19–25), which, he claims, presents “a series of puerile reasons unworthy of the rest of the treatise,” he concluded that “the fact is that his doctrine of the incarnation has almost swallowed up any doctrine of the atonement, has rendered it unnecessary.”

⁹R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 450.

Yet, as we have seen, the purpose of Athanasius in these two works is in reality nothing other than presenting an apology for the cross. It is absolutely necessary, as we said earlier, to pay close attention to what an author himself says that he is going to be doing in the work that he writes. Although entitling this work *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius does not allot any time to considering the infancy narratives of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and only mentions a few times, and then in passing, the birth from the virgin, or to use his typical expression, the Word's fashioning for himself the body from a virgin as a temple in which to dwell.¹⁰ Likewise, he devotes only a few passages to considering the divine works of Christ as recorded in the Gospels. Rather, after examining the "rationality" of Christ's suffering on the cross, Athanasius gives considerably more space to the divine works which Christ now does in those who have "put on the faith of the cross" (*Inc.* 28), so demonstrating the resurrection of the body which Christ had "put on" (eg. *Inc.* 44). As we can only speak of what the Word has done in the body—conquering death and bestowing knowledge of the Father—in the light of the Passion, we cannot separate the body that he has taken from the body in which he effects such works in believers in the present. The scope of what Athanasius means by "incarnation" is thus far broader than is often assumed and, moreover, it has a scope not limited to the past. The body, fashioned from the virgin, in which the Word dwells, as seen in the light of his passion, cannot be separated from the body of Christ, that is, those who by faith in the cross are no longer subject to the corruption of death.

On the Incarnation has been variously subdivided in previous translations. In this present edition, we have only utilized the most obvious transitions indicated by Athanasius himself. The work begins with an introductory chapter, already discussed. Athanasius follows this by two accounts of the "divine dilemma": What should God have done? The first (*Inc.* 2–10) pertains to the problem of death. The human beings that God had created for life in commu-

¹⁰*Inc.* 8, 18, 20, 33, 37.

nion with himself in the knowledge of himself, have become subject to death. This, as it were, put God in a predicament: what should he do? Allow death to hold sway, and so seem weak, lacking care and concern? Or should he himself go against the law that he had laid down, that death would follow on from transgression? The resolution of this divine dilemma is that the Word of God takes a human body, as his “instrument,” in order to be able to offer it to death and in this way conquer death, rendering his body incorruptible.

The second divine dilemma (*Inc.* 11–19) treats the same predicament but from the perspective of knowledge. Once human beings had their sights set only on material, bodily things, how else could God grab our attention, as it were, apart from through a body. Therefore the Word of God takes a human body, again as an “instrument,” through which, in this analysis, he makes himself known. Although first seen as a human being, by the works he does in the body, works which are clearly not human but divine, Christ makes himself known not merely as a human being but as the Word of God himself.

That Athanasius undertakes two analyses for the rationale of the incarnation is important. The first analysis, which focuses specifically on the death of Christ, provides what he describes as “the first cause of the incarnation of the Savior” (*Inc.* 10). Only on this basis does he then go further to examine the way in which Christ made himself known in and through the body. In proceeding in this manner, Athanasius remains true to the narrative of the Synoptic Gospels, those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in which the disciples continually fail to understand who Christ truly is until after his passion, when through the opening of the scriptures and the breaking of bread they finally recognize who he truly is—the one of whose suffering Moses and all the prophets had spoken—for him only to then disappear from sight (Lk 24).¹¹ In this way, the divine dilemmas

¹¹The one exception to this, in Matt 16, proves the rule, for although Peter confesses that Christ is the Son of the Living God, Christ clarifies that this was not known by flesh and blood but by a revelation from the Father; yet when he then begins to tell Peter of his impending passion, Peter demonstrates his ignorance and is called “Satan” by Christ, specifically for having tried to separate Christ from the cross.

expounded by Athanasius must be taken in the sense of expounding the wisdom which God has in fact already accomplished in Christ, rather than as an attempt to take a different starting point and to offer alternatives. Attempting to go behind the cross, to find the “real” Jesus ignores the manner in which the disciples themselves came to know him as the Son of God and substitutes the first principle of their proclamation for another presupposition. To attempt to find the “Jesus of history” in such a manner would in fact be less historical, for it would act as if the passion had not happened. Finally to separate the “incarnation” from the passion in this way would be to locate the “incarnation” solely as an event in the past, now further removed than ever, rather than as the transforming work of God, as Athanasius sees it, at work in those who are now his body.

The following section (*Inc.* 20–32) treats more fully the death of Christ—why it was that he died on the cross rather than through some other means and how the whole of creation witnesses to the coming of its Lord in his death—and the resurrection of the body, demonstrated by the manner of life lived by Christians now, no longer fearful of death, but trampling it underfoot as themselves testimonies to the resurrection of his body.

This exposition of the incarnation of the Word, the death and resurrection of Christ, is followed by two “refutations,” first of the Jews (*Inc.* 33–40), from their own scriptures, and second of the Gentiles (*Inc.* 41–55), from the evident facts of creation and the effects of Christ’s work. The two final chapters specify that these works have been intended as “an elementary sketch and paradigm of the faith of Christ” for those who would devote themselves, in diligent study and the life of virtue, to growing in their faith so that they will know not only his coming in lowliness and humility but also his “second glorious and truly divine manifestation to us” when he will “bestow the fruit of his own cross on all” (*Inc.* 56).

The Life of Antony

Such is what we find in the double treatise *Against the Gentiles—On the Incarnation*. The “incarnation” described there by Athanasius is reflected in his later work, *The Life of Antony*, in such a dramatic manner that it deserves a brief mention here, to give, as it were, flesh and bones to his vision. The movement that Athanasius portrays in *On the Incarnation*, of the Word coming into our world by taking a body as his own, as his own instrument, in order to ensure victory over death for those who are his body, is continued in the *Life of Antony*, in terms of the appropriation of Christ’s victory, making it one’s “own,” in the intense struggle with the devil that such appropriation entails. In this *Life* there is no “flight from the body,” but rather a concrete engagement in the body and for the body. Not only that, but the whole premise of Antony’s efforts is based upon the dynamic of the incarnation. Thus, at the very beginning of Antony’s ascetic life, his struggle is placed directly in the context of the victory already won by Christ:

All these were things that took place to the enemy’s shame. For he who considered himself to be like God was now made a buffoon by a mere youth, and he who vaunted himself against flesh and blood was turned back by a flesh-bearing man. Working with Antony was the Lord, who bore flesh for us, and gave to the body the victory over the devil, so that each of those who truly struggle can say, It is not I, but the grace of God which is in me. (*Ant.* 5; cf. 1 Cor 15.10)

Because the Lord has won the victory in and through the body, the victory is given to the body, so that it is indeed the Lord himself who fought with Antony, ensuring that the devil is defeated. This was Antony’s first victory against the devil, or rather, as the *Life* repeatedly corrects itself, the success of the Savior in Antony.

That it is Christ who works in Antony is evident throughout the *Life*, even in one of the most striking trials undergone by Antony, when he felt that Christ had abandoned him. After having moved from his village to some tombs lying at some distance, not to pursue a life of contemplation but to engage more fully in this struggle with the devil, as the devil himself realized (*Ant.* 8), Antony underwent a particularly fierce battle. Antony was then visited by a certain beam of light descending towards him, which he took to be a luminous manifestation of Christ, for he could not help but ask, "Where were you? Why didn't you appear in the beginning, so that you could stop my distress?" To which the answer was, "I was here, Antony, but I waited to watch your struggle. And now since you persevered and were not defeated, I will be your helper for ever" (*Ant.* 10). This exchange should not be taken as implying that Antony's own struggles have merited the reward of thereafter being helped by Christ, for it was, nevertheless, by keeping to his profession of faith in the Lord that he defeated the demons (*Ant.* 9). The test is not to see what Antony by himself can do, but whether he can keep control of his thoughts, standing firm in his faith in the one who has already worked the victory, in the midst of the demonic cacophony.

The most notable and forceful depiction of Antony occurs when, after having spent twenty years barricaded in a deserted fortress battling with the demons, he is forced to emerge by those who, in their desire to emulate him, broke down the door of the fortress:

Antony came forth as though from some shrine, having been led into divine mysteries and inspired by God. This was the first time he appeared from the fortress for those who came out to him. And when they beheld him, they were amazed to see that his body had maintained its former condition, neither fat from lack of exercise, nor emaciated from fasting and combat with demons, but was just as they had known him prior to his withdrawal. The state of his soul was one of purity, for it was not constricted by grief, nor relaxed by

laughter or dejection. Moreover, when he saw the crowd, he was not annoyed any more than he was elated at being embraced by so many people. He maintained utter equilibrium, like one guided by the Word and steadfast in that which accords with nature. (*Ant.* 14)

Athanasius deliberately uses language redolent of the pagan mystery religions, to provide an image by which we can see how the fortress had been for Antony as a sacred shrine, in which he so yielded to God, become perfectly responsive to his will, that he is filled with the power of God. The most arresting characteristic of this description, and the one that is most emphasized, is the stability in detachment of Antony: after his severe asceticism and violent struggle with demons, he is no longer moved by emotions such as pleasure or grief. Athanasius' ideal Christian is detached, interiorly and exteriorly, from things of this world, no longer subjected to the play of the emotions, but is rather free or delivered.¹² Thus the ideal of a detachment, preserving the soul in the intended purity of its nature, corresponds to the working of God in the ascetic. Rather than being emaciated, Antony emerges in a properly natural state, neither emaciated nor fat. The goal has not been to mortify the body itself, but to re-establish the body in its proper subjection to the soul.

But it would be a mistake to stop there. For while Antony's asceticism has resulted in a state "according to nature," the detachment thus achieved then opens out onto a new horizon: in all of this, he is "as one guided by the Word." This phrase is often translated as "according to reason," and this is indeed suggested by its juxtaposi-

¹²It is noteworthy that Athanasius does not use the word ἀπάθεια. Rather, for Athanasius, the ideal state is characterized by its stability; it is this that distinguished Antony from all others, even in his physical appearance: "It was not his physical dimensions that distinguished him from the rest, but the stability of character and the purity of soul. His soul being free of confusion, he held his outer senses also undisturbed, so that from the soul's joy his face was cheerful as well, and from the movements of the body it was possible to sense and perceive the stable condition of the soul" (*Ant.* 67).

tion with the description of Antony being "according to nature." However, as we have seen in *Against the Gentiles* and *On the Incarnation*, the state of being "according to nature," that is, as intended by God rather than the inherent corruptibility of created beings, is linked with the presence of the Word of God. Moreover, the way in which the passage continues, makes it clear that it is the very Word of God, Christ himself, that is intended. In fact, in the words which follow, the Lord himself is the subject of the verbs describing the actions which Christ did in and through Antony:

Through him the Lord healed many of those present who suffered from bodily ailments; others he purged of demons, and to Antony he gave grace in speech. Thus he consoled many who mourned, and others hostile to each other he reconciled in friendship, urging everyone to prefer nothing in the world above the love of Christ. And when he spoke and urged them to keep in mind the future goods and the affection in which we are held by God, "who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all" (Rom 8.32), he persuaded many to take up the solitary life. And so, from then on, there were monasteries in the mountains and the desert was made a city by monks, who left their own people and registered themselves for the citizenship in the heavens. (*Ant.* 14)

Wholly inspired by the Word of God, Antony himself no longer remains in solitude, for this was never an end in itself. It had been pursued for the sake of subjecting himself completely to God and God alone. Now that victory has been achieved, he returns to the world, for the world can no longer harm him, since in him is the one who has overcome the world (cf. 1 Jn 4.4). And Antony now finds himself in the position of helping others and guiding them to God. Rather than being unconcerned for others, Antony has become the archetypal spiritual father. Coming forth from the fortress, as Christ from the tomb, Antony is totally delivered from any subjec-

tion to worldly concerns, he has become totally detached, given over instead to the Word, himself “become word” (cf. *Arians* 3.33). He is now the instrument of Christ, by which the Lord effects his work: healing the sick, consoling and reconciling others. The messianic prophecies of Isaiah are fulfilled in Antony, or, rather, Christ in Antony. Moreover, with Antony manifesting the presence of Christ and being the instrument of the Word, the desert, the world uninhabited by God and opposed to him, is also now conquered, civilized, populated by monks giving praise to God, so bringing about the original goal of creation. The full content and sense of the equilibrium achieved by asceticism is shown to be the incarnation in Antony of the Lord and Word, Jesus Christ, and the consequent transformation of creation.

Finally, this “eschatological” accomplishment of the original goal of creation is also anticipated in Antony’s own body. The descriptions of Antony as he approached death are just as striking as those describing his emergence from the fortress:

He never succumbed, due to old age, to extravagance in food, nor did he change his mode of dress because of frailty of the body, nor even bathe his feet with water, and yet in every way he remained free of injury. For he possessed eyes undimmed and sound, and he saw clearly. He lost none of his teeth – they simply had been worn to the gums because of the old man’s great age. He also retained health in his feet and hands, and generally seemed brighter and of more energetic strength than those who make use of baths and a variety of foods and clothing. (*Ant.* 93)

The vitality of Antony in this passage is a sign, anticipation or foretaste, of the resurrectional incorruptibility. The body itself is the focus of Athanasius’ “incarnational” theology; it is to the body that the victory is given (cf. *Ant.* 5), as it is in and through the body, flesh and blood, that the spiritual forces of the devil are conquered. The

body is not only involved in salvation, but is the locus of salvation, for it is the dwelling place of the Lord.

For Athanasius, the “incarnation,” in all its dimensions as has been explored, is clearly the basis, and the basic model, for Christian life and activity, the appropriation of what has been wrought by Christ in his Passion, in and through which we attain to the truly human status as intended for us by God. Christian asceticism is not simply a work of human beings upon themselves, who, by their own efforts, attempt to transcend their human nature to what they consider divine. Rather, as understood by Athanasius, it reflects the possibility, opened by Christ in his Passion, to have communion with God, and embody the Word. This is a possibility which is only actualised by the free and unconstrained grace of God, but also, as we have seen, only through the free application and struggle of human beings; it is, on the one hand, the work of human beings, but, on the other, that which makes it fruitful is solely the work of God. The iconic depiction of Antony, whose very body anticipates its futural state, appropriating the victory already won by Christ, is a vivid portrayal of Athanasius’ incarnational theology, a narrative exposition of his theology that contributed significantly to its widespread and enduring acceptance.

Text and Translation

The translation presented here is based on the Greek text in the dual-language edition of this volume (Popular Patristics Series 44a), a “working text,” following the manuscript widely recognized as preserving the best reading (the twelfth century Codex Seguerianus [=S], housed in the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris: Coisliniana gr. 45), and which has formed the basis of all printed editions since that of Montfaucon (1698). For a full account of the manuscript traditions and the various readings, recourse must be made to the critical edition of Kannengiesser in the series *Sources Chrétiennes* (=SC).

The relationship between this text and a shorter recension of *On the Incarnation*, discovered in 1925, has yet to be fully clarified, though it is generally accepted that the short recension is a revision of the longer recension. For further discussion, one may consult the introductions to the editions of Thompson and Kannengiesser.

On the Incarnation has been translated into English a number of times over the past centuries, and this translation has benefitted from many of them. The goal has been to produce a translation more faithful than that previously appearing in this series, and to make it readily available with the Greek text presented in parallel.

Suggested Further Reading

The following bibliography only points to a selection of recent editions of *On the Incarnation* and studies on Athanasius and his place in the fourth century; they will direct the reader towards many further works.

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Treatise by the same author on the Incarnation of the Word and his Manifestation to us through the Body

1 In what preceded¹ we have sufficiently treated a few points from many, regarding the error of the Gentiles concerning idols and their superstition, how their invention was from the beginning, and that out of wickedness human beings devised for themselves the worship of idols. By the grace of God we also noted a few points regarding the divinity of the Word of the Father and his providence and power in all things, that through him the good Father arranges all things, by him all things are moved, and in him are given life (cf. Acts 17.28). Come now, blessed one and true lover of Christ, let us, with the faith of our religion, relate also the things concerning the Incarnation of the Word and expound his divine manifestation to us, which the Jews slander and the Greeks mock, but we ourselves venerate, so that, all the more from his apparent degradation, you may have an even greater and fuller piety towards him, for the more he is mocked by unbelievers by so much he provides a greater witness of his divinity, because what human beings cannot understand as impossible, these he shows to be possible (cf. Matt 19.26), and what human beings mock as unseemly, these he renders fitting by his own goodness, and what human beings through sophistry laugh at as merely human, these by his power he shows to be divine, overturning the illusion of idols by his own apparent degradation through the cross, invisibly persuading those who mock and disbelieve to recognize his divinity and his power.

¹That is, the treatise *Against the Gentiles*.

For the account of such things, it is necessary to recall what has previously been said, that you may be able to know the cause of the manifestation in the body of such and so great Paternal Word, and not think that the Savior has worn a body as a consequence of nature, but that, being by nature bodiless and existing as the Word, by the love for humankind and goodness of his own Father he appeared to us in a human body for our salvation. As we give an account of this, it is first necessary to speak about the creation of the universe and its maker, God, so that one may thus worthily reflect that its recreation was accomplished by the Word who created it in the beginning. For it will appear not at all contradictory if the Father works its salvation in the same one by whom he created it.

The Divine Dilemma regarding Life and Death

2 The making of the world and the creation of all things have been taken differently by many, and each has propounded as each has wished. Some say that all things have come into being spontaneously and as by chance, such as the Epicureans who, according to themselves, fantasize that there is no providence over the universe, speaking in the face of the clear and apparent facts. For if all things came into being spontaneously without providence, as they claim, all things would necessarily have simply come into being and be identical and without difference. Everything would have been as a single body, sun or moon, and regarding human beings, the whole would have been a hand or eye or foot. But, now, this is not the case: we see, here, the sun, there the moon, there the earth; and again regarding human bodies, here a foot, there a hand, and there a head. Such order indicates that they did not come into being spontaneously, but shows that a cause preceded them, from which one can apprehend the God who ordered and created all things.

Others, amongst whom is Plato, that giant among the Greeks, declare that God made the universe from preexistent and uncreated

matter, as God is not able to make anything unless matter preexisted, just as a carpenter must already have wood so that it may be used. They do not realize that saying such things is to impute weakness to God: for if he is not himself the cause of matter, but simply makes things from pre-existent matter, then he is weak, not being able without matter to fashion any of the things that exist, just as the weakness of the carpenter is certainly his inability to make any required thing without wood. According to the argument, unless there were matter, God would not have made anything. How would he then still be called “Maker” and “Creator,” if he had his ability to make from something else, I mean from the matter? And if this is so, as they thus have it, according to them God is only a craftsman and not the Creator of being, if he fashions underlying matter but is not himself the cause of matter. He could in no way be called “Creator,” if he does not create matter, from which created things come into being.

Others, again, from the heretics fabricate for themselves another creator of all things besides the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, being greatly blinded even in what they say. For the Lord said to the Jews, *“Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and will cleave to his wife, and the two will be one flesh.’”* Then, referring to the Creator, he says, *“What God has put together, let not man put asunder”* (Matt 19.4–6). How then do they introduce a creation alien to the Father? For if, according to John, encompassing all things in saying, *“all things were made by him and without him was nothing made”* (Jn 1.3), how could there be another creator besides the Father of Christ?

3 These things, then, they fantasize. But the inspired teaching and faith according to Christ casts out their vain talk as godlessness. For it knows that neither spontaneously, as it is not without providence, nor from pre-existent matter, as God is not weak, but from nothing and having absolutely no existence God brought the universe into being through the Word, which it says through Moses, *“In the begin-*

ning God made heaven and earth" (Gen 1.1), and through that most useful book of the Shepherd, "First of all believe that God is one, who created and framed all things, and made them from non-existence into being,"² as also Paul indicates when he says, "*By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which appear*" (Heb 11.3). For God is good, or rather the source of all goodness, and one who is good grudges nothing, so that grudging nothing its existence, he made all things through his own Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. Among these things, of all things upon earth he had mercy upon the human race, and seeing that by the principle of its own coming into being it would not be able to endure eternally, he granted them a further gift, creating human beings not simply like all the irrational animals upon the earth but making them according to his own image (cf. Gen 1.27), giving them a share of the power of his own Word, so that having as it were shadows of the Word and being made rational, they might be able to abide in blessedness, living the true life which is really that of the holy ones in paradise. And knowing again that free choice of human beings could turn either way, he secured beforehand, by a law and a set place, the grace given. For bringing them into his own paradise, he gave them a law, so that if they guarded the grace and remained good, they might have the life of paradise—without sorrow, pain, or care—besides having the promise of their incorruptibility in heaven; but if they were to transgress and turning away become wicked, they would know themselves enduring the corruption of death according to nature, and no longer live in paradise, but thereafter dying outside of it, would remain in death and in corruption. This also the Divine Scripture foretells, speaking in the person of God, "*You may eat from all the trees in paradise; from the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat. On the day you eat of it, you shall die by death*" (Gen 2.16–18). This "*you shall die by death*," what else might it be except not merely to die, but to remain in the corruption of death?

²Shepherd of Hermas, *Mandate* 1.1.

4 Perhaps you are wondering for what reason, having proposed to talk about the Incarnation of the Word, we are now expounding the origin of human beings. Yet this too is not distinct from the aim of our exposition. For speaking of the manifestation of the Savior to us, it is necessary also to speak of the origin of human beings, in order that you might know that our own cause was the occasion of his descent and that our own transgression evoked the Word's love for human beings, so that the Lord both came to us and appeared among human beings. For we were the purpose of his embodiment, and for our salvation he so loved human beings as to come to be and appear in a human body. Thus, then, God created the human being and willed that he should abide in incorruptibility; but when humans despised and overturned the comprehension of God, devising and contriving evil for themselves, as was said in the first work, then they received the previously threatened condemnation of death, and thereafter no longer remained as they had been created, but were corrupted as they had contrived; and, seizing them, death reigned. For the transgression of the commandment returned them to the natural state, so that, just as they, not being, came to be, so also they might rightly endure in time the corruption unto non-being. For if, having a nature that did not once exist, they were called into existence by the Word's advent [*parousia*] and love for human beings, it followed that when human beings were bereft of the knowledge of God and had turned to things which exist not—evil is non-being, the good is being, since it has come into being from the existing God—then they were bereft also of eternal being. But this, being decomposed, is to remain in death and corruption. For the human being is by nature mortal, having come into being from nothing. But because of his likeness to the One who Is, which, if he had guarded through his comprehension of him, would have blunted his natural corruption, he would have remained incorruptible, just as Wisdom says, "*Attention to the laws is the confirmation of incorruptibility*" (Wis 6.18). And being incorruptible, he would have lived thereafter like God, as somewhere the Divine Scripture also signals, saying

"I said you are gods, and all sons of the Most High; but you die like human beings and fall like any prince" (Ps 81.6–7).

5 For God has not only created us from nothing, but also granted us by the grace of the Word to live a life according to God. But human beings, turning away from things eternal and by the counsel of the devil turning us towards things of corruption, were themselves the cause of corruption in death, being, as we already said, corruptible by nature but escaping their natural state by the grace of participation in the Word, had they remained good. Because of the Word present in them, even natural corruption did not come near them, just as Wisdom says, *"God created the human being for incorruptibility and an image of his own eternity; but by the envy of the devil, death entered into the world"* (Wis 2.23–4). When this happened, human beings died and corruption thenceforth prevailed against them, becoming even stronger than its natural power over the whole race, the more so as it had assumed the threat of the Deity against them through the transgression of the commandment. For even in their transgressions human beings had not stopped short of any defined limits, but gradually pressing forward they had passed beyond all measure: from the beginning they were inventors of evil and called death and corruption down upon themselves; while later, turning to vice and exceeding all lawlessness, not stopping at one evil but contriving in time every new evil, they became insatiable in sinning. For there were adulteries and thefts everywhere, the whole earth was full of murders and plundering. There was no concern for law regarding corruption and vice; every wickedness, individually and jointly, was being carried out by all. Cities warred against cities, and nations rose up against nations; the whole world was torn apart by factions and battles, everyone competing in lawlessness. Even acts against nature were not far from them, but as the witness of Christ, the Apostle, said, *"Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural; and in the same way also the men, leaving aside natural relations with women, were consumed with their desire for one another, men com-*

mitting shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due reward for their error” (Rom 1.26–7).

6 For these reasons, then, with death holding greater sway and corruption remaining fast against human beings, the race of humans was perishing, and the human being, made rational and in the image, was disappearing, and the work made by God was being obliterated. For as I said earlier, by the law death thereafter prevailed against us, and it was impossible to escape the law, since this had been established by God on account of the transgression. And what happened was truly both absurd and improper. It was absurd, on the one hand, that, having spoken, God should prove to be lying: that is, having legislated that the human being would die by death if he were to transgress the commandment, yet after the transgression he were not to die but rather this sentence dissolved. For God would not be true if, after saying that we would die, the human being did not die. On the other hand, it was improper that what had once been made rational and partakers of his Word should perish, and once again return to non-being through corruption. It was not worthy of the goodness of God that those created by him should be corrupted through the deceit wrought by the devil upon human beings. And it was supremely improper that the workmanship of God in human beings should disappear either through their own negligence or through the deceit of the demons.

Therefore, since the rational creatures were being corrupted and such works were perishing, what should God, being good, do? Permit the corruption prevailing against them and death to seize them? What need was there for their coming into being at the beginning? It was proper not to have come into being rather than to have come into being to be neglected and destroyed. The weakness, rather than the goodness, of God is made known by neglect, if, after creating, he abandoned his own work to be corrupted, rather than if he had not created the human being in the beginning. For not making him, there would have been no one considering the weakness, but once

he made him and created him out of nothing, it was most absurd that his works should be destroyed, and especially before the sight of the maker. It was therefore right not to permit human beings to be carried away by corruption, because this would be improper to and unworthy of the goodness of God.

7 But just as this had to be, so also on the other hand the consistency of God lies against it, so that God should appear true in his legislation concerning death. For it was absurd that God, the Father of truth, should appear a liar for our profit and preservation. What then had to happen in this case or what should God do? Demand repentance from human beings for their transgression? One might say that this is worthy of God, claiming that just as they were set towards corruption by the transgression, so by repentance they might again be set towards incorruptibility. But repentance would neither have preserved the consistency of God, for he again would not have remained true if human beings were not held fast by death, nor does repentance recall human beings from what is natural, but merely halts sins. If then there were only offence and not the consequence of corruption, repentance would have been fine. But if, once the transgression had taken off, human beings were now held fast in natural corruption and were deprived of the grace of being in the image, what else needed to happen? Or who was needed for such grace and recalling except the God Word who in the beginning made the universe from non-being? For his it was once more both to bring the corruptible to incorruptibility and to save the superlative consistency of the Father. Being the Word of the Father and above all, he alone consequently was both able to recreate the universe and was worthy to suffer on behalf of all and to intercede for all before the Father.

8 For this purpose, then, the incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Word of God comes into our realm, although he was not formerly distant. For no part of creation is left void of him; while abiding with his own Father, he has filled all things in every

place. But now he comes, condescending towards us in his love for human beings and his manifestation. For seeing the rational race perishing, and death reigning over them through corruption, and seeing also the threat of the transgression giving firm hold to the corruption which was upon us, and that it was absurd for the law to be dissolved before being fulfilled, and seeing the impropriety in what had happened, that the very things of which he himself was the Creator were disappearing, and seeing the excessive wickedness of human beings, that they gradually increased it to an intolerable pitch against themselves, and seeing the liability of all human beings to death—having mercy upon our race, and having pity upon our weakness, and condescending to our corruption, and not enduring the dominion of death, lest what had been created should perish and the work of the Father himself for human beings should be in vain, he takes for himself a body and that not foreign to our own. For he did not wish simply to be in a body, nor did he wish merely to appear, for if he had wished only to appear he could have made his divine manifestation through some other better means. But he takes that which is ours, and that not simply, but from a spotless and stainless virgin, ignorant of man, pure and unmixed from intercourse with men. Although being himself powerful and the creator of the universe, he prepared for himself in the Virgin the body as a temple, and made it his own, as an instrument, making himself known and dwelling in it. And thus, taking from ours that which is like, since all were liable to the corruption of death, delivering it over to death on behalf of all, he offered it to the Father, doing this in his love for human beings, so that, on the one hand, with all dying in him the law concerning corruption in human beings might be undone (its power being fully expended in the lordly body and no longer having any ground against similar human beings), and, on the other hand, that as human beings had turned towards corruption he might turn them again to incorruptibility and give them life from death, by making the body his own and by the grace of the resurrection banishing death from them as straw from the fire.

9 For the Word, realizing that in no other way would the corruption of human beings be undone except, simply, by dying, yet being immortal and the Son of the Father the Word was not able to die, for this reason he takes to himself a body capable of death, in order that it, participating in the Word who is above all, might be sufficient for death on behalf of all, and through the indwelling Word would remain incorruptible, and so corruption might henceforth cease from all by the grace of the resurrection. Whence, by offering to death the body he had taken to himself, as an offering holy and free of all spot, he immediately abolished death from all like him, by the offering of a like. For being above all, the Word of God consequently, by offering his own temple and his bodily instrument as a substitute for all, fulfilled in death that which was required; and, being with all through the like [body], the incorruptible Son of God consequently clothed all with incorruptibility in the promise concerning the resurrection. And now the very corruption of death no longer holds ground against human beings because of the indwelling Word, in them through the one body. As when a great king has entered some large city and made his dwelling in one of the houses in it, such a city is certainly made worthy of high honor, and no longer does any enemy or bandit descend upon it, but it is rather reckoned worthy of all care because of the king's having taken residence in one of its houses; so also does it happen with the King of all. Coming himself into our realm, and dwelling in a body like the others, every design of the enemy against human beings has henceforth ceased, and the corruption of death, which had prevailed formerly against them, perished. For the race of human beings would have been utterly dissolved had not the Master and Savior of all, the Son of God, come for the completion of death.

10 Truly this great work supremely befitted the goodness of God. For if a king constructed a house or a city, and it is attacked by bandits because of the carelessness of its inhabitants, he in no way abandons it, but avenges and saves it as his own work, having regard

not for the carelessness of the inhabitants but for his own honor. All the more so, the God Word of the all-good Father did not neglect the race of human beings, created by himself, which was going to corruption, but he blotted out the death which had occurred through the offering of his own body, and correcting their carelessness by his own teaching, restoring every aspect of human beings by his own power. One may be convinced of these things by the theologians³ of the Savior himself, taking their writings, which say, *“For the love of Christ constrains us, as we judge this, that if one died for all, then all died; and he died for all that that we should no longer live for ourselves but for him who died and rose”* from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5.14–15). And again, *“We see Jesus who, for a little while, was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the passion of death, that by the grace of God he might taste death on behalf of all”* (Heb 2.9). Then, he also points out the reason why it was necessary for none other than the God Word to be incarnate, saying, *“For it was fitting that he, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings”* (Heb 2.10). Saying this, he means that it was for none other to bring human beings out from the corruption that had occurred except the God Word who had also created them in the beginning. And that the Word himself also took to himself a body as a sacrifice for similar bodies, this they indicated, saying, *“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of them, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is the devil, and might deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage”* (Heb 2.14–15). For by the sacrifice of his own body, he both put an end to the law lying against us and renewed for us the source of life, giving hope of the resurrection. For since through human beings death had seized human beings, for this reason, again, through the

³By this expression (see also *Inc.* 18, 56), Athanasius specifically means the writers of Scripture (CG 46 describes David in this way); John, as the only evangelist to call Christ “God,” is referred to simply as “the theologian” (CG 42).

incarnation of the God Word there occurred the dissolution of death and the resurrection of life, as the Christ-bearing man says, “*For as by a human being came death, by a human being has come also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive*” and that which follows (1 Cor 15.21–22). For now we no longer die as those condemned, but as those who will arise do we await the common resurrection of all, which God, who wrought and granted this, “*in his own time will reveal*” (1 Tim 6.15; Titus 1.3).

This, therefore, is the first cause of the incarnation of the Savior. One might also recognize that his gracious advent consistently occurred from the following.

The Divine Dilemma regarding Knowledge and Ignorance

11 When he made the human race through his own Word, God, who has dominion over all, seeing again the weakness of their nature—that it was neither sufficient of itself to know the Creator nor to receive any knowledge of God, as he is uncreated whereas they had come into being from nothing, and as he is incorporeal whereas human beings had been fashioned here below with a body—and, comprehensively, that the deficiency of creatures for the understanding and knowledge of the maker was great, again had mercy on the human race, in that being good he did not leave them destitute of the knowledge of himself, lest their being should be profitless. For what profit would there be for those who were made, if they did not know their own Maker? Or how would they be rational, not knowing the Word of the Father, in whom they came to be? For they would not have differed at all from the irrational creatures if they had known nothing more than the terrestrial animals. And why would God have made those by whom he did not wish to be known? So, lest this should happen, being good he bestowed on them of his own image, our Lord Jesus Christ, and made them according to his own image and according to the likeness, so that understanding through such

grace the image, I mean the Word of the Father, they might be able to receive through him a notion of the Father, and knowing the Creator they might live the happy and truly blessed life.

But human beings, being again foolish, despising the grace thus given to them, so turned away from God and so darkened their own soul, that they not only forgot the concept of God but also fashioned for themselves others instead. They fabricated idols for themselves instead of the truth and honored beings which do not exist rather than God who is, worshipping "*the creation rather than the Creator*" (Rom 1.25), and, much worse, they even transferred the honor due to God to wood and stones and to every material object, and even to human beings, and went even further than this, as we described in the former treatise. They were so impious that they even thereafter worshipped demons and called them gods, fulfilling their own desires. They sacrificed irrational animals and slaughtered human beings, as we said earlier, as was required of them, ensnaring themselves even more in their own frenzies. For this reason also magical arts were taught among them, and oracles in various places led human beings astray, and all ascribed the causes of their coming to be and being to the stars and to all the heavenly bodies, taking thought for nothing more than the appearances. And everything was completely full of impiety and lawlessness, and neither God, nor his Word, was recognized, even though he had not hidden himself invisibly from human beings, nor given them knowledge of himself in one way only, but had unfolded it to them in manifold ways and through many forms.

12 The grace of being in the image was sufficient to know the God Word, and through him the Father. But knowing the weakness of human beings, God anticipated also their carelessness, so that if they cared not to recognize God through themselves, through the works of creation they might not be ignorant of the Creator. But since the negligence of humans descended gradually to lower things, God again anticipated such weakness of theirs, sending the law and the

prophets, known to them, so that if they shrank from looking up to the heavens and knowing the Creator, they might have instruction from those close by. For human beings are able to learn from humans more directly about higher things. So they could, lifting up their sight to the greatness of the heaven and discerning the harmony of creation, know its ruler, the Word of the Father, who by his providence for all things makes known to all the Father, and for this reason moves the universe so that through him all might know God. Or, if they were not ready for this, it would be possible for them to meet the holy ones, and through them to learn of God the creator of everything, the Father of Christ, and that the worship of idols is godlessness and full of all impiety. They could also by knowing the law cease from all lawlessness and live the life of virtue. For the law was not only for the Jews, nor on their account only were the prophets sent: they were sent to the Jews, and persecuted by the Jews, but they were for the whole inhabited world a sacred school of the knowledge of God and the conduct of the soul. Such then being God's goodness and love for human beings, nevertheless human beings, beaten by the pleasures of the moment and the illusions and deceits of the demons, did not raise their gaze to the truth, but sated themselves even more with evils and sins, so that they no longer appeared rational, but from their ways of life were reckoned irrational.

13 Since, then, human beings had become so irrational and demonic deceit was thus overshadowing every place and hiding the knowledge of the true God, what was God to do? Be silent before such things and let human beings be deceived by the demons and be ignorant of God? But then what need was there in the beginning for human beings to come into being in the image of God? He should have come into being simply irrational, or having been rational not live the life of the irrational creatures. What need at all was there for him to receive a notion about God from the beginning? For if he is not now worthy to receive it, neither should it have been given him from the beginning. Or what profit would there be to the maker

God, or what glory for him, if human beings, brought into being by him, did not revere him but reckoned others to be their makers? For God would be found creating them for others and not for himself.

Moreover, a king, being human, does not permit the lands established under him to pass to and serve others, nor does he abandon them to others, but he reminds them with letters, and often enjoins them by friends, and, if need be, comes himself, shaming them by his own presence, only so that they not serve others and his work be in vain. How much more will God allow his own creatures to not be led astray from him and serve things that do not exist? In particular, since such error is the cause of their destruction and disappearance, it was not right that those who had once partaken of the image of God should be destroyed. What then was God to do? Or what should be done, except to renew again the “in the image,” so that through it human beings would be able once again to know him? But how could this have occurred except by the coming of the very image of God, our Savior Jesus Christ? For neither by human beings was it possible, since they were created “in the image”; but neither by angels, for they were not even images. So the Word of God came himself, in order that he being the image of the Father (cf. Col 1.15), the human being “in the image” might be recreated. It could not, again, have been done in any other way, without death and corruption being utterly destroyed. So he rightly took a mortal body, that in it death might henceforth be destroyed utterly and human beings be renewed again according to the image. For this purpose, then, there was need of none other than the Image of the Father.

14 For as when a figure painted on wood has been soiled by dirt from outside, it is necessary for him whose figure it is to come again, so that the image can be renewed on the same material—because of his portrait even the material on which it is painted is not cast aside, but the portrait is reinscribed on it. In the same way the all-holy Son of the Father, being the Image of the Father, came to our place to renew the human being made according to himself, and to find him,

as one lost, through the forgiveness of sins, as he himself says in the Gospels, “*I came to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Lk 19.10). Therefore he said to the Jews, “*Unless one be born again*” (Jn 3.5), not referring to the birth from women, as they supposed, but indicating the soul being born again and recreated in that which is after the image. But since the madness of idolatry and godlessness held firm the inhabited world and the knowledge of God was hidden, whose was it to teach the inhabited world of the Father? A human being, one might say. But humans were not able to traverse everywhere under the sun, nor by nature were they able to run so far, nor were they sufficient to become credible regarding this, nor were they able by themselves to withstand the deceit and illusion of the demons. For with everyone smitten and troubled in soul from demonic deceit and the vanity of idols, how was it possible to convert the human soul and the human mind, when they cannot even see them? How can one convert what one cannot see? But perhaps one might say that creation was sufficient. But if creation sufficed, such evils would not have occurred. For there was creation, and human beings wallowed no less in the same error regarding God. Who again was needed, except the God Word who sees both soul and mind, who moves everything in creation, and through them makes known the Father? For he who by his own providence and ordering of the universe teaches about the Father, his it was to renew the same teaching. How could this be done? Perhaps one might say that it was possible through the same means, so as to show the things concerning him through the works of creation. But this was no longer certain. Not at all! Human beings had neglected this before, and no longer were their eyes held upwards but downwards. So, rightly wishing to help human beings, he sojourned as a human being, taking to himself a body like theirs and from below—I mean through the works of the body—that those not wishing to know him from his providence and governance of the universe, from the works done through the body might know the Word of God in the body, and through him the Father.

15 For as a good teacher who cares for his students always condescends to teach by simpler means those who are not able to benefit from more advanced things, so also does the Word of God, just as Paul says, *“For since in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of the preaching to save those who believe”* (1 Cor 1.21). For since human beings, having rejected the contemplation of God and as though sunk in an abyss with their eyes held downwards, seeking God in creation [genesis] and things perceptible, setting up for themselves mortal humans and demons as gods, for this reason the lover of human beings and the common Savior of all, takes to himself a body and dwells as human among humans and draws to himself the perceptible senses of all human beings, so that those who think that God is in things corporeal might, from what the Lord wrought through the actions of the body, know the truth and through him might consider the Father. Being human and thinking all things in human terms, on whatever they cast their sense perception there they saw themselves being drawn and taught the truth from all sides: for if they were struck by creation, yet they saw it confessing Christ as Lord; or if their minds were predisposed towards human beings, such that they supposed them gods, yet comparing the works of the Savior with theirs, the Savior alone among human beings appeared the Son of God, for there were no such works among them as done by the God Word; and if they were predisposed towards the demons, yet seeing them put to flight by the Lord, they knew that only he was the Word of God and that the demons were not gods; if their mind was then fixed even on the dead, so as to worship heroes and those said by the poets to be gods, yet seeing the resurrection of the Savior they confessed that the former were false and that only the Word of the Father was the true Lord, the one reigning even over death. For this reason he was both born and appeared as a human being, and died, and rose again, dulling and overshadowing by his own works those of all human beings who ever existed, so that from wherever human beings were predisposed, from there he might raise them and teach

them of his own true Father, just as he himself says, *"I came to save and to find that which was lost"* (Lk 19.10).

16 Once the mind of human beings descended to perceptible things, the Word himself submitted to appear through a body, so that as a human he might bring humans to himself and return their sense perception to himself, and then, by their seeing him as a human being, he might persuade them through the works he effected that he is not a man only but God and the Word and Wisdom of the true God. Wishing to indicate this, Paul also said, *"being rooted and grounded in love, that you may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God"* (Eph 3.17–19). For the Word unfolded himself everywhere, above and below and in the depths and in the breadth: above, in creation; below, in the incarnation; in the depths, in hell; in breadth, in the world. Everything is filled with the knowledge of God. For this reason, not immediately upon coming did he complete the sacrifice on behalf of all, delivering the body to death and resurrecting it, making himself thereby invisible. But by means of it he made himself visible, remaining in it and doing such works and giving signs which made him known to be no longer a human being but the God Word. For in both ways the Savior exercised his love for human beings through his incarnation, in that he both banished death from us and renewed us, and also in that, although being unseen and invisible, through his works he appeared and made himself known to be the Word of the Father, the ruler and king of the universe.

17 For he was not enclosed in the body, nor was he in the body but not elsewhere. Nor while he moved that [body] was the universe left void of his activity and providence. But, what is most marvelous, being the Word, he was not contained by anyone, but rather himself contained everything. And, as being in all creation, he is in essence

outside everything but inside everything by his own power, arranging everything, and unfolding his own providence in everything to all things, and giving life to each thing and to all things together, containing the universe and not being contained, but being wholly, in every respect, in his own Father alone. So also, being in the human body, and himself giving it life, he properly gives life to the universe also, and was both in everything and outside all. And being made known from the body through the works, he was not unseen even from the working of the universe.

It is the function of the soul to see by reasoning even what is outside its own body, without however acting outside its own body or to move things distant from the body by its presence. Never, that is, does a human being by thinking of things at a distance thereby move or displace them. Nor, if one sat in his own home and considered the things in heaven, would he thereby move the sun or rotate the heavens. But he sees them moving and existing, whilst not being able to act upon them. But such was not the case for the Word of God in the human being; for he was not bound to the body, but rather was himself wielding it, so that he was both in it and in everything, and was outside everything, and at rest in the Father alone. And the most wonderful thing was that he both sojourned as a human being, and as the Word begot life in everything, and as Son was with the Father. Therefore he himself did not suffer when the Virgin gave birth, nor by being in the body was he defiled, but rather he sanctified the body also. Nor, being in all things, does he partake of all, but rather everything bore life and was nourished by him. For if the sun, too, made by him and seen by us, circling in heaven, is not polluted by touching bodies upon the earth, nor is destroyed by darkness, but rather itself enlightens and purifies them, by so much more the all-holy Word of God, the maker of the sun and Lord, when being made known in the body was not polluted, but rather, being incorruptible, vivified and purified even the mortal body. "*For he committed no sin,*" it says, "*nor was deceit found in his mouth*" (cf. 1 Pet 2.22; Isa 53.9).

18 When then the theologians⁴ in this matter say that he ate and drank and was born, know that the body, as body, was born and was nourished on appropriate food, but that he, the God Word, present in the body yet arranging all things, made known through the works wrought in the body that he was not himself a human being but the God Word. But these things are said of him, since the body which ate and was born and suffered, was no one else's but the Lord's, and as he became human, it is proper for these things to be said of him as human, that he might be shown possessing a real and not illusory body. But just as he was known by these things to be bodily present, so also from the works he did through the body he made himself known to be Son of God. Whence he cried out to the unbelieving Jews, saying, *"If I do not do the works of my Father, do not believe me; but if I do, even if you don't believe me, believe my works, that you might know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father"* (Jn 10.37–38). Just as, being invisible he is yet known from the works of creation, so also becoming human, yet not being seen in a body, from the works it is known that it was not a human being but the Power and Word of God who was accomplishing these things. For his commanding demons, and their being driven away, is not a human work but divine. Or who, seeing him healing illnesses, to which the human race was subject, still thinks him human and not God? For he purified lepers, made the lame to walk, opened the hearing of the deaf, made the blind to see again, and, simply put, cast away every illness and every infirmity from human beings, from which anyone could see his divinity. For who, seeing him give what was lacking to those whose creation [*genesis*] was deficient and opening the eyes of the one blind from birth, would not think that the creation [*genesis*] of human beings was subject to him and that he is their Creator and Maker? For he who supplied what the human being did not have from birth [*genesis*] most clearly is he the Lord also of the creation [*genesis*] of human beings. Therefore, when he came down to us in the beginning, he fashioned for himself the

⁴See footnote 3 on p. 71.

body from the virgin, in order to provide to all no small proof of his divinity, for he who fashions this is himself the Maker of the others. For who, seeing the body come from a virgin alone without a man, would not think that he who was revealed in this was the Creator and Lord of the other bodies? And who, seeing the substance of water being changed and turned into wine, would not think that he who did this is Lord and Creator of the substance of all water? For this reason he also went upon the sea as its Master and walked as upon land, providing to all who looked a proof of his lordship over all. When feeding from a little such a great multitude, and from a lack himself bringing about an abundance, so that from five loaves five thousand were filled, and leaving over as much again, he did not make himself known as anything other than the Lord even of the providence of the universe.

19 It seemed good to the Savior to do all these things, so that, since human beings did not know his providence in all things nor understand his divinity through his creation, if they looked up on account of his works done through the body they might gain a notion through him of the knowledge of the Father, understanding by analogy, as I said before, his providence over all from that regarding the parts. For who seeing his authority against the demons, or who seeing the demons confessing that he is himself their Lord, would still have any doubt in mind whether this one is the Son and Wisdom and Power of God? For neither did he make creation itself be silent, but what is most wonderful, even at his death, or rather at the very trophy over death, I mean the cross, all creation confessed that he who was made known and suffered in the body was not simply a human being but Son of God and Savior of all. For the sun turned back and the earth shook and the mountains were rent, and all were awed. These things showed the Christ on the cross to be God and the whole of creation to be his servant, witnessing in fear the advent [*parousia*] of the Master. In this way, then, the God Word showed himself to human beings by his works.

The next step is to recount the end of his life and dealings in the body and to relate also of what kind was the death of the body, especially because this is the chief point of our faith and absolutely all human beings discuss it, so that you may know that also from this, the more rather than less, Christ is known to be God and Son of God.

The Death of Christ and the Resurrection of the Body

20 We have spoken above in part, as far as was possible and as far as we were able to understand, the cause of his bodily manifestation, that it was not for another to turn what was corruptible to incorruptibility except the Savior himself, who in the beginning created the universe from nothing; and that it was not for another to recreate again the “in the image” for human beings, except the Image of the Father; and that it was not for another to raise up the mortal to be immortal, except our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Life itself; and that if was not for another to teach about the Father and destroy the worship of idols, except the Word who arranges all things and is alone the true only-begotten Son of the Father. But since what was required from all still had to be rendered (for, as I said earlier, it was absolutely necessary to die and for this, in particular, he sojourned amongst us), for this reason, after the demonstrations of his divinity from his works, he now offered the sacrifice on behalf of all, delivering his own temple to death in the stead of all, in order to make all not liable to and free from the ancient transgression, and to show himself superior to death, displaying his own body as incorruptible, the first-fruits of the universal resurrection.

And do not be surprised if we frequently say the same things about the same matters. For since we are speaking of the counsel of God, therefore we expound the same sense in many ways, lest we appear to be omitting anything and incur the charge of speaking inadequately. For it is better to submit to the blame of repetition than to omit anything that should be laid down.

Therefore the body, as it had the common substance of all bodies, was a human body. If it was constituted by a new miracle from a virgin only, yet being mortal it died in conformity with those like it. Yet by the coming of the Word into it, it was no longer corruptible by its own nature but because of the indwelling Word of God it became immune from corruption. And thus it happened that both things occurred together in a paradoxical manner: the death of all was completed in the lordly body, and also death and corruption were destroyed by the Word in it. For there was need of death, and death on behalf of all had to take place, so that what was required by all might occur. Therefore, as I said earlier, the Word, since he was not able to die—for he was immortal—took to himself a body able to die, that he might offer it as his own on behalf of all and as himself suffering for all, through coming into it *“he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage”* (Heb 2.14–15).

21 Indeed, with the common Savior of all dying for us, we, the faithful in Christ, no longer die by death as before according to the threat of the law, for such condemnation has ceased. But with corruption ceasing and being destroyed by the grace of the resurrection, henceforth according to the mortality of the body we are dissolved only for the time which God has set for each, that we may be able *“to attain a better resurrection”* (Heb 11.35). For as seeds sown in the ground, we do not perish when we are dissolved, but as sown we shall arise again, death having been destroyed by the grace of the Savior. For this reason, the blessed Paul, who became a guarantor of the resurrection to all, said, *“For the corruptible must put on incorruptibility and the mortal must put on immortality. And when the mortal puts on immortality then shall come to pass the word that has been written: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory: O death, where is thy sting?’”* (1 Cor 15.53–5).

Why, then, one might ask, if it were necessary for him to deliver the body to death on behalf of all, did he not lay it aside privately

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being, instead of going so far as to be crucified? For it
 been more fitting for him to have laid his body aside
 than to endure such a death with ignominy. Consider
 er such an objection is not human, whereas what was
 done by the Savior is truly divine and worthy of his divinity for
 many reasons. First, because the death which befalls human beings
 comes to them according to the weakness of their own nature, for
 not being able to remain for long, in time they are dissolved. For this
 reason also diseases come upon them, and, weakening, they die. But
 the Lord is not weak, but the Power of God, and the Word of God,
 and himself Life. If, then, it was in some private place that he laid his
 body upon a bed in the manner of human beings, it would have been
 supposed that he also suffered this through the weakness of nature
 and because he had nothing more than other humans. But since he
 was Life, and Word of God, and because death on behalf of all had
 to take place, therefore, on the one hand, as being life and power
 he strengthened the body in him, and as, on the other hand, death
 had to occur, he took the occasion, provided not from himself but
 from others, to complete the sacrifice. For it was neither fitting for
 the Lord to be ill, he who healed the illnesses of others, nor again for
 the body to be weakened, in which he strengthened the weaknesses
 of others. Why, then, did he not prevent death, just as he did illness?
 Because it was for this that he had the body, and it was unfitting to
 prevent it, lest the resurrection should also be hindered. Moreover,
 it was again unfitting for illness to precede death, lest it be thought
 a weakness of him who was in the body. Did he not then hunger?
 Yes, he hungered because of the property of the body, but he did not
 perish of starvation, because of the Lord wearing it. Therefore, if he
 died for the ransom of all, yet "*he saw not corruption*" (cf. Acts 2.31;
 13.35; Ps 15.10). For he rose whole, since the body belonged to none
 other but Life itself.

22 But, one might say, he should have hidden from the counsel
 of the Jews, in order to preserve his own body altogether immortal.

Let such a one hear that this also was unfitting for the Lord. For as it was not fitting for the Word of God, being Life, to give death to his own body by himself, so neither was it suitable to flee from that given by others, but rather to follow it to destruction, whence it was right that he neither laid aside the body himself nor fled when the Jews took counsel. Such action did not show weakness on the part of the Word, but rather made him known to be Savior and Life, in that he both waited for death to destroy it and hastened to complete the death given to him for the salvation of all. And, besides, it was not his own death that the Savior came to complete, but that of human beings. Therefore he did not lay aside the body by his own death—for he had none, being Life—but he accepted that death coming from human beings, in order to destroy it completely when it came to his own body.

Again, from the following one might see the lordly body having such an end as consistent. The Lord was especially concerned for the resurrection of the body that he was to accomplish; for the trophy of victory over death was this [resurrection] being shown to all and all being persuaded of the removal of corruption effected by him and of the incorruptibility henceforth of [their] bodies, as a pledge of which for all and proof of the resurrection in store for all, he preserved his own body incorruptible. If, then, once again, his body had fallen ill, and the Word been loosened from it in the sight of all, it would have been unfitting that the one who heals the illness of others should permit his own instrument to waste in illness. How, then, would he have been believed to drive out the weaknesses of others, when his own temple was weak in him? For either he would have been mocked as one not able to drive out illness, or, being able but not doing so, he would have been reckoned to lack love of human beings towards others.

23 But if, without any illness and without any pain, he had hidden his body away by itself privately and “*in a corner*” (Acts 26.26), or in a desert place or a house or anywhere at all, and afterwards suddenly

appearing again said he had raised himself from the dead, he would have been supposed by all to be telling tall tales and would have been distrusted even more when speaking about the resurrection, as there would be no one at all to witness to his death. Death must precede resurrection, for there would be no resurrection without death preceding, so that if the death of the body took place somewhere in secret, death neither appearing nor taking place before witnesses, its resurrection also would be unseen and unwitnessed. Or why would he, arising, proclaim the resurrection, yet cause his death to take place invisibly? Or why did he drive out the demons in the sight of all, and cause the man blind from birth to see again, and change the water into wine, that through these works he might be believed to be the Word of God, yet not show in the sight of all the mortal to be incorruptible that he might be believed to be Life himself? And how could his disciples have had boldness with the message of the resurrection, were they not able to say that he first died? Or how would they be believed when saying that death first took place, and then the resurrection, if they did not have as witnesses of the death those to whom they were speaking with boldness? For if, when the death and resurrection had thus occurred in the sight of all, the Pharisees of the time did not wish to believe but compelled even those who had seen the resurrection to deny it, surely, if these things had taken place in secret, how many pretexts would they have devised for disbelief? How then could the end of death, and the victory over it, be demonstrated, unless summoning it in the sight of all he proved it to be dead, being annulled thereafter by the incorruptibility of the body?

24 But we must also offer answers to questions that others might ask. Perhaps someone might even say this, "If it was necessary that his death occur in the sight of all and be witnessed that the account of the resurrection might be believed, then he ought to have contrived a glorious death for himself, if only to escape the ignominy of the cross." But if he had done this, it would provide the suspicion against him that he was not powerful over every form of death but only

concerning that which he devised, and then the pretext for disbelief regarding the resurrection would again be no less. So, death came to the body not from him but from plotting, that he might destroy that death which they brought upon the Savior. And as a noble wrestler, great in skill and courage, does not choose opponents for himself, lest he cause suspicion that he is fearful of some, but leaves it to the choice of the spectators, especially if they are hostile, so that when he has overthrown the one they have chosen, he may be believed to be superior to all, so also, the Life of all, our Lord and Savior Christ, did not contrive death for his own body, lest he should appear fearful of some other death, but he accepted and endured on the cross that inflicted by others, especially by enemies, which they reckoned fearful and ignominious and shameful, in order that this being destroyed, he might himself be believed to be Life, and the power of death might be completely annihilated. So something wonderful and marvelous happened: that ignominious death which they thought to inflict, this was the trophy of his victory over death. Therefore he neither endured the death of John by being beheaded, nor as Isaiah was he sawn in part, that in death he might keep his body undivided and whole and that there be no pretext for those wishing to divide the Church.

25 These comments are for outsiders, who pile up arguments for themselves. But if any one from among us asks, not as a lover of contention but as a lover of learning, why he endured the cross rather than some other way, then let him hear that in no other way than this was it beneficial for us, and that it was good that the Lord endured this for us. For if he came himself to bear the curse which lay upon us, how else could he have *"become a curse"* (Gal 3.13) if he had not accepted the death occasioned by the curse? And that is the cross, for thus it is written, *"cursed is he who hangs from the tree"* (Deut 21.23). Moreover, if the death of the Lord is a ransom for all and by his death *"the wall of partition"* (Eph 2.14) is broken down, and the call of the Gentiles effected, how would he have called us if

he had not been crucified? For only upon the cross does one die with hands stretched out. Therefore it was fitting for the Lord to endure this, and to stretch out his hands, that with the one he might draw the ancient people and with the other those from the Gentiles, and join both together in himself. This he himself said when he indicated by what manner of death he was going to redeem all, “*When I am lifted up, I shall draw all to myself*” (Jn 12.32). And again, if the enemy of our race, the devil, having fallen from heaven, wanders around these lower airs and, lording it here over the demons with him, similar in disobedience, through them works illusions in those who are deceived and attempts to prevent them rising upwards—about this the Apostle also says, “*Following the prince of the power of the air, who is now at work in the sons of disobedience*” (Eph 2.2)—yet Christ came that he might overthrow the devil, purify the air, and open up for us the way to heaven, as the Apostle said, “*through the veil, that is, his flesh*” (Heb 10.20), this must have been by death, and by what other death would these things have happened except that which takes place in the air, I mean the cross? For only he that completes his life on the cross dies in the air. Therefore it was right that the Lord endured it. For being thus lifted up, he purified the air from the diabolical plots of all demons, saying “*I saw Satan falling as lightning*” (Lk 10.18), and blazing the trail he made anew the way up to heaven, saying again, “*Lift up your gates, O princes of yours, and be raised up, everlasting gates*” (Ps 23.7). For it was not the Word himself who needed the gates to be opened, since he is the Lord of all, nor was any made thing closed to its Maker; but we were those who needed it, who he himself carried up through his own body. For as he offered to death on behalf of all, so though it he opened up again the way to heaven.

26 Therefore death upon the cross for our sakes was fitting and suitable, and its cause appeared to be consistent in every way, and there are solid arguments that the salvation of all had to take place in no other way than by the cross. And not even thus, not even on the

cross, did he leave himself unseen, but rather by far he made creation witness to the advent of her own Creator, not tolerating his temple, the body, to remain [dead] for long, but having only shown it to be dead by the conjunction of death with it, on the third day he immediately raised it up, bearing the incorruptibility and impassibility of the body as trophies and victory over death. He could have raised the body immediately upon death and shown it alive again, but foreseeing well the Savior did not do this. For someone might have said that he had not died at all, or that death had not fully touched him, if he had shown the resurrection immediately. Had the interval between death and resurrection been within the same day, the glory of incorruptibility would have been obscure. So, in order that the body might be shown to be dead, the Word waited one intermediary day, and on the third day showed it to all as incorruptible. So that death might be shown in the body, he raised in on the third day. Yet lest, by raising it up when it had remained for a long time and been completely corrupted, he should be disbelieved, as though he bore not his own but another body—for, because of the length of time, one might distrust what appeared and forget what happened—therefore he waited no more than three days nor put off for long those who had heard from him about the resurrection, but while the word was still echoing in their ears and their eyes were still expecting and their minds were in suspense, and those who put him to death and witnessed the death of the lordly body were still living upon earth and in the same place, the Son of God himself, after an interval of three days, showed the body which had been dead as immortal and incorruptible; and it was demonstrated to all that the body died not by the weakness of the nature of the indwelling Word, but in order that death might be destroyed in it through the power of the Savior.

27 That death has been dissolved, and the cross has become victory over it, and it is no longer strong but is itself truly dead, no mean proof but an evident surety is that it is despised by all Christ's disciples, and everyone tramples on it, and no longer fears

it, but with the sign of the cross and faith in Christ tread it under foot as something dead. Of old, before the divine sojourn of the Savior, all used to weep for those dying as if they were perishing. But since the Savior's raising the body, no longer is death fearsome, but all believers in Christ tread on it as nothing, and would rather choose to die than deny their faith in Christ. For they really know that when they die they are not destroyed, but both live and become incorruptible through the resurrection. And that devil, who formerly exulted wickedly in death, "*its pangs having been loosed*" (Acts 2.24), only he remains truly dead. And the proof of this is that human beings, before believing in Christ, view death as fearsome and are terrified at it. But when they come to faith in him and to his teaching, they so despise death that they eagerly rush to it and become witnesses to the resurrection over it effected by the Savior. For even while they are still young in stature they hasten to die, and not only men but also women practice for it with exercises. It has become so weak that even women, who were formerly deceived by it, now mock it as dead and paralyzed. For as when a tyrant has been defeated by a legitimate king and bound hand and foot, all those that then pass by mock him, hitting and reviling him, no longer fearing his fury and barbarity because of the victorious king; in this way death also having been conquered and placarded by the Savior on the cross, and bound hand and foot, all those in Christ who pass by trample on him [death], and witnessing to Christ they mock death, jeering at him, and saying what was written above, "*O death, where is your victory? O hell, where your sting?*" (1 Cor 15.55).

28 Is this, then, a meager proof of the weakness of death? Or is it a feeble demonstration of the victory over it wrought by the Savior, when boys and young girls in Christ despise this present life and practice dying? For by nature human beings are afraid of death and of the dissolution of the body. But this is most amazing, that one who has put on the faith of the cross scorns even things

according to nature, and is not afraid of death because of Christ. And just as, while it is the nature of fire to burn, if someone were to say that there is something not fearful of burning but rather which shows it to be weak—as is said of asbestos by the Indians—then one who does not believe this claim, if he wished to put the claim to the test, putting on the inflammable material and touching fire would certainly be convinced thereby of the weakness of the fire. Or just as if someone wanted to see the tyrant bound, he would certainly enter into the country and domain of the conqueror and see the one feared by others rendered weak. So also, if anyone is incredulous, and even after such great things and after so many have become martyrs in Christ, after the daily scorn shown towards death by the illustrious in Christ, if, regardless, he still has doubt in his mind that death has been destroyed and brought to an end, he would do well to wonder at such a great thing, only let him be neither obstinate in disbelief nor shameless in the face of what is so clear. But just as he who has the asbestos knows that fire cannot touch it, and he who wishes to see the tyrant bound goes over to the domain of the victor, so let the one not believing the victory over death accept the faith of Christ and come over to his teaching, and he will see the weakness of death and the victory over it. For many who at first disbelieved and mocked, afterward believed, and thus so despised death as even themselves to become martyrs for Christ.

29 Now, if it is by the sign of the cross and by the faith that is in Christ that death is trampled down, then, if judging by truth, it is none other than Christ himself who shows the trophies and victories against death and renders it fully weakened. And if formerly death was strong, and therefore fearsome, but is now despised, after the sojourn of the Savior and after the death and resurrection of his body, clearly it is by him, the Christ who was raised upon the cross, that death has been destroyed and conquered. For as, if after the night the sun appears and every earthly place is enlightened by it,

there is no doubt at all that the sun, spreading its light out everywhere, is also the one chasing away the darkness and illuminating everything, so also, with death being despised and trampled down since the saving manifestation of the Savior in the body and the conclusion of the cross, it is clear that he is the Savior, being revealed in the body, destroying death, and daily displaying the trophies against it in his disciples. For when one sees human beings, who are weak by nature, leaping towards death, neither shrinking from its corruption nor fearing the descent to hell, but with an eager spirit challenging it and not flinching from torture, but rather for the sake of Christ preferring instead of this present life zeal for death; or if one were to watch men and women and young children rushing and leaping towards death on account of their devotion to Christ, who is so silly or who is so incredulous, or who is so maimed in mind, as to not understand and reason that it is Christ, to whom human beings are bearing witness, who provides and grants the victory over death to each, rendering it fully weakened in each of those having his faith and wearing the sign of the cross? For one who sees a snake trampled down, especially if he knows its former ferocity, no longer doubts that it is dead and completely weakened, unless he is perverted in mind and does not have even his bodily senses sound. For who, seeing a lion being played with by children, does not know that it is either dead or has lost all its power? Just as it is possible for the eye to see that these things are true, so when death is played with and despised by those believing in Christ, let no one any longer doubt, nor be unbelieving, that death has been destroyed by Christ and its corruption dissolved and brought to an end.

30 What has been said so far is no small proof that death has been destroyed and that the lordly cross is the trophy over it. For those having sound mental sight, the proof of the resurrection of the now immortal body effected by Christ, the common Savior of all and true Life, is clearer through visible facts than through arguments. For if death has been destroyed, as the argument has shown, and all tram-

ple it down on account of the Lord, all the more did he first trample it down in his own body and destroy it. Death having been put to death by him, what else should happen than that the body should rise and be shown as the trophy over it? Or how else could death be shown to be destroyed, unless the lordly body had arisen? If this proof of his resurrection is not sufficient for anyone, then let him believe what is said from what takes place before his eyes. If anyone is dead, he cannot act, for the gift lasts only until the grave and thereafter ceases; deeds and actions towards other human beings only belong to the living: let him who will, see and judge, confessing the truth from the visible facts. For since the Savior works so many things among human beings, and daily in every place invisibly persuades such a great multitude, both from those who dwell in Greece and in the foreign lands, to turn to his faith and all to obey his teaching, would anyone still have doubt in their mind whether the resurrection has been accomplished by the Savior, and whether Christ is alive, or rather is himself the Life? Is it like a dead man to prick the minds of human beings so that they deny their father's laws and revere the teaching of Christ? Or how, if he is not acting—for this is a property of one dead—does he stop those active and alive so that the adulterer no longer commits adultery, the murderer no longer murders, the unjust is no longer grasps greedily, and the impious is henceforth pious? How, if he is not risen but dead, does he stop and drive out and cast down those false gods said by unbelievers to be alive and the demons they worship? For where Christ and his faith are named, there all idolatry is purged away, every deceit of demons refuted, and no demon endures the name but fleeing, only hearing it, disappears. This is not the work of one dead, but of one alive, and especially of God. It would be absurd to say that the demons cast out by him and the idols brought to naught are dead, yet to say that the one who chases them away and by his own power makes them not appear, but is confessed by all as Son of God, that this one is dead!

31 Those who disbelieve the resurrection bring a strong refutation against themselves, if all the demons and those worshipped by them as gods do not drive out the Christ whom they claim is dead, but instead Christ proves them all to be dead. For if it is true that the dead can effect nothing, but the Savior effects such great things every day—drawing to piety, persuading to virtue, teaching about immortality, leading to a desire for heavenly things, revealing the knowledge of the Father, inspiring power against death, showing himself to each, and purging away the godlessness of idols; yet the gods and the demons of the faithless can do none of these things, but rather fall dead at the advent of Christ, their show being futile and empty; but by the sign of the cross all magic ceases, all witchcraft is brought to naught, all idols are deserted and abandoned, all irrational desire ceases, yet everyone is looking up from earth to heaven—who then would one say is dead? The Christ effecting such things? But it is not a property of one dead to be active. Or one who in no way acts, but lies lifeless, which is the property of the demons and idols, dead as they are? For the Son of God “*is living and active*” (Heb 4.12), works daily, and effects the salvation of all. But death is daily proved to have become completely weakened, and it is the idols and demons rather who are dead, so that from this no one can any longer doubt regarding the resurrection of his body.

He who disbelieves the resurrection of the lordly body would seem likely to be ignorant of the power of the Word and Wisdom of God. For if he had fully taken to himself a body, and made it his own with proper consistency, as our argument has shown, what should the Lord do with it? Or what kind of end should befall the body, once the Word had come to it? It was unable not to die, since it was mortal and offered to death on behalf of all, for which purpose the Savior had prepared it for himself. But it could not remain dead, because it had become the temple of life. So, it died as mortal, but came again to life because of the life which is in it; and the works are a proof of the resurrection.

32 But if, not being seen, his having risen is not believed, it is now time for those not believing to deny the course of nature. For it is a property of God not to be seen, but to be known by his works, just as was said above. If, then, there were no works, they would do well to disbelieve what does not appear; but if the works cry out and show it clearly, why do they chose to deny the life so patently of the resurrection? For even if they were lame in mind, even with the external senses they can see the indisputable power and divinity of Christ. For even a blind person, if he does not see the sun but feels the warmth coming from it, knows that the sun is above the earth. So also the naysayers, even if they do not yet believe, being still blind to the truth, yet at least knowing the power of others who believe, let them not deny the divinity of Christ and the resurrection accomplished by him. For it is clear that if Christ were dead, he would not have expelled the demons and despoiled the idols, for demons would not have obeyed a dead man. But if they are clearly expelled by the naming of him, it is clear that he is not dead, but rather that the demons, who see things invisible to human beings, would have been able to know if Christ were dead and not to obey him in any way. Now the demons see what the impious do not believe—that he is God—and for this reason they flee and fall down before him, saying what they cried out when he was in the body, “*We know who you are: the Holy One of God*” (Lk 4.34) and “*Ah, what have we to do with you, Son of God? I beseech you, do not torment me*” (Mat 8.28; Mk 5.7). With the demons thus confessing and the works bearing witness, it is should be manifest, and let no one be shameful against the truth, that the Savior raised up his body, and that he is the true Son of God, being from him as the Father’s own Word and Wisdom and Power, who in the last time took a body for the salvation of all, and taught the world about the Father, destroyed death, granted incorruptibility to all through the promise of the resurrection, raising his own body as first-fruits of this and showing it as a trophy over death and its corruption by the sign of the cross.

Refutation of the Jews

33 These things being so, and the proof of the resurrection of the body and the victory wrought by the Savior over death being clear, come now and let us also refute the unbelief of the Jews and the mockery of the Greeks. Perhaps the Jews do not believe and the Greeks mock for these reasons, disparaging the unseemliness of the cross and the incarnation of the God Word. But our argument will not shrink from advancing to both, especially as it has clear proofs against them.

The unbelieving Jews have their rebuttal from the scriptures which they also read. From beginning to end, and simply every inspired book proclaims these things, as also the very words themselves are obvious. For the prophets previously foretold the miracle regarding the Virgin and the birth occurring from her, saying, "*Behold a virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call his name Emmanuel, which is interpreted as 'God with us'*" (Isa 7.14). And Moses, that truly great man, believed by them to be true, considering the saying concerning the incarnation of the Savior as something great, and recognizing it to be true, established this saying, "*A star will rise from Jacob and a human being from Israel, and he will break down the princes of Moab*" (Num 24.17), and again, "*How fair are your tents, O Jacob, and your encampments, O Israel; like shady valleys and like gardens beside rivers, and like tents set up by the Lord, like cedars beside the waters. There will come forth a human being from his seed, and he shall rule over many peoples*" (Num 24.5–7). And again Isaiah "*Before the child knows how to cry out 'father' or 'mother,' he will take the power of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria before the King of Assyria*" (Isa 8.4). That a human being shall appear then is foretold by these. And that the coming one is Lord of all they again predict, saying, "*Behold, the Lord sits upon a swift cloud, and he will come to Egypt, and the graven images of Egypt will be shaken*" (Isa 19.1). For from there also the Father called him, saying, "*From Egypt have I called my Son*" (Hos 11.1).

34 Nor is even his death passed over in silence, but rather it is indicated exceedingly clearly in the divine scriptures. For they were not fearful to speak even of the cause of his death—that he endured it not for himself, but for the incorruptibility and salvation of all, and the plotting of the Jews, and the indignities that came upon him from them—in order that no one should be uninformed or in error about what happened. Thus they say, *“A man in affliction and knowing how to bear sorrows, because his face was turned away. He was despised and esteemed not. He bears our sins and suffers for our sake; we considered him to be in distress and affliction, and suffering. He was wounded for our sins and bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace is upon him, by his bruise we have been healed”* (Isa 53.3–5). Marvel at the Word’s love for human beings, that he is dishonored for our sake, that we might be honored. *“For all we,”* it says, *“like sheep have gone astray; the human being has gone astray from his way, and the Lord has delivered him to our sins. And he, though being in affliction, opens not his mouth. Like a sheep led to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearers is dumb, so opens he not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away”* (Isa 53.6–8). Then, lest anyone suppose him, from his suffering, to be a mere human being, scripture anticipates the suspicions of human beings, and relates his power beyond human and the unlikeness of nature to us, saying, *“Who will declare his generation? For his life was taken from the earth. By the iniquities of the people he was brought to death. And I shall give the wicked in exchange for his burial and the rich for his death, for he committed no iniquity, nor was deceit found in his mouth. And the Lord wishes to heal him from his iniquity”* (Isa 53.8–10).

35 But perhaps, having heard the prophecy of his death, you ask to learn what is indicated regarding the cross. For not even this is passed over in silence; but is expounded with great clarity by the saints. For first Moses, in a loud voice, predicts it saying, *“You will see your life hanging before your eyes, and you will not believe”* (Deut 28.66). And after him the prophets again witness to this, saying, *“But*

I, as a gentle lamb led to the slaughter, knew it not. And they plotted wickedly against me saying, 'Come, let us cast wood in his bread and efface him from the land of the living' (Jer 11.19). And again, *"They pierced my hands and my feet; they numbered all my bones, they divided my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots"* (Ps 21.17–19). But death in the air, taking place on wood, could be none other than the cross; in no other death are the hands and feet pierced, except on the cross. Since by the sojourn of the Savior all nations everywhere have begun to recognize God, they did not even leave out this undeclared, for there is also mention of it in the holy letters, *"He will be,"* it says, *"the root of Jesse and he that rises to rule the nations, and in him will the nations hope"* (Isa 11.10).

These few things contribute to the proof of what happened. But all scripture is full of things which refute the Jews' unbelief. For which of the righteous and the holy prophets and the patriarchs mentioned in the divine scriptures ever had the creation [*genesis*] of his body from a virgin only? Or what woman without a man was sufficient to produce human beings? Was not Abel from Adam, Enoch from Yared, Noah from Lamech, Abraham from Tarrah, Isaac from Abraham, and Jacob from Isaac? Was not Judah from Jacob, and Moses and Aaron from Ameram? Was not Samuel from Helcana, David from Jesse, Solomon from David, Hezekiah from Achaz, Josiah from Amos, Isaiah from Amos, Jeremiah from Hilciah, Ezekiel from Buzi? Did not each of these have his father as the author of his being [*genesis*]? Who then is born of a virgin only? For much care about this sign was taken by the prophet. And before whose birth did a star run in the heavens and indicate to the inhabited world the one born? For when Moses was born, he was hidden by his parents; nor was David heard of by those in the neighborhood, since even the great Samuel did not know him but asked whether Jesse had another son; and Abraham had already become great when he was known to his kin. No human being was a witness of the birth of Christ but a star appearing in heaven, whence also he descended.

36 Whatever king that ever was, “*before he was able to cry out ‘father’ or ‘mother,’*” reigned and gained trophies over his enemies? Was not David thirty years old when he began to reign, and did not Solomon begin to reign when he had become a young man? Did not Joas come into the kingdom when he was seven, and did not Josiah, a later king, receive the government when he was about seven? And yet they, being of that age, were able to call out “father” and “mother.” Who then is there that almost before birth was reigning and despoiling his enemies? And who was such a king in Israel and in Judah—let the Jews who have searched this out tell us—in whom all the nations placed their hope and had peace? Were they not rather opposing them from every side? For as long as Jerusalem stood, there was war without respite between them, and they all fought with Israel: the Assyrians oppressing them, the Egyptians persecuting them, the Babylonians falling upon them; and what is strange is that they even had the Syrians, their neighbors, at war with them. Or did not David wage war against those in Moab, and smite the Syrians, Josiah guard against his neighbors, Hezekiah fear the posturing of Sennacherib, Amalek fight against Moses, and the Amorites oppose Joshua son of Nun, and the inhabitants of Jericho array themselves in opposition? There was absolutely no treaty of friendship between the Gentiles and Israel. It is worthwhile seeing, then, who it is upon whom the Gentiles have placed their hope. He must exist, as the prophets cannot lie. Which of the holy prophets or patriarchs of old died on the cross for the salvation of all? Or who was wounded and destroyed for the healing of all? Which of the righteous or kings went down to Egypt, and at his descent the idols of the Egyptians fell? Abraham went down, but idolatry was still universal. Moses was born there, yet the superstition of those led astray was no less there.

37 Which of those borne witness to in the scriptures was pierced in his hands and feet, or was hung at all upon a tree, and completed his life on the cross for the salvation of all? Abraham died, expiring on a bed; Isaac and Jacob also died with feet raised upon a bed.

Moses and Aaron on the mountain; David died in his house, without being the object of any plotting by the people. Even if he was sought by Saul, yet he was preserved unharmed. Isaiah was sawn asunder, but he was not hanged upon the wood; Jeremiah was abused, but he did not die under condemnation; Ezekiel suffered, but not for the people, but indicating what would happen to the people. Moreover, these, although suffering, were human beings, like everyone else in the similarity of nature; but he who is declared by the scriptures to suffer on behalf of all is not simply human, but is called the Life of all, even if similar in nature to human beings. *"You will see,"* it says, *"your life hanging before your eyes"* (Deut 28.66) and *"Who will declare his generation?"* (Isa 53.8) For one could study the generation of all the saints, to expound from of old who and whence each one was, but the generation of the one who is Life the divine words declare to be inexpressible.

Who then is this of whom the divine scriptures say these things? Or who is so great, that the prophets also foretell such things about him? For no one else is found in the scriptures except the Savior common to all, the God Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. For he it is who came forth from a virgin, and appeared on earth as a human being, and has an inexpressible generation in the flesh. For there is no one who can speak of his father in the flesh, his body not being from a man but from a virgin alone. Just as one can, therefore, trace the genealogy of David and Moses and all the patriarchs, so no one can tell of the generation in the flesh of the Savior from man. For he it is who made the star tell of the birth [*genesis*] of his body. For as the Word came down from heaven, it was necessary to have a sign from heaven too; and as the king of creation came forth, it was necessary that he be clearly known by the whole inhabited world. He was born in Judaea and they came from Persia to worship him. He it is who even before his bodily manifestation took the victory against the opposing demons and the trophy over idolatry. So all Gentiles from everywhere, rejecting the inherited customs and the godlessness of idols, place their hope henceforth in Christ and dedicate

themselves to him, so that one can also see such things with the eyes themselves. For at no other time did the godlessness of the Egyptians cease, except when the Lord of all, riding as upon a cloud, went down there in the body, destroyed the error of the idols, and brought all to himself and through himself to the Father. He it is that was crucified, with the sun and creation as witnesses together with those who inflicted death upon him; and by his death salvation has come to all, and all creation been ransomed. He it is who is the Life of all, and who like a sheep delivered his own body to death as a substitute for the salvation of all, even if the Jews do not believe.

38 If they do not think these passages sufficient, let them be persuaded by others, from the oracles which they themselves possess. For of whom do the prophets say, *"I was made manifest to them that sought me not; I was found by those who did not ask for me. I said, 'Here am I' to the Gentiles who did not call upon my name. I stretched out my hands to a disobedient and rebellious people"* (Isa 65.1–2)? One might say to the Jews, who then is it that was made manifest? For if it is the prophet, let them say when he was hidden so as later to appear? And what manner of prophet is this, who becomes manifest after being unseen, and stretched out his hands upon the cross? None of the righteous, but only the Word of God, who is incorporeal by nature and was manifest in a body for our sake and suffered on our behalf. Even if this is not sufficient for them, let them at least be silenced from other passages, seeing that their rebuttal is so clear. For scripture says, *"Be strong, weak hands and feeble knees; be consoled, faint-hearted in spirit; be strong, fear not, for behold our God requites judgment; he will come and save us. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf will hear; then will the lame leap like a hart and the tongue of those who stammer will be clear"* (Isa 35.3–6). What, then, can they say about this, or how can they dare to face this at all? For the prophecy indicates the sojourn of God and makes known the signs and time of his advent: they say that at the divine advent the blind regain sight, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the

tongue of those who stammer is made clear. When, then, did such signs occur in Israel, or any such thing in Judah, let them tell us. A leper, Naaman, was cleansed, but no deaf person heard nor did a lame person walk. Elijah and Elisha raised the dead, but no one blind from birth regained sight. It is truly a great thing to raise the dead, but it is not such as that wonder wrought by the Savior. If scripture was not silent about the leper and the dead son of the widow, if it had happened that a lame man walked and a blind man received sight, the Word would certainly not have omitted to mention these as well. Since, then, there is silence about them in the scriptures, it is clear that they did not happen earlier. When, therefore, did these things happen, apart from when the Word of God himself came in the body? And when did he come, apart from when the lame walked, and those who stammer were clarified, and the deaf heard, and those blind from birth regained sight. Therefore even the Jews then seeing these things said that at no other time had they heard of these things happening, *“From the ages never has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing”* (Jn 9.32–3).

39 But perhaps being unable, even they, to contend against the plain facts, they will maintain, without denying what is written, that they are still waiting for these things and that the God Word has not yet come. For chattering about this from dawn to dusk, they do not blush to be so shameless before plain facts. But upon this point, and above all, they shall rather be refuted, not by us, but by the most wise Daniel, who marks both the present date and the divine sojourn of the Savior, saying, *“Seventy weeks are decreed for your people, and your holy city, to put an end to sin, and to seal up sins, and to efface iniquities, and to atone for iniquities, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint the holy of holies; and that you might know and understand from the going forth of the Word to give an answer and to build Jerusalem until Christ be prince”* (Dan 9.24–5). Perhaps regarding the other things, they

could find pretexts and put off what is written to a future time. But what can they say to this, or can they face it at all—where Christ is indicated, and he that is anointed is declared to be not simply human but the holy of holies, and Jerusalem is to stand until his advent, and then the prophet and vision cease in Israel? Of old David was anointed, and Solomon, and Hezekiah, but then Jerusalem and the place nevertheless stood and prophets were prophesying, Gad, and Asaph, and Nathan, and after them Isaiah, and Hosea, and Amos, and the others. Moreover, those who were anointed were called holy men, but not holy of holies. But if they bring up the captivity, and by it claim that Jerusalem did not exist, what would they say about the prophets? For of old, when the people went down to Babylon, Daniel and Jeremiah were there, and Ezekiel and Haggai and Zechariah prophesied.

40 So the Jews are telling fables, and putting off the time which is actually now. For when did the prophet or vision cease from Israel if not now, when Christ, the holy of holies, has come? For a sign and a great proof of the advent of the God Word is that Jerusalem no longer stands, nor does a prophet arise, nor is vision revealed to them, and rightly so. For when he who was indicated has come, what is the use of those who indicate? When the truth is present, what need is there any more for the shadow? For this reason they prophesied until there should come justice itself and the one who redeems the sins of all. For this reason, Jerusalem stood for so long, in order that there they might be prepared by the types of the truth. Therefore, when the holy of holies was present, rightly have vision and prophecy been sealed, and the kingdom of Jerusalem has ceased. Kings were anointed among them only so long until holy of holies should be anointed. Moses also prophesied that the kingdom of the Jews would stand until him, saying, *“There will not be lacking a prince from Judah or a leader from his loins, until what is laid up for him comes, and he is the expectation of the nations”* (Gen 49.10). So the Savior himself cried out, saying, *“The law and the prophets prophesied until John”*

(Matt 11.13). If, therefore, there were now among the Jews a king or a prophet or vision, they would rightly deny that Christ has come. But if there is neither king nor vision, but all prophecy has henceforth been sealed up, and the city and the temple taken, why are they so impious and perverse, that they see what has happened, and yet deny Christ who made these things happen? And why, seeing even those from among the Gentiles abandoning the idols and fixing their hope, through Christ, on the God of Israel, do they deny Christ, who is from the root of Jesse according to the flesh and reigns henceforth? If the Gentiles worshipped another God and did not confess the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Moses, they would do well in alleging that God had not come. But if the Gentiles are honoring the God who gave the law to Moses and the promise to Abraham, and whose Word the Jews dishonored, why do they not know, or rather why do they willingly ignore, that the Lord who was prophesied by the scriptures has illumined the inhabited world and has been made manifest bodily to it, just as the scripture says, "*The Lord God has appeared to us*" (Ps 117.27), and again, "*He sent his Word and healed them*" (Ps 106.20), and again, "*Not a messenger, nor an angel, but the Lord himself has saved them*" (Isa 11.9).

They are suffering like one, maimed in mind, who might see the earth illumined by the sun, but denies the sun which illumines it. For what more has he who is expected by them to do when he comes? Call the Gentiles? But they have already been called. To make prophet and king and vision to cease? This has already happened. To refute the godlessness of idols? It has already been refuted and condemned. To destroy death? It is already destroyed. What then must Christ do, which has not been done? Or what is left unfulfilled, that the Jews now rejoice and disbelieve. For if, as we thus see, they have neither king, nor prophet, nor Jerusalem, nor sacrifice, nor vision, but the whole world is filled with the knowledge of God, and those from the Gentiles are abandoning godlessness, and henceforth taking refuge in the God of Abraham through the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, it should be clear even to those who are exceedingly

obstinate that Christ has come, and that he illumines absolutely all with his light and teaches the true and divine teaching concerning his Father. So one can rightly refute the Jews from these and many more passages from the divine scriptures.

Refutation of the Gentiles

41 But one is utterly amazed at the Greeks who laugh at things that should not be mocked, but are blinded to their own disgrace which, having devoted themselves to stones and wood, they do not see. As our own exposition is not short of proofs, come, let us put them to shame with reasonable arguments, especially from what we ourselves see. For what is absurd or worthy of derision on our part? Is it only that we say that the Word has been made manifest in the body? But even this they would with us confess to have happened without absurdity, if they were but friends of the truth. If they completely deny that there is a Word of God, they are behaving beyond limit, mocking that which they do not know. But if they confess that there is a Word of God, the ruler of everything, and that in him the Father has produced the creation, and that by his providence the universe is enlightened and receives life and being, and that he reigns over all, so that by his providence he is known and through him the Father—consider, I beseech you, if they do not realize that they are bringing ridicule upon themselves.

The philosophers of the Greeks say that the cosmos is a great body, and they speak truly. For we see it and its parts as being subject to our senses. If, then, the Word of God is in the cosmos, which is a body, and has come into it all and into each part of it, what is surprising or absurd if we say that he came in a human being? For if it were completely absurd for him to be in a body, it would be absurd for him to come into the whole, and illumine and move all things by his own providence, for the universe is also a body. But if it is fitting for him to come into the cosmos and to be made known in the universe,

it would also be fitting for him to appear in a human body and that it should be illumined and moved by him. For the human race is part of the whole; and if the part is unsuitable to be his instrument towards the knowledge of his divinity, it would be most absurd that he should be made known even through the whole cosmos.

42 For, in the way that, as the whole body is activated and illumined by the human being, if anyone were to say that it is absurd that the strength of the human being should also be in the toe he would be thought mad, because while granting that he pervades and acts in the whole he demurs to his being in the part also; in the same way, one who grants and believes the Word of God to be in all, and that all is illumined and moved by him, should not think it absurd that a single human body should be moved and illumined by him. But if because the human race is created and was made from nothing, for this reason they think that it is unfitting for us to speak of the manifestation of the Savior in a human being, it is time for them to cast him out of creation also, for this also was brought into being from nothing by the Word. But if, even though creation is something made, it is not absurd for the Word to be in it, then neither is it absurd for him to be in a human being. For whatever they think regarding the whole, this they must necessarily conceive regarding the part, for the human being, as I said earlier, is also part of the whole. Therefore it is not at all unfitting for the Word to be in a human being, and that by him and in him all things are illumined and move and live, just as their writers also say, that “*in him we live and move and have our being*” (Acts 17.28). What then merits scorn if we say that the Word uses as an instrument for manifestation that in which the Word is? For if he were not in it, he would not be able to use it. But if we have previously allowed that he is in all and in every part, what is there unbelievable if he manifests himself in those parts in which he is? For as by his own powers he comes wholly in each and in all, and arranges everything ungrudgingly, no one would call it absurd for him to speak, if he wished, by means of the sun or moon

or heaven or earth or waters or fire, to make himself and his Father known; inasmuch as he holds together all things, and is with all and in the part in question, and invisibly shows himself. So likewise it would not be absurd if, while arranging all things and giving life to the universe and having willed to be known by human beings, he were to use as an instrument the body of a human being for the true revelation and knowledge of the Father, for humanity is part of the whole. And just as the mind, while pervading the whole of a human being, is indicated by a part of the body, I mean the tongue, and no one says that the essence of the mind is diminished by this, so also if the Word, who pervades all things, made use of a human instrument, this would not seem unfitting. For if, as I said above, it were unfitting to have used a body as an instrument, it would be unfitting also for him to be in the whole.

43 Now then, if they ask why he did not appear through other more noble parts of creation, or use some nobler instrument, as the sun or moon or stars or fire or air, but merely a human being, let them know that the Lord came not to be put on display but to heal and to teach those who were suffering. One being put on display only needs to appear and dazzle the beholders; but one who heals and teaches does not simply sojourn, but is of service to those in need and appears as those who need him can bear, lest by exceeding the need of those who suffer he trouble the very ones in need and the manifestation of the divine be of no benefit to them. Now nothing in creation had gone astray in its notions of God, save the human being only. Why, neither sun nor moon nor heaven nor stars nor water nor air altered their course; but knowing their Creator and King, the Word, they remained as they were made. But human beings alone, having rejected the good, henceforth fabricated things that do not exist instead of the truth, and ascribed the honor due to God, and the knowledge of him, to demons and human beings fabricated in stone.

With reason, then, since it was not worthy of the goodness of God to overlook so grave a matter, yet human beings were not able

to know him even though he was ordering and guiding the universe, he takes a part of the whole for himself as an instrument, the human body, and came into it, in order that since human beings were not able to know him in the whole they should not fail to know him in the part; and since they were not able to lift up their gaze to his invisible power, they might be able, at any rate, to know and contemplate him from things similar. Being human, they will be able to know the Father more speedily and directly by a body corresponding [to theirs] and the divine works effected through it, considering that the things done by him are not human but the works of God. And if it were absurd, according to them, for the Word to be made known through the works of the body, it would likewise be absurd for him to be known through the works of the universe. For just as he is in creation, yet in no way partakes of creation, but rather everything partakes of his power, so also while using the body as an instrument, he partook of none of the body's properties, but rather himself sanctified even the body. For if even Plato, who is admired by the Greeks, says that because he who begot the world saw it distressed and in danger of sinking into a region of dissimilitude, sitting at the helm of the soul he helped it and corrects all its faults, what then is there incredible in what we say, that humankind being in error, the Word sat at its helm and appeared as human, in order that he might save the distressed by his guidance and goodness?

44 But perhaps, shamed into agreeing with this, they will choose to say that wishing to teach and save human beings, God should have done so by a nod only, and his Word should not have touched a body, just as when he created them of old, making them out of nothing. To this objection of theirs, the following could reasonably be said: that formerly, when nothing at all existed, only a nod and an act of will was needed for the creation of the universe. But when the human being had once been made, and necessity required the healing, not for things that were not, but for things that had come to be, it followed that the healer and Savior had to come among those who

had already been created, to heal what existed. He became a human being for this, and used his body as a human instrument. For if it was not right to happen in this way, how should the Word appear, when he wished to use an instrument? Or whence was he to take it, if not from those who already existed and had need of his divinity through one like [themselves]? For it was not non-existent things that needed salvation, so that a command alone would have sufficed, but the human being, already in existence, who was corrupted and perishing. Whence it was reasonable and good that the Word should use a human instrument and unfold himself to all things.

Next, this must also be known, that the corruption which had occurred was not outside the body, but attached to it, and it was necessary that instead of corruption, life should cleave to it, so that as death had come to be in the body, so too life might come to be in it. If, then, death had been outside the body, life would also have had to be outside it. But if death was interwoven with the body, and dominated it as if united to it, it was necessary for life to be interwoven with the body, so that the body putting on life should cast off corruption. Otherwise, if the Word had been outside the body, and not in it, death would have been conquered by him most naturally, since death has no power against life, but nonetheless the attached corruption would have remained in the body. For this reason, the Savior rightly put on a body, in order that the body, being interwoven with life, might no longer remain as mortal in death, but, as having put on immortality, henceforth it might, when arising, remain immortal. For, once it had put on corruption, it would not have risen unless it had put on life. And, moreover, death does not appear by itself, but in the body; therefore he put on the body, that finding death in the body he might efface it. For how at all would the Lord have been shown to be Life, if not by giving life to the mortal? And just as straw is naturally destroyed by fire, if anyone keeps the fire away from the straw, the straw does not burn, but remains fully straw, straw fearful of the threat of fire, for fire naturally consumes it. But if someone covers the straw with much asbestos, which is said to be fireproof,

the straw no longer fears the fire, having security from the covering of asbestos. In the same way one may talk about the body and about death. If death were kept away from it by a command only, it would still be no less mortal and corruptible, according to the principle of bodies. But that this should not be, it put on the incorporeal Word of God, and thus no longer fears death or corruption, having life as a garment and corruption being destroyed in it.

45 Properly, therefore, the Word of God took a body and used a human instrument, in order to give life to the body and in order that, just as he is known in creation by his works, so also he might act in a human being, and show himself everywhere, leaving nothing barren of his divinity and knowledge. Again, I repeat, resuming what we said before, that the Savior did this in order that as he fills everything everywhere by his presence, so also he might fill all things with the knowledge of himself, as the divine scriptures say, "*The whole earth was filled with the knowledge of God*" (Isa 11.9). For if anyone wishes to look up to the heavens, he sees its arrangement, or if he cannot raise his gaze to heaven but only to human beings, he sees through his work his power incomparable to that of human beings and knows that he alone among human beings is the Word of God. But if anyone is turned astray by demons, and is in fear of them, he sees him driving them out, and judges that he is their master; if he has sunk into the nature of the waters, and think that they are God—as the Egyptians reverence the water—he sees it transformed by him and knows the Lord to be their creator; if he has descended even to Hades, and gazes in awe at the heroes who have descended there as if they were gods, yet he sees the fact of his resurrection and the victory over death, and concludes that even among them Christ alone is the true Lord and God. For the Lord touched all parts of creation and freed and disabused everything from every error, as Paul said, "*Disarming the principalities and powers, he has triumphed on the Cross*" (Col 2.15), in order that no one might be any longer deceived, but might find everywhere the true Word of God. So the human

being, henceforth closed in on every side and seeing everywhere, that is in heaven, in hell, in the human being, the divinity of the Word unfolded over the earth, is no longer deceived concerning God, but reveres him alone, and through him rightly knows the Father. By these arguments, then, from their coherence, even the Greeks will reasonably be put to shame by us. But if they reckon these remarks insufficient to shame them, let them be convinced of what we say from those things manifest to the sight of all.

46 When did human beings begin to abandon the worship of idols, except since the true God Word of God came among human beings? Or when have the oracles amongst the Greeks and everywhere ceased and become empty, except since the Savior revealed himself upon earth? Or when did those who are called gods and heroes by the poets begin to be condemned as merely mortal humans, except since the Lord erected the trophy over death and preserved incorruptible the body which he took, raising it from the dead? Or when were the deceit and madness of the demons despised, except when the Power of God, the Word, the Master of all, even of these, condescended, because of the weakness of humans, to appear on earth? When did the craft and teachings of magic begin to be trampled underfoot, except when the divine manifestation of the Word took place among human beings? And when, in short, did the wisdom of the Greeks become foolish (cf. 1 Cor 1.18–24) except when the true Wisdom of God revealed itself upon earth? For formerly the whole inhabited world and every place were led astray by the worship of idols, and human beings regarded nothing else but idols as gods. Now, however, throughout the whole inhabited world, human beings are deserting the superstition of idols, taking refuge in Christ, and worshipping him as God, and through him they know the Father, of whom they had been ignorant. And, what is amazing, is that while there were thousands of diverse objects of worship, and each place had its own idol, and that which was called a god by some had no power to pass over into the neighboring place

to persuade those of the neighborhood to worship it, but was barely worshipped even among its own people—for no one worshipped his neighbor's god, but each kept his own idol, thinking it to be the lord of all—only Christ is worshipped by all as one and everywhere the same. And what the weakness of idols could not do—persuade even those dwelling nearby—this Christ has done, persuading not only those nearby, but simply the entire inhabited world, to worship one and the same Lord, and through him God, his Father.

47 And formerly everywhere was filled with the deceit of the oracles, and the utterances of those in Delphi and Dodona and Boeotia and Lycia and Libya and Egypt and Cabiri and the Pythoness were admired in the imagination of human beings. But now, since Christ is announced everywhere, their madness has also ceased and no longer is there anyone among them giving oracles. Formerly demons deceived human fancy, taking possession of springs or rivers, wood or stone, and by their tricks thus stupefied the simple. But now, after the divine manifestation of the Word has taken place, their illusion has ceased. For by the sign of the cross, if a human being but use it, he drives away their deceits. Formerly human beings thought to be gods those spoken of as gods by the poets, Zeus and Chronos and Apollo and the heroes, and went astray in worshipping them. But now that the Savior has appeared among human beings, these are known to be mortal humans, and Christ alone among humans is known to be God of true God, the God Word. What could one say about the magic which was admired among them? That before the sojourn of the Word it was strong and active among the Egyptians and Chaldaeans and Indians, and astounded those who saw it; but at the advent of truth and the manifestation of the Word, this also has been confuted and thoroughly destroyed.

As for Greek wisdom and the grandiloquence of the philosophers, I think that no one needs our argument, as the wonder is before the sight of all, that while the wise among the Greeks had written so much, and were unable to persuade even a few from

their neighborhood about immortality and the virtuous life, Christ alone by means of simple words and by means of humans not wise in speech has throughout the inhabited world persuaded whole churches full of human beings to despise death but to think rather of things immortal, and to disregard what is temporal but to consider rather things eternal, and to think nothing of earthly glory but to seek rather only immortality.

48 Now these things said by us are not merely words, but have the witness of their truth from experience itself. Let him who wishes come up and behold the proof of virtue in the virgins of Christ and in the youth who live a pure life in chastity, and the belief in immortality in so great a company of martyrs. And let him come who wishes to put to test what has been said, and in front of the illusions of the demons and the deceit of the oracles, and the wonders of magic, let him use the sign of the cross, which is mocked by them, merely naming Christ, and he will see how by it demons are put to flight, oracles cease, and all magic and witchcraft are brought to naught. Who, then, and how great is this Christ, who by his naming and presence overshadows and brings to naught everything everywhere, and who is alone powerful over all, and has filled the whole inhabited world with his teaching? Let the Greeks tell us, who greatly mocked and are not ashamed. For if he is a human being, how has one human being exceeded the power of all their gods, and proved by his power that they are nothing? If they call him a magician, how can all magic be destroyed by a magician, rather than being confirmed? For if he conquered human magicians, or prevailed over only one, he would properly be reckoned by them to have surpassed the rest by superior skill. But if his cross has won the victory over absolutely all magic, and over the very name of it, it must be clear that the Savior is not a magician, from whom even those demons invoked by other magicians flee as their master.

Who then is he? Let the Greeks tell us, whose only interest is mockery. Perhaps they might say that he too was a demon and hence

prevailed. But saying this, they will deserve great ridicule, for once again they will be put to shame by the same arguments. For how can one who drives out demons be a demon? If he simply expelled demons, it would be rightly thought that by the prince of demons he prevailed over the lesser, just as the Jews said to him when wishing to insult him (cf. Matt 12.24). But if all the madness of demons is uprooted and chased away by his name, it should be evident that in this too they are wrong, and that our Lord and Savior Christ is not, as they think, some demonical power. So, then, if the Savior is not simply a human being, nor a magician, nor a demon, but by his divinity has destroyed and overshadowed the suppositions of poets and the illusions of the demons and the wisdom of the Greeks, it should be clear and will be confessed by all that this one is the true Son of God, being the Word and Wisdom and Power of the Father. For this reason his works are not human, but beyond human, and they are known to be truly of God both from the very appearances and by comparison with those of human beings.

49 For what human being that ever existed formed a body for himself from a virgin alone? Or what human being ever healed such diseases as the common Lord of all? Or who restored what was lacking to creation [*genesis*] and made one blind from birth to see? Asclepius was made a god by them because he practiced healing and discovered herbs for the sufferings of bodies, not forming them himself out of the earth, but discovering them by science from nature. But what was that compared to what was done by the Savior, who did not heal the wound, but formed the creation [*genesis*] and restored the formation? Heracles is worshipped as a god by the Greeks because he fought with humans equal to himself and killed wild beasts by guile. But what was that compared to what was done by the Word, who banished sicknesses and demons and death itself from human beings? Dionysius was worshipped by them because he taught human beings drunkenness; but the true Savior and Lord of all, teaching sobriety, is mocked by them. But let these things be.

What of the other miracles of his divinity? At the death of which human being was the sun darkened and the earth shaken? See, even until now human beings are dying, and they died even from the beginning; when did such a miracle occur in their case? Or, to leave aside the deeds done through his body and recall those after the resurrection of his body: whose teaching, of all those human beings who ever existed, prevailed from one end of the earth to the other, one and the same throughout the whole, so that his worship has spread through the whole world? Or why, if Christ is a man and not the God Word as they hold, is not his worship prevented by their gods from passing into the regions where they are, but rather why does the Word himself, sojourning here, cause their worship to cease by his teaching and put their illusion to shame?

50 There have been many kings and tyrants on earth before him; many among the Chaldaeans and Egyptians and Indians are recorded as wise and magicians. Which of these ever—I do not mean after death, but while living—were able to so prevail as to fill the whole earth with his teaching, and to educate so great a multitude away from the superstitions of idols, as our Savior has converted from idols to himself? The philosophers of the Greeks have written much with persuasiveness and eloquence; what then did they prove as great as the cross of Christ? For their sophistries were plausible until their death; but even while they lived what they thought to be conclusive was contested by others, and they fought, declaiming against each other. But the Word of God, in the greatest paradox, teaching with poorer words, has cast into the shade the greatest sophists, and reduced to naught their teachings, and by drawing all to himself has filled his churches. And what is wonderful is that coming as a human being to death, he has destroyed the grandiloquence of the wise concerning the idols. For whose death ever cast out demons? Or of whose death were the demons ever so afraid as that of Christ? For where the name of the Savior is named, there every demon is expelled. And who thus delivered human beings

from the natural passions, so that adulterers are chaste, murderers no longer take up the sword, and those overcome by cowardice are courageous? Or, in short, what persuaded human beings from the barbarians and the Gentile regions to lay aside their madness, and to mind peace, except the faith of Christ and that sign of the cross? Or what else has thus assured human beings about immortality as the cross of Christ and the resurrection of his body? For although the Greeks lied in everything, they were unable to fabricate the resurrection of their idols, not supposing at all whether it be possible for the body to exist again after death. In this, in particular, one could accept them, for by thinking such things they have proved the weakness of their idols, and conceded the strength to Christ, so that from this also he is known by all as Son of God.

51 Who then among human beings, after death or even while alive, taught about virginity and did not think that this virtue was impossible among human beings? But our Savior and king of all, Christ, so prevailed in the teaching of this that even children not yet arrived at the lawful age profess the virginity that is above the law. Who among humans was ever able to travel so far as to reach the Scythians and Ethiopians, or Persians, or Armenians, or Goths, or those said to be beyond the Ocean, or those beyond Hyrcania, or even the Egyptians and Chaldaeans, who think about magic and are superstitious beyond nature and savage in their ways, and to preach only about virtue and sobriety and against the worship of idols, as the Lord of all, the power of God, our Lord Jesus Christ? He not only preached through his own disciples, but even persuaded them in their minds to lay aside the savagery of their manners, and no longer to honor the ancestral gods but to recognize him and through him to worship the Father. For formerly, while they were idolaters, the Greeks and Barbarians made war on each other, and were cruel towards their own kin. There was not anyone at all who crossed land or sea without arming the hand with a sword because of the irreconcilable fighting amongst themselves. For the whole course of their life was

under arms, and for them the sword took the place of a staff and was their support in everything. And yet, as I said, they worshiped idols and offered sacrifices to demons, and those who thought such things were altogether incapable of being reeducated from the superstition of idols. But when they were converted to the teaching of Christ then, paradoxically, as truly pricked in their minds, they laid aside the cruelty of murder and no longer think things of war, but every thought of theirs was henceforth peaceful and towards friendship.

52 Who, then, is it that has done this, or who is he that has united in peace those who hated each other, if not the beloved Son of the Father, the common Savior of all, Jesus Christ, who in his love submitted to all things for our salvation? For even from of old it had been prophesied concerning the peace ushered in by him, the scriptures saying, *"They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into sickles, and nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn any more to wage war"* (Isa 2.4). And such a thing is not unbelievable, inasmuch as even now the barbarians who have an innate savagery of manners, while they still sacrifice to their idols, rage against one another and cannot bear to remain without a sword for a single hour, but when they hear the teaching of Christ they immediately turn to farming instead of war, and instead of arming their hands with swords stretch them out in prayer, and, in a word, instead of fighting amongst themselves, henceforth they arm themselves against the devil and the demons, subduing them with sobriety and virtue of soul. This is, on the one hand, the proof of the Savior's divinity, that what human beings were unable to learn among idols, they have learned from him, and, on the other hand, no small refutation of the weakness and nothingness of the demons and idols. The demons, knowing their weakness, because of this formerly set human beings at war with each other, lest if they ceased from mutual strife, they should turn to battle against the demons. Indeed, those who become disciples of Christ, instead of fighting against each other, stand arrayed against the demons by their lives

and deeds of virtue, putting them to flight and mocking their prince, the devil, so that, in their youth they are temperate, in temptations they endure, in toils they persevere, when insulted they forbear, and deprivations they disregard, and, what is most wonderful is that they scorn even death and become martyrs for Christ.

53 And, to mention one proof of the divinity of the Savior, which is indeed exceedingly wonderful: which mere human being or magician or tyrant or king was ever able to take so much upon himself, and to battle against all idolatry and the whole demonical host and all magic and all the wisdom of the Greeks, while they were so strong and still flourishing and captivating all, and at one turn withstand them all, as our Lord, the true Word of God who, invisibly confuting the error of each, alone despoils all of them of all human beings, so that those who worshipped idols now trample upon them, those who were under the spell of magic now burn their books (cf. Acts 19.19), and the wise prefer the interpretation of the Gospels above everything else? Those whom they worshipped, them they abandon, while the crucified one whom they mocked, him they worship as Christ, confessing him to be God. Those called gods by them are driven out by the sign of the cross, while the crucified Savior is proclaimed in all the inhabited world as God and Son of God. The gods worshipped by the Greeks, are reviled by them as shameful, while those who receive the teaching of Christ lead a more sober life than they.

If, then, these and such works are human, let anyone who wishes point out similar things from those before, and persuade us. But if they appear to be, and are, works not of human beings but of God, why are the unbelievers so impious as not to recognize the Master who wrought them? They are afflicted like one who did not know, from the works of creation, God their creator. For if they knew his divinity from his power over the universe, they would have known that Christ's works in the body also are not human but are of the

Savior of all, the Word of God. And knowing this, as Paul said, “*they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*” (1 Cor 2.8).

54 Therefore, just as if someone wishes to see God, who is invisible by nature and not seen at all, understands and knows him from his works, so let one who does not see Christ with his mind learn of him from the works of his body, and test whether they be human or of God. And if they be human, let him mock; but if they are known to be not human, but of God, let him not laugh at things that should not be mocked, but let him rather marvel that through such a paltry thing things divine have been manifested to us, and that through death incorruptibility has come to all, and through the incarnation of the Word the universal providence, and its giver and creator, the very Word of God, have been made known. For he was incarnate that we might be made god; and he manifested himself through a body that we might receive an idea of the invisible Father; and he endured the insults of human beings, that we might inherit incorruptibility. He himself was harmed in no way, being impassible and incorruptible and the very Word and God; but he held and preserved in his own impassibility the suffering human beings, on whose account he endured these things. And, in short, the achievements of the Savior, effected by his incarnation, are of such a kind and number that if anyone should wish to expound them he would be like those who gaze at the expanse of the sea and wish to count its waves. For as one cannot take in all the waves with one's eyes, since those coming on elude the perception of one who tries, so also one who would comprehend all the achievements of Christ in the body is unable to take in the whole, even by reckoning them up, for those that elude his thought are more than he thinks he has grasped. Therefore it is better not to seek to speak of the whole, of which one cannot even speak of a part, but rather to recall one thing, and leave the whole for you to marvel at. For all are equally marvelous, and wherever one looks, seeing there the divinity of the Word, one is struck with exceeding awe.

55 After what we have said above, therefore, it is right for you to learn this and to consider it as the principle of what has not been said, and to marvel at greatly, that when the Savior sojourned idolatry no longer increased, but even what there was diminishes and gradually ceases; the wisdom of the Greeks no longer advances, but even what there was now disappears; and the demons no longer deceive with fantasies and oracles and magic, for if they but dare and try they are put to shame by the sign of the cross. To speak concisely, behold how the teaching of the Savior increases everywhere, while all idolatry and everything opposed to the faith of Christ daily diminish and weaken and fall. And, seeing this, worship the Savior and mighty God Word "*who is over all*" (Rom 9.5), but condemn those who, by him, are diminished and disappear. For as when the sun is present darkness no longer prevails, but even if it remains somewhere it is put to flight, so also since the coming of the divine manifestation of the God Word the darkness of idols no longer prevails, but all parts of the inhabited world everywhere are illumined by his teaching. And just as if someone reigns without appearing in any part of the realm, but rather remaining inside his own home, frequently some who are seditious, taking advantage of his withdrawal, proclaim themselves, and each of them assuming the role deceives the simple by pretending to be king; and thus citizens are led astray by the name, hearing that there is a king but not seeing him, especially because they cannot enter into the house. But when the real king emerges and appears, then the seditious imposters are exposed by his presence, while the citizens, seeing the real king, abandon those who previously led them astray. In the same way, demons and human beings were previously deceitful, ascribing to themselves the honor due to God; but when the Word of God appeared in a body and made known to us his own Father, then indeed the deceit of the demons disappears and ceases, while human beings, looking to the true God Word of the Father, abandon idols and henceforth recognize the true God. This is a proof that Christ is the God Word and Power of God. For as human things cease and the word of Christ abides, it is clear

to all that the things which cease are transient, and he who abides is God and true Son and only-begotten Word of God.

Conclusion

56 Let these brief remarks, then, O Christ-loving human being, be dedicated to you from us, as an elementary sketch and paradigm of the faith of Christ and his divine manifestation to us. Taking occasion from them, if you take the text of the scriptures and genuinely apply your mind to them, you will know from them more completely and more clearly the accuracy of what has been said. For they were spoken and written by God through theologians⁵; while we pass on to your love of learning what we have learned from the inspired teachers who were conversant with them, who also became witnesses to the divinity of Christ. You will also know of his second glorious and truly divine manifestation to us, when he comes no longer in lowliness but in his own glory, no longer with humility but in his own magnificence, no longer to suffer but to bestow thenceforth the fruit of his own cross on all—I mean the resurrection and incorruptibility—no longer judged, but judging all according to what each one has done in the body, whether good or evil, whence there is laid up for the good the kingdom of heaven, but for them that have done evil, eternal fire and outer darkness. For thus says the Lord himself, “I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming upon the clouds of heaven in the glory of the Father” (Mat 26.64). Therefore the saying is salutary which prepares us for that day, saying, “Be ready and watch, for he will come at an hour that you know not” (cf. Mat 24.42, 44). For according to the blessed Paul, “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive according to what he has done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Cor 5.10).

⁵See footnote 3 on p. 71.

57 But in addition to the study and true knowledge of the scriptures, there is needed a good life and a pure soul and the virtue which is according to Christ, so that the mind, guided by it, may be able to attain and comprehend what it desires, as far as it is possible for human nature to learn about the God Word. Without a pure mind and a life modeled on the saints, no one can comprehend the words of the saints. For just as, if someone would wish to see the light of the sun, he would certainly wipe and clear his eyes, purifying himself to be almost like that which he desires, so that as the eye thus becomes light it may see the light of the sun; or just as if someone would wish to see a city or a country, he would certainly go to that place for the sight; in the same way, one wishing to comprehend the mind of the theologians must first wash and cleanse his soul by his manner of life, and approach the saints themselves by the imitation of their works, so that being with them in the conduct of a common life, he may understand also the things revealed to them, and thenceforth, as joined to them, may escape the peril of the sinners and their fire on the day of judgment, but may receive what has been laid up for the saints in the kingdom of heaven, "*which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have they entered into the heart of man*" (1 Cor 2.9), whatsoever things have been prepared for those who live a virtuous life and love the God and Father, in Christ Jesus our Lord, through whom and with whom, to the Father with the Son himself in the Holy Spirit, be honor and power and glory to the ages of ages. Amen.

- 1 *On the Priesthood* – St John Chrysostom
- 2 *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments* – St Cyril of Jerusalem
- 4 *On the Divine Images* – St John of Damascus
- 6 *On the Holy Icons* – St Theodore the Studite
- 7 *On Marriage and Family Life* – St John Chrysostom
- 8 *On the Divine Liturgy* – St Germanus
- 9 *On Wealth and Poverty* – St John Chrysostom
- 10 *Hymns on Paradise* – St Ephrem the Syrian
- 11 *On Ascetical Life* – St Isaac of Nineveh
- 12 *On the Soul and Resurrection* – St Gregory of Nyssa
- 13 *On the Unity of Christ* – St Cyril of Alexandria
- 14 *On the Mystical Life, vol. 1* – St Symeon the New Theologian
- 15 *On the Mystical Life, vol. 2* – St Symeon the New Theologian
- 16 *On the Mystical Life, vol. 3* – St Symeon the New Theologian
- 17 *On the Apostolic Preaching* – St Irenaeus
- 18 *On the Dormition* – Early Patristic Homilies
- 19 *On the Mother of God* – Jacob of Serug
- 20 *On Pascha* – Melito of Sardis
- 21 *On God and Man* – The Theological Poetry of St Gregory of Nazianzus
- 22 *On the Apostolic Tradition* – Hippolytus
- 23 *On God and Christ* – St Gregory of Nazianzus
- 24 *Three Treatises on the Divine Images* – St John of Damascus
- 25 *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ* – St Maximus the Confessor
- 26 *Letters from the Desert* – Barsanuphius and John
- 27 *Four Desert Fathers* – Pambo, Evagrius, Macarius of Egypt, and Macarius of Alexandria
- 28 *Saint Macarius the Spiritbearer* – Coptic Texts
- 29 *On the Lord's Prayer* – Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen
- 30 *On the Human Condition* – St Basil the Great
- 31 *The Cult of the Saints* – St John Chrysostom
- 32 *On the Church: Select Treatises* – St Cyprian of Carthage
- 33 *On the Church: Select Letters* – St Cyprian of Carthage
- 34 *The Book of Pastoral Rule* – St Gregory the Great
- 35 *Wider Than Heaven* – Eighth-century Homilies on the Mother of God
- 36 *Festal Orations* – St Gregory of Nazianzus
- 37 *Counsels on the Spiritual Life* – Mark the Monk
- 38 *On Social Justice* – St Basil the Great
- 39 *The Harp of Glory* – An African Akathist
- 40 *Divine Eros* – St Symeon the New Theologian
- 41 *On the Two Ways* – Foundational Texts in the Tradition
- 42 *On the Holy Spirit* – St Basil the Great
- 43 *Works on the Spirit* – Athanasius and Didymus
- 44 *On the Incarnation* – St Athanasius
- 45 *Treasure-house of Mysteries* – Poetry in the Syriac Tradition



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ISBN 978-0-88141-427-1



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