

The Paradox of the Mystery of the Incarnation

1. The Son by whom all things were made became one among what He created. The Son of God by the Father without a mother became the Son of man by a mother without a father. The Word who is God before all time became flesh to live under time. The maker of the sun came to live under the sun. He Who fills the world lays in a manger, infinite and great is God but became a tiny human and in the form of a servant; this was in such a way that neither was His greatness diminished by His tininess, nor was His tininess overcome by His greatness:
 - Became a creature to bring us creatures to full communion
 - Without a mother, as divine, to change the biological cycle of birth
 - He kept his greatness to bring us to this greatness
2. God became a human being, so that in one person we may see both - something to see (his humanity) and something totally invisible (his divinity). We may see God in man and man in God. He represents God for us and us to God.
3. He lies in a manger, but contains the world, so that He may dwell in the tiny human life.
4. He feeds at the breast of Mary, the Theotokos, but also feeds the whole creation. He came to eat our food so that we may eat His life as food.
5. He is wrapped in swaddling clothes, but vests us with immortality. He put on our humanity so that we may put on His divinity.
6. He found no place in the inn, but makes for Himself a temple in the hearts of believers.
7. By the Incarnation the weak became strong, and since then the strong became weak. For the slaves became free because the free became a slave to free the slaves.
8. He so loved us, that for our sake He was made man in time, through whom all seasons and all dimensions of times were made. He broke time as an obstacle, for Jesus is yesterday and today. Yesterday was the time of His coming; today is the time of His dwelling in us. Tomorrow is the time of lifting us to His throne on high (Rev 3:21)
9. He came to live under time, and became more new than the rocks and the mountains, though older than the world itself in His eternity. Thus He united heaven and earth, time and eternity under his one authority (Eph 1:9-10)

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10. The humanity of the Son was created by the Holy Spirit out a virgin mother, whom He Himself has created. By this He united the creature to the Creator because He remained both
 11. He was carried by hands which He formed; nursed at the breasts with the milk which He had created, and cried in the manger. Since then, Jesus became the Lord of the needy, the helpless and the poor because He lived their life.
 12. He, the Word without Whom all human eloquence is mute, learned the cry of all babies with is unknown to us. Because of this He called all babies to come to Him
 13. He who was God was made man by taking on what He was not, not by losing what He was. He accepted the otherness of His own creation not in thought but in the physical reality of his union with our humanity. Thus the lack of love or appreciation of the otherness or the rejection of those who are not like us put us outside the gift of communion. Therefore let Christ, lift us up by that which is human in Him for our humanity is united in Him; let Him unite us by that which is God, let Him guide us and be in us as God.
 14. The Truth, eternally existing in the bosom of the Father, has sprung from the earth which has seen little truth, so that He might exist also in the womb and bosom of a mother to reveal truth in human flesh and blood.
 15. No one can tell how Jesus can see heaven while he is sleep like us, or talk and walk while He is in the Father, or eat the products of the earth, the fish of the sea, drink wine with sinners and hear the praise of heaven while He is on the throne as God.

Our Roots in Christ
The two ways of participation and communion in the Triune God in the
Son and through the Spirit

According to St. Athanasius of Alexandria

On the Incarnation, Chapter 1

Creation is the ground for understanding the Incarnation

5. We must first speak about the creation of the universe and its creator, God, so that in this way one may consider as fitting that its renewal was effected by the Word who created it in the beginning. For it will appear in no way contradictory if the Father worked its salvation through the same one by whom he created it.

Chapter 3

Creation out of nothing is the Christian teaching

1. The divinely inspired teaching of faith in Christ refutes their vain talk as impiety. It teaches that the world did not come into being of its own accord because it did not lack providence, and that neither was it made from pre-existent matter since God is not weak, but that through the Word God brought the universe, which previously in no way subsisted at all, into being from non-existence, as he says through Moses: 'In the beginning God made heaven and earth'(Gen 1:1) and through the most helpful book of the Shepherd: 'First of all believe that God is one, who created and fashioned the universe and brought it from non-existence into being.'(Hermas, Mand, 1:1second century writer). This, Paul too indicates when he says: 'By faith we understand that the worlds were formed by the word of God, so that the visible was not made from what is apparent (Heb 11:3)

Creation came to existence because of the goodness of God who created all by His Word.

2. For God is good—or rather the source of goodness—and the good has no envy for anything. Thus, because he envies nothing its existence, he made everything from nothing through his own Word, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Creation is the work of grace and that is the reason for creating humanity according to the grace of the image of God as a second grace added to the grace of creation.

2 (continued). And among these creatures, of all those on earth he had special pity for the human race, and seeing that by the definition of its own existence it would be unable to persist for ever, he gave it an added grace, not simply creating men like all irrational animals on the earth, but making them in his own image giving them also a share in the power of his own Word, so that having the image they became the shadows of the Word and being made rational, they might be able to remain in felicity and live the true life in paradise, which is really that of the saints.

Grace was given before the law

3. Furthermore, knowing that men's faculty of free will could turn either way, he first secured the grace they had been given by imposing a law and a set place. For he brought them into his paradise and gave them a law, so that if they kept the grace and remained good they would enjoy the life of paradise, without sorrow, pain, or care, in addition to their having the promise of immortality in heaven.

But if they transgressed and turned away (from the law) and became wicked, they would know that they would suffer the natural corruption consequent on death, and would no longer live in paradise, but in future dying outside it would remain in death and corruption. This also the Divine Scripture foretells, speaking in God's words: 'Of all the trees in paradise you shall eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat. On the day you eat of it you shall die' (Gen 2:16). And the meaning of these words is 'you shall die by death', what else is it save not merely to die, but to remain in the corruption of death.

Chapter 4

Why the creation and Incarnation?

1. Perhaps you are wondering why, when we proposed to speak about the incarnation of the Word, we are now treating of the beginning of mankind. But this is not irrelevant to the purpose of our exposition. For we must, when speaking of the manifestation of the Savior to us, speak also of the beginning of mankind, in order that you may know that our own cause was the reason of his coming, and that our own transgression called forth the love of humanity of the Word, so that the Lord came even to us and appeared among men.

2. For we were the cause of his incarnation, and for our salvation he had compassion to the extent of being born and revealed in a body. God, then, had so created man and willed that he should remain in incorruptibility. But when men had disregarded and turned away from the understanding of God, and had thought of and invented for themselves wickedness, as was said in the first part, then they received the verdict (*katakrsin*) of death which had been previously threatened, and no longer remained as they had been created, but as they had devised, were ruined. And death overcame them and reigned over them.

The reign of death - Because humans are not immortals they cannot be saved by a creature

3. For the transgression of the commandment turned them to what was natural so that, as they had come into being from non-existence, so also they might accordingly suffer in time the corruption consequent to their non-being.

What is good is supported by God and remains in existence, humanity in death

4. For if, having such a nature as not ever to exist, they were summoned to existence by the advent and love of mankind of the Word, it follows that because men were deprived of the understanding of God, and had turned to things which do not exist— for what does not exist is evil, but what does exist is good since it has been created by the existent God, then they were also deprived of eternal existence. But this means that when they perished they would remain in death and corruption.

Man is mortal by nature

5. For man is by nature mortal in that he was created from nothing. But because of his likeness to him who exists, if he had kept this through contemplating God, he would have blunted his natural corruption and would have remained incorruptible, as the book of Wisdom says: ‘The keeping of the law is the assurance of incorruptibility.’ (Wisdom 6:18)

Deification was on offer from the beginning

6. But being incorruptible he would thenceforth have lived as God, as also somewhere the Divine word declares, saying: ‘I said that you are gods and all sons of the Highest: but you die like men and fall as one of the princes.’ (Ps 81:6-7)

Chapter 5

God is not the cause of death but Humans brought death upon themselves

1. For God did not only create us from nothing, but he also granted us by the grace of the Word to live divine life. But men, turning away from things eternal and by the counsel of the devil turning towards things corruptible, were themselves the cause of the corruption in death. They are, as I said above, corruptible by nature, but by the grace of the participation of the Word they could have escaped from the consequences of their nature if they had remained virtuous.

The Word dwelled in humanity from the beginning because humans were created as images of God

2. For on account of the Word who was in them, even natural corruption would not have touched them the book of Wisdom says: ‘God created man for incorruption, and made him the image of his own eternity; but by the envy of the devil death entered the world.’ (Wisdom 2:23-24).

The speed of the power death

3. Since this happened, men died, and corruption thenceforth took a strong hold on them, and was more powerful than the force of nature over the whole race, the more so as it had taken up against them the threat of God concerning the transgression of the law. For in their trespasses men had not stopped at the set limits, but gradually moving forward, at length had advanced beyond all measure. In the beginning they had been inventors of evil and had called upon themselves death and corruption; and in the end they turned to vice and exceeded all iniquity, and not stopping at one wickedness but inventing ever more new things, they became insatiable in sinning.

4. For adulteries and thefts were committed everywhere; the whole earth was filled with murders and violence; there was no care for the law, but for corruption and vice; and every wickedness, singly and in concert, was committed by all. Cities warred with cities, and peoples rose up against peoples; the whole world was torn apart by seditions and battles; and everyone competed in lawlessness.' Not even acts against nature were alien to them, but as the witness of Christ, the Apostle, said: 'Their women changed the natural use for that which is contrary to nature; and in the same way also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned with their desire for each other, men with men doing what is shameful, and they received in themselves the recompense which their error deserved.' (Rom 1:26-27)

Chapter 6

The human predicament

1. For these reasons death held greater sway, and corruption stood firm against men; the race of men was being destroyed, and man who was rational and who had been made in the image was being obliterated; and the work created by God was perishing. For indeed, as I said above, by the law death thenceforth prevailed over us.

It was absurd for God and even improper to let death reign over his creation

2. And it was impossible to flee the law, since this had been established by God because of the transgression. And these events were truly at once absurd and improper. For it was absurd that, having spoken, God should lie, in that he had established a law that man would die by death if he were to transgress the commandment, and man did not die after he had transgressed, but God's word was made void.

God had to be truthful to his word and let death reign

3. For God would not have been truthful if after he had said we would die, man had not died. And further more, it would have been improper that what had once been created rational and had partaken' of his Word, should perish and return again to non-existence through corruption. For not have been worthy of the goodness of God that what had been brought into existence by him should be corrupted on account of the deceit which the devil had played on men. And it would have been especially improper that the handiwork of God in mankind should come to naught, either through their neglect, or through the deceit of demons.

The goodness of God faces the human dilemma

4. Therefore, since rational creatures were being corrupted and such works were perishing, what should God, who is good, have done? Allow corruption to hold sway over them and death to capture them? Then what need would there have been for them to have been created in the beginning? For it was more fitting that they should not be created than that, having come into being, they should be neglected and perish. For by their neglect the weakness of God rather than his goodness would be made known if after creating he had abandoned his work to corruption, rather than if he had not created man in the beginning. For if he had not created him, there would have been no one to consider his weakness. But after he had made him and brought him into existence, it would have

been most improper that his works should perish, especially in front of him who created him. So it was not right that he should permit men to be destroyed by corruption, because this was neither proper nor fitting for the goodness of God.

Chapter 7

What is reasonable for God to do?

1. But as this had to be, so again on the other hand lies opposed to it what was reasonable for God, that he should appear truthful in passing the law about death. For it would have been absurd that for our benefit and permanence God, the Father of truth, should appear a liar.

Repentance was not enough

2. What therefore in this matter had to occur or what should God have done? Demand repentance from men for the transgression? For one might say that this was fitting for God, that as they had become subject to corruption by the transgression, so by repentance they might return to incorruption. But repentance would have saved God's honor for he would still have remained untruthful unless men were in the power of death. Repentance gives no exemption from the consequence of nature but merely looses sins. If, therefore, there had been only sin and not its consequence of corruption, repentance would have been good enough.

Why the Word has to become man?

But if, since transgression had overtaken them, men were now prisoners to natural corruption, and they had been deprived of the grace of being in the image, what else should have happened? Or who was needed for such grace and recalling except the Word of God, who also in the beginning had created the universe from nothing? For it was his task both to bring what was corruptible back again to incorruption, and to save what was above all fitting for the Father. For since he is the Word of the Father and above everyone, consequently he alone was both able to recreate the universe and be worthy to suffer for all and to be an advocate for all before the Father.

Chapter 8

The two ways: the Word who was in the world comes to the world as Incarnate

1. For this reason the incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Word of God came to our realm; not that he was previously distant, for no part of creation is left deprived of him, but he fills the universe, being in union with his Father. But in his love for humanity he condescended to come and be made manifest.

- a. For he saw that the rational race was perishing and that death was reigning over them through corruption,
- b. and he saw also that the threat the transgression has made our corruption a master over us,
- c. And that it would have been absurd for the verdict to be removed before it was fulfilled.

- d. He saw also the impropriety of what had occurred, that the creatures he himself had made should perish,
- e. and he saw the excessive wickedness of men, and that they were gradually increasing it against themselves and making it intolerable,
- f. And he saw too the liability of all men in regard to death.

The Mercy of the Word is the cause of his incarnation by taking our corrupt humanity

2. Therefore he had pity on our race, and was merciful to our infirmity, and submitted to our corruption, and did not endure the dominion of death. And lest what had been created should perish and the work of the Father among men should be in vain, he took to himself a body, and that not different from our own.

The two ways of redemption: The Word surrendered his body to death, and offered his body to the Father

4. 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 theophany through some better means. But he took our body, and not simply that, but from a pure and unspotted virgin who did not know a man, a body pure and truly was not the product of marriage. For he, although powerful and the creator of the universe, fashioned for himself in the virgin a body as a temple, and appropriated it for his own as an instrument (organon) in which to be known and dwell. And thus taking a body like ours, since all were liable to the corruption of death, and surrendering it to death for all he offered it to the Father.

Redemption was not an external act but an internal act which took place in the Incarnate Son. Because of the Word's love of humanity, he abolished in his own body the law of death and corruption

5. And this he did in his love of humanity in order that, as all die in him, (Rom 6:8) the law concerning corruption in men might be abolished—since its power was concluded in the Lord's body and it would never again have influence over men who are like him—and in order that, as men had turned to corruption, he might turn them back again to incorruption and might give them life for death, in that he had made the body his own, and by the grace of the resurrection had rid them of death as straw is destroyed by fire.

Chapter 9

The Word abolished our corruption because of his divinity made his humanity incorruptible.

1. For since the Word realized that the corruption of men would not be abolished in any other way except by everyone dying—but the Word was not able to die, being immortal and the Son of the Father—therefore he took to himself a body which could die, in order that, since this participated in the Word who is above all, it might suffice for death for all, and because of the Word who was dwelling in it, it might remain incorruptible, and so, corruption might cease from all men by the grace of the resurrection.

The Sacrifice of the Word was offered to death - the definite meaning of substitute and debt in the 4th Century

2. Therefore as an offering and sacrifice free of all spot, he offered to death the body which he had taken to himself, and immediately abolished death from all who were like him by the offering of a like. For since the Word is above all, consequently by offering his temple and the instrument of his body as a substitute (αντιψυχον) for all men, he fulfilled the debt (οφιλω) by his death. And as the incorruptible Son of God was united to all men by his body similar to theirs, consequently he endued all men with incorruption” by the promise concerning the resurrection. And now no longer does the corruption involved in death hold power over men because of the Word who dwelt among them through a body one with theirs.

Illustration which proves the greatness and the power of the Word

3. As when a great king has entered some great city and dwelt in one of the houses in it, such a city is then greatly honored, and no longer does any enemy or bandit come against it, but it is rather treated with regard because of the king who has taken up residence in one of its houses; so also is the case with the King of all. For since he has come to our realm and has dwelt in a body similar to ours, now every machination of the enemy against men has ceased and the corruption of death, which formerly had power over them, has been destroyed. For the race of men would have perished, unless the Lord of all and Savior, the Son of God, had come to put an end to death.

Chapter 10

Another Illustration which is applied to the goodness of God and negates the idea of paying a debt to God the Father.

1. Truly this great deed particularly befitted the goodness of God. For if a king has constructed a house or a city and brigands attack it through the negligence of its inhabitants, he in no wise abandons it, but avenges and rescues it as his own work, having regard not for the negligence of its inhabitants but for his own honor.

2. So all the more, when the race of men which had been created by himself had descended to corruption, God the Word of the all-good Father did not neglect them, but effaced the death which had fallen upon them by the offering of his own body, and corrected their negligence by his teaching, and reformed all men's estate by his own power. This one can verify from the theologians who speak of the Savior himself, by reading in their writings where they say: 'For the love of Christ forces us, as we judge this, that if one died for all, then all died; and he died for all in order that we should no longer live for ourselves but for him who died for us and rose' (2 Cor 5:14-15) from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ. And again: 'We see him who was made a little less than the angels, Jesus, crowned with honor and glory because of the passion of death, that by the grace of God he might taste death for all.' (Heb 2:9).

The Word Creator comes to us as man to change us

3. And then, indicating the reason why no other save God the Word himself should be incarnate, he says: 'For it was fitting that he, for whom are all things and through whom are all things and who brought many sons to glory, should make the leader of their salvation perfect through sufferings.'(Heb 2:10) By this he means that it was the task of no one else to bring men from the corruption which had occurred save God the Word, who also in the beginning had created them.

4. And that for a sacrifice for the bodies similar to his the Word himself had also taken to himself a body, this also they declare, saying: 'So, since the children have partaken of blood and flesh, he equally partook of them, that by death he might destroy him who held the power of death, that is the devil, and might free all those who by the fear of death were condemned to servitude all the length of their lives.(Heb 2:14-15)

The Sacrifice of the Word fulfilled two things

5. For by the sacrifice of his own body the Word:

- a. Put an end to the law to which we were subjected
- b. Renewed for us the origin of life by hope of the resurrection.

6. For since by men death had laid hold of men, so for this reason by the incarnation of God the Word were effected the overthrow of death and the resurrection of life. For the man who put on Christ says: 'Since by man came death, also by man came the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive,'(1 Cor 15:21-22) and so on.

Death is no longer a condemnation but was transformed to work for our renewal

For now no longer as condemned do we die, but as those who will rise again we await the general resurrection of all, which God 'in his own time will reveal',(1 Tim 6:15;Tit 1:3) he who also made and granted it to us. This, therefore, is the primary cause of the incarnation of the Savior. One could also recognize that his blessed manifestation among us was justified from the following.

Chapter 11

All were created by the Word, and the task of salvation belongs to the Word who came to reveal the Father.

1. God, who has dominion over all, when he made the race of men through his own Word, saw that the weakness of their nature was not capable by itself of knowing the Creator or of taking any thought of God, in that he was uncreated, whereas they had been made from nothing, and he was incorporeal, but men had been fashioned here below with a body, and he saw the creatures' complete lack of understanding and knowledge of him who made them. So having pity on the human race, in that he is good he did not leave them destitute of knowledge of himself, lest even their own existence should be profitless for them. For what advantage would there be for those who had been made, if they did not know their own Maker? Or in what way would they be rational, being unaware of the

Word of the Father by whom they had also been created? For indeed they would in no way have differed from irrational creatures if they had known nothing more than terrestrial things.

Men were created to know God through being the image of the Word

2. And why would God have made creatures by whom he did not wish to be known? Therefore, lest this should happen, since he is good he bestowed on them of his own image, our Lord Jesus Christ, and he made them according to his own image and likeness in order that, understanding through such grace the image, I mean the Word of the Father, they might be able through him to gain some notion about the Father, and recognizing the Maker, might live a happy and truly blessed life.

The lack of the knowledge of the true God created Idol worship

3. But men, foolish as ever, so despised the grace which had been given them, and so turned away from God, and so polluted their souls, that not only did they lose the knowledge of God, but even formed others for themselves instead. They fashioned idols for themselves instead of the truth, and honored beings who do not exist more than the God who is, and 'they worshipped creation more than its creator' (Rom 1:25); and what was worst, they even transferred to wood and stones and all kinds of matter and men the honor due to God. And they did more than this, as has been said above.

4. So impious were they that they even worshipped demons and called them gods, accomplishing their desires. For they made sacrifices of dumb animals and slayings of men as their due, as was said above, ensnaring themselves all the more in their frenzies. So therefore they learned magic from them, and divination in various places led men astray, and they attributed the causes of their birth and of their existence to the stars and all the heavenly bodies, taking no thought of anything more than appearances. Everything was completely filled with impiety and vice, and only God was ignored and his Word, although he had not hidden himself invisibly from men nor given them knowledge of himself in one way only, but had unfolded it to them in various fashions and in manifold ways.

Chapter 12

The life of being the image is enough for our knowledge of God the Word, and here knowledge has its origin in the human ontology

1. The grace of being in the image was sufficient for one to know God the Word and through him the Father. But because God knew the weakness of men he anticipated their negligence, so that if they failed to recognize God by themselves, through the works of creation they might be able to know the Creator.

The giving of the Law, and learning from creation the power of the Word

2. But because the negligence of men sank gradually to the worse, God again provided for such weakness of theirs and sent the law and who were known to them, so that if they were reluctant to raise their eyes to heaven and know the Creator, they would have schooling from those close by. For men can learn more directly from other men about

more advanced things. So they could lift their eyes to the immensity of heaven, and discerning the harmony of creation know its ruler, the Word of the Father, who by his providence in the universe makes the Father known to all men, and for that reason moves the universe, in order that by him all men should know God. Or if they were reluctant to do this, they could meet the saints and through them learn of God the Creator of the universe, the Father of Christ, and that the worship of idols was godless and full of all impiety. They could also, by knowing the law, desist from all wickedness and lead lives of virtue. For the law was not for the Jews only, nor on their account only were the prophets sent— though they were sent to the Jews and persecuted by the Jews—but they provided holy instruction for the whole world about the knowledge of God and the conduct of one’s soul. Although, therefore, such was the goodness and mercy of God, nevertheless men, being overcome by their present desires and the illusions and deceits of demons, did not look towards the truth, but sated themselves with many vices and sins, so that they no longer appeared rational beings, but from their behavior were considered to be irrational.

Chapter 13

God cannot be silent and leave men in their decay

Since men had become so irrational and the deceit of evil spirits was casting such a wide shadow everywhere and hiding the knowledge of the true God, what was God to do? Be silent before such things, and let men be deceived by demons and be ignorant of God? But then what need would there have been for man to have been created in the image from the beginning? For he should have been made simply irrational, or else, having been created rational, he should not live the life of irrational creatures. But what need was there at all for him to gain an idea about God from the beginning? For if he is not now worthy to receive it, neither ought it to have been given him from the beginning. And what advantage would there be to God who made him, or what glory would he have, if men who had been created by him did not honor him, but thought that others had made them? For then God would seem to have created them for others and not for himself.

Illustration of how God constantly sent messengers

2. Furthermore, a king—who is a man—does not permit the realms which he has founded to be handed over and become subject to others and escape from his power, but reminds them with letters, and frequently also sends to them through friends, and if there be need he himself finally goes to them to win them over by his presence, only lest they become subject to others and his work be in vain.’ Will then God not have much greater pity on his creatures, lest they stray from him and serve those who do not exist? Especially as such an error is the cause of their ruin and destruction, and it would not be right for those who had once partaken of the image of God to perish? What then was God to do, or what should have happened, except that he should renew again that which was in his image, in order that through it men might be able once more to know him?

The Word is the Image of the Father, he alone can come to renew our image

2 (continued). But how could this have been done, unless the very image of God was to come, our Savior Jesus Christ? For neither by men was it possible, since they had been created in the image, nor by the angels, for neither were they images. So the Word of God came in his own person, in order that, as he is the image of his Father, he might be able to restore man who is in the image. In any other way it could not have been done, without the destruction of death and corruption. So he was justified in taking a mortal body, in order that in it death could be destroyed and men might be again renewed in the image. For this, then, none other than the image of the Father was required.

Chapter 14

The Word acted like an artist who brings the original to re-paint the damaged icon

1. For as when a figure which has been painted on wood is spoilt by dirt, it is necessary for him whose portrait it is to come again so that the picture can be renewed in the same material—for because of his portrait the material on which it is painted is not thrown away, but the portrait is redone on it, even so the all-holy Son of the Father, who is the image of the Father, came to our realms to renew man who had been made in his likeness, and, as one lost, to find him through the forgiveness of sins; as he said in the gospels: ‘I have come to save and find that which was lost.’ (Lk 19:10) Therefore he also said to the Jews: ‘Unless a man be born again,’ (Jn 3:5) not referring to the birth from women as they supposed, but indicating the soul which is born again and restored in being in the image.

2. But because the madness of idolatry and impiety had hold of the world and knowledge of God was hidden, whose task was it to teach the world about the Father? A man’s, someone might say. But it was not in men’s capacity to traverse the whole earth, nor were they able naturally to run so far or to inspire belief about this, nor were they capable of resisting by themselves the deceit and illusion of the demons. For since all had been confounded in their souls and disturbed by the deceit of demons and vanity of idols, how would they have been able to convert the soul of man and the mind of men, when they could not even see them? For how can a man convert what he cannot see?

The Word is the teacher of all souls

But perhaps someone might say that creation was sufficient. But if creation had been sufficient, such evil not have occurred. Now creation did exist, yet men were no less confused in the same error about God. So again, who was needed but God the Word, who sees both soul and mind, and who moves all things in creation and by them makes known the Father? For it was the task of him who by his providence and regulation of the universe teaches about the Father, also to renew the same teaching. How then could this be done? Perhaps one might say that it was possible through the same means, so that he could show the facts about him once more through the works of creation. But that was no longer a certainty. Not at all, for men had neglected it previously and their eyes were no longer directed upwards but downwards. So as it was right for him to wish to be of help to men, he came as a man and took to himself a body like theirs of humble origin - I mean through the works of the body- in order that those who were unwilling to know him

by his providence and government of the universe, yet by the works done through the body might know the Word of God who was in the body, and through him the Father.

Chapter 15

The Word as a teacher meets humanity in their situation

1. For as a good teacher who cares for his disciples always condescends to teach by simpler means those who cannot profit by more advanced things, so does the Word of God, as Paul says: 'Because in the wisdom of God the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God to save those who believed through the foolishness of the gospel.' (1 Cor 1:21) For because men had turned away from the contemplation of God, and were sunk as it were in an abyss with their eyes cast down, and they were seeking God in creation and sensible things, and had set up mortal men and demons as gods for themselves; for this reason the lover of humanity and universal Savior, the Word of God, took to himself a body and lived as a man among men, and took the senses of all men, in order that who supposed that God was in corporeal things might understand the truth from the works which the Lord did through the actions of his body, and through him might recognize of the Father.

Human terms are means to teach us

2. And because they were men and thought of everything in human terms, wherever they directed their senses they saw a comprehensible universe, and they learnt the truth from all sides. For if they were struck at creation, yet they saw it confessed Christ as Lord; and if their minds were preconceived towards men so that they supposed them gods, yet when they compared the works of the Savior with theirs, it appeared that the Savior alone among men was the Son of God, since men had no such works as those done by God the Word. But if they were prejudiced for the demons, yet when they saw them being put to flight by the Lord, they recognized that only he was the Word of God and that the demons were not gods. And if their minds were by then fixed on the dead, so that they worshipped the heroes and those said to be gods by the poets, yet when they saw the resurrection of the Savior they confessed that the former were false, and that only the Word of the Father was the true Lord, he who has power over death. For this reason he was born and appeared as a man and died and rose again, weakening and overshadowing by his own works those of all men who ever existed, in order that from wherever men were attracted he might lift them up and teach them his true Father, as he himself says: 'I have come to save and find of the true Father as he himself says: "I have come to save and find that which was lost."' (Lk19:10).

Communicatio Operationum

(Communication of operation or actions)

On the Incarnation, Chapters 16 – 17, and Selected texts from the First Discourse Against the Arians

Chapter 16

Revelation through the human body is a cure to the decay of the human reason

1. For since men's reason had descended to sensible things, the Word submitted to being revealed through a body, in order that he might bring men to himself as a man and turn their senses to himself and that thenceforth, although they saw him as a man, he might persuade them through the works he did that he was not merely a man but God, and the Word and Wisdom of the true God.

The infinite Dimensions of Divine Love

3. This Paul wished to indicate when he said: 'Be firm and grounded in love, that you may be able to understand with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and that you may know the love of Christ which transcends knowledge, in order that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.'"(Eph 3:17-19)

4. For the Word spread himself everywhere above and below and in the depth and in the breadth:

5. above, in creation

6. below, in the incarnation

7. in the depth, in hell

8. in breadth, in the world.' Everything is filled with the knowledge of God. (Isa 11:9)

9. For this reason, not as soon as he came did he complete the sacrifice for all and deliver his body to death, and resurrecting it make himself thereby invisible. But by means of it he rendered himself visible, remaining in it and completing such works and giving signs as made him known to be no longer a man but God the Word.

Two different achievements of the Word

10. For in two ways our Savior, in his love for humanity which is manifested through the incarnation:

a. he both rid us of death and renewed us;

b. and also, although he is invisible and indiscernible, yet by his works he revealed and made himself known to be the Son of God and the Word of the Father, leader and king of the universe.

Chapter 17

Being in the body, the Word was administering the universe

1. He was not enclosed' in the body, nor was he in the body but nowhere else. Nor did he move the latter while the universe was deprived of his action and providence. But what is most wonderful is that, being the Word, he was not contained by anyone, but rather himself contained everything.

2. And as he is in all creation, he is in essence not from the universe but in everything by his power, ordering everything and extending his providence over everything. And giving life to all, separately and together, he contains the universe and is not contained, but in his Father only he is complete in everything.

3. So also being in a human body and giving it life himself, he accordingly gives life to everything, and was both in all and outside all. And although he was known by his body through his works, yet he was not invisible by his action on the universe.

The soul in the body gives us a sense of the relationship between the Word and his body

4. It is the task of the soul to see by reasoning what is outside its own body, but not to act outside its own body nor to affect by its proximity what is distant from it. Therefore, when a man considers the things which are in the distance, he never directly acts upon them or moves them. Nor if a man sits at home and considers the heavenly bodies does he straightway move the sun or turn the heavens, but he sees them moving and existing, and he is quite unable to act upon them himself.

Being in the body, the Word sanctified the body

4 (continued). But not such was the Word of God in the man. For he was not bound to the body, but rather he controlled it, so he was in it and in everything, and outside creation, and was only at rest in the Father. And the most amazing thing is this, that he both lived as a man, and as the Word gave life to everything, and as the Son was with the Father. Therefore, neither when the Virgin gave birth did he suffer himself (any change) nor when he was in the body was he polluted, but rather he sanctified the body.

5. Nor when he was in creation did he partake of all, but rather everything lived and was sustained by him. For if the sun, which was made by him and is seen by us, as it circles in the heavens is not defiled by approaching terrestrial bodies nor is destroyed by darkness, but rather illuminates and purifies them, much the more the all-holy Word of God, maker of the sun and Lord, when he was known in the body was not polluted, but rather, being incorruptible, vivified and purified the mortal body. For Scripture says: ‘He did no sin, nor was deceit found in his mouth.’ (1 Pet 2:22)

Chapter 20

The transformation of our humanity from death to life and from corruption to incorruption happened to the humanity of the Word

1. We have, therefore, mentioned above in part the cause of his manifestation in the body, as far as it was possible and we were able to comprehend it: that no one else could bring what was corrupted to incorruptibility, except the Savior himself; who also created the universe in the beginning from nothing; nor could any other recreate men in the image, save the image of the Father; nor could another raise up what was mortal as immortal, save our Lord Jesus Christ, who is life itself; nor could another teach about the Father and overthrow the cult of idols, save the Word who orders the universe, and who alone is the true only-begotten Son of the Father.

Our debt to death

2. But since the debt owed by all men had still to be paid, for all, as I said above, had to die, therefore after the proof of his divinity given by his works, he now for all men offered the sacrifice and surrendered his own temple to death for all, in order to make them all guiltless and free from the first transgression, and to reveal himself superior to death, showing his own incorruptible body as first-fruits of the universal resurrection.(1 Cor 15:20)

The argument is about the goodness of God

3. Do not be surprised if we frequently repeat the same argument for since we are talking of the goodness of God, therefore we express the same idea in many ways lest we seem to omit anything and incur the charge of saying too little. For it is better to be blamed for repetition than to omit any of the things which must be emphasized.

What did the Incarnation achieve? It was a mortal body

4. So the body, as it had the common substance of all bodies, was a human body. Even if it had been constituted by a new miracle from a virgin only, nevertheless it was mortal and died in the fashion of those similar to it.

4 (continued). But through the coming of the Word into it, it was no longer corruptible according to its nature, but because of the Word who was dwelling in it, became immune from corruption.

The two great achievements

5. And the two things occurred simultaneously in a miraculous manner:

a) the death of all was fulfilled in the Lord's body

b) and also death and corruption were destroyed because of the Word who was in it. For there was need of death, and death for all had to take place in order that what was owed by all men might be paid. Therefore, as I said above, the Word himself since he could not die, for he was immortal, took to himself a body which could die in order to offer it order, suffering himself for all men, through his coming into it,' to destroy him who held the power of death, that is the devil, and to deliver all those who through fear of death had been all their lifetime subject to bondage.' (Heb 2:14-15)

Chapter 21

We die no more because condemnation and corruption have ceased, but we become like seeds which will grow up

1. So, since the common Savior of all has died for us, no longer do we the faithful in Christ now die as before according to the threat of the law, for such condemnation has ceased. But as corruption has ceased and been destroyed by the grace of the resurrection, now in the mortality of the body we are dissolved' only for the time which God has set for each man, in order that we may be able to 'obtain a better resurrection'.(Heb 11:35). For like seeds which are sown in the ground we do not perish when we are dissolved, but we rise again as plants, since death has been destroyed by the grace of the Savior. So therefore the blessed Paul, who was the guarantor to all of the resurrection, said: 'This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality. And when this

mortal will have put on immortality, then will come to pass the saying which is written: "Death has been swallowed up in victory; where is thy sting, O death?" (1 Cor 15:53-55)

Was death necessary? In what way the cross was appropriate?

2. So one might well ask, if it was necessary for him to surrender his body to death for all, why did he not put it aside privately as a man, but come so far as to be crucified, for it would have been more fitting for him to put aside the body honorably than to suffer death with ignominy. Consider whether this objection as just human, whereas what was done by our Savior is truly divine and worthy of his divinity for many reasons.

- a. In the first place because the death which is the fate of men comes upon them through the weakness of their nature, for since they cannot last for long, in time they are dissolved. And so many diseases come upon them, and becoming weakened, they die.
- b. But the Lord is not weak, but is the Power of God and the Word of God and Life itself. If therefore in some private place and in the fashion of men he had laid aside his body on a bed, it would have been supposed that he also had suffered this through the weakness of his nature and that he had no superiority over other men.
- c. But because he was life and the Word of God, and because death had to take place for all, therefore, as he is life and power, he gave strength to the body; and as death had to occur, he took the occasion provided not by himself but by others, to complete the sacrifice. For it was neither right that the Lord should be ill, he who healed the illnesses of others, nor again was it right that his body should be weakened in which he strengthened the weaknesses of others.
- d. So why did he not restrain death as he did disease? Because that was why he had the body, and it would have been unfitting to avoid death lest the resurrection be prevented. Furthermore it was unfitting to let disease precede death lest he who was in the body be thought to have some weakness. Did he not hunger then? Yes, he hungered because of the body's nature. But he did not die of starvation because the Lord was wearing that body. Therefore, if he died for the ransom yet he 'did not see corruption'. (Acts 2:31) For he rose up whole, since the body belonged to no one else but life itself.

II Our Exaltation in Christ

The exaltation of our humanity in the first Discourse against the Arians, Phil 2:9-10 and Ps 45:7-8

Phil 2:9-10 is about the exaltation of our humanity as a result of the humiliating of the Logos

Against the Arians 1:41

Since then the Word, being the Image of the Father and immortal, took the form of the servant, and as man underwent for us death in His flesh, that thereby He might offer Himself for us through death to the Father; therefore also, as man, He is said because of us and for us to be highly exalted, that as by His death we all died in Christ so again in the Christ Himself we might be highly exalted, being raised from the dead, and ascending into heaven, 'where the forerunner Jesus is for us entered, not into the figures of heaven, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.' But if now for us the Christ is entered into heaven itself, though He was even before and always Lord and Framer of the heavens, for us therefore is that present exaltation written. And as He Himself, who sanctifies all, says also that He sanctifies Himself to the Father for our sakes, not that the Word may become holy, but that He Himself may in Himself sanctify all of us, in like manner we must take the present phrase, 'He highly exalted Him,' not that He Himself should be exalted, for He is the highest, but that He may become righteousness for us, and we may be exalted in Him, and that we may enter the gates of heaven.

The Son receives from the Father to give to us the deification of his body because we are of one body with Him

Against the Arians1: 42. For as Christ died and was exalted as man, so, as man, is He said to take what, as God, He ever had, that even such a grant of grace might reach to us. For the Word was not impaired in receiving a body, that He should seek to receive a grace, but rather He deified that which He put on, and more than that, 'gave' it graciously to the race of man. but 'to the glory of God the Father.' For it is the Father's glory that man, made and then lost, should be found again; and, when dead, that he should be made alive, and should become God's temple. For whereas the powers in heaven, both Angels and Archangels, were ever worshipping the Lord, as they are now worshipping Him in the Name of Jesus, this is our grace and high exaltation, that even when He became man, the Son of God is worshipped, and the heavenly powers will not be astonished at seeing all of us, who are of one body with Him, introduced into their realms. And this had not been, unless He who existed in the form of God had taken on Him a servant's form, and had humbled Himself, yielding His body to come unto death.

The Baptism of Jesus

Against the Arians1:47. If then for our sake He sanctifies Himself, and does this when He is become man, it is very plain that the Spirit's descent on Him in Jordan was a descent upon us, because of His bearing our body. And it did not take place for promotion to the Word, but again for our sanctification, that we might share His anointing, and of us it might be said, 'Do you not know that you are God's Temple, and the Spirit of God dwells in you 1 Corinthians 3:16 ?' For when the Lord, as man, was washed in Jordan, it was we who were washed in Him and by Him . And when He received the Spirit, we it was who by Him were made recipients of the Spirit. And moreover for this reason, not as Aaron or David or the rest, was He anointed with oil, but in another way above all His fellows, 'with the oil of gladness,' which He Himself interprets to be the Spirit, saying by the Prophet, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me Isaiah 61:1;' as also the Apostle has said, 'How God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit. Acts 10:38 ' When then were these things spoken of Him but when He came in the flesh and was baptized in Jordan, and the Spirit descended on Him? And indeed the Lord Himself said, 'The Spirit shall take of Mine;' and 'I will send Him;' and to His disciples, 'Receive the Holy Ghost .' And notwithstanding, He who, as the Word and Radiance of the Father, gives to others, now is said to be sanctified, because now He has become man, and the Body that is sanctified is His. From Him then we have begun to receive the unction and the seal, John saying, 'And you have an unction from the Holy One;' and the Apostle, 'And you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise .' Therefore because of us and for us are these words. What advance then of promotion, and reward of virtue or generally of conduct, is proved from this in our Lord's instance? For if He was not God, and then had become God, if not being King He was preferred to the Kingdom, your reasoning would have had some faint plausibility. But if He is God and the throne of His kingdom is everlasting, in what way could God advance? or what was there wanting to Him who was sitting on His Father's throne? And if, as the Lord Himself has said, the Spirit is His, and takes of His, and He sends It, it is not the Word, considered as the Word and Wisdom, who is anointed with the Spirit which He Himself gives, but the flesh assumed by Him which is anointed in Him and by Him ; that the sanctification coming to the Lord as man, may come to all men from Him.

The Anointing of Jesus

Against the Arians1:46. the orthodox sense, of 'Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. You have loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore God, even Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows .' The Singer speaks of us all as 'fellows' or 'partakers' of the Lord: but were He one of things which come out of nothing and of things originate, He Himself had been one of those who partake. But, since he hymned Him as the eternal God, saying, 'Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever,' and has declared that all other things partake of Him, what conclusion must we draw, but that He is distinct from originated things, and He only the Father's true Word, Radiance, and Wisdom, which all things originate partake , being sanctified by Him in the Spirit .. the Savior on the contrary, being God, and ever ruling in the Father's Kingdom, and being Himself He that supplies the Holy Spirit, nevertheless is here said to be anointed, that, as

before, being said as man to be anointed with the Spirit, He might provide for us men, not only exaltation and resurrection, but the indwelling and intimacy of the Spirit. And signifying this Lord Himself has said by His own mouth in the Gospel according to John, 'I have sent them into the world, and for their sakes do I sanctify Myself, that they may be sanctified in the truth.' In saying this He has shown that He is not the sanctified, but the Sanctifier; for He is not sanctified by other, but Himself sanctifies Himself, that we may be sanctified in the truth. He who sanctifies Himself is Lord of sanctification. How then does this take place? What does He mean but this? 'I, being the Father's Word, I give to Myself, when becoming man, the Spirit; and Myself, become man, do I sanctify in Him, that henceforth in Me, who am Truth (for Your Word is Truth), all may be sanctified.'

Third, the main point in the Christology of St. Athanasius as a whole is that the immortal took on mortal flesh; the immortal flesh put on mortal humanity--feeble, capable of suffering and death. By the death on the cross Christ met our death, not His death, in order to abolish it and to change the mortal to immortal, and the feeble and the weak to glory, to the extent that our humanity was divinized in Christ (became impassable). This great change was so real to Him that it happened through the historical events the Lord passed through: (1) birth from the Virgin Mary, (2) baptism in the river Jordan, (3) death on the cross, (4) resurrection and (5) ascension. All these are stations of transformation through which Jesus Christ the Son of God accepted in order to transfer the origin of our humanity to Himself. We are no longer born of Adam, but experience a new birth through the coming of the New Man born for us. In his baptism, Jesus was sanctified and the Spirit descended on him, but it was a descent on us. It is our body that has been washed, and it is our humanity that received the Spirit. Because of receiving the Spirit after He came out of the water, Jesus himself anoints with the Spirit all those who come to Him.

Ascension and deification

Against the Arians 1:45. Since it was His Body, and none other's, that was exalted from the dead and taken up into heaven. And again, the Body being His, and the Word not being external to it, it is natural that when the Body was exalted, He, as man, should, because of the body, be spoken of as exalted. the Word became flesh, of necessity the resurrection and exaltation, as in the case of a man, must be ascribed to Him, that the death which is ascribed to Him may be a redemption of the sin of men and an abolition of death, and that the resurrection and exaltation may for His sake remain secure for us. Men from the Father, and is exalted by Him, as has been said. And it is plain, nor would any one dispute it, that what the Father gives, He gives through the Son. And it is marvelous and overwhelming verily; for the grace which the Son gives from the Father, that the Son Himself is said to receive; and the exaltation, which the Son bestows from the Father, with that the Son is Himself exalted. For He who is the Son of God, became Himself the Son of Man; and, as Word, He gives from the Father, for all things which the Father does and gives, He does and supplies through Him; and as the Son of Man, He Himself is said after the manner of men to receive what proceeds from Him, because His Body is none other than His, and is a natural recipient of grace, as has been said. For He received it as far as His man's nature was exalted; which exaltation was its being deified. But such an exaltation the Word Himself always had according to the Father's Godhead and perfection, which was His .

St. Athanasius used the New Testament vocabulary such as ransom and redemption, but he was far from being a herald of what St. Anselm advocated later on. Two important things must be observed:

1. When we speak of the ransom, we have to pay attention to the New Testament term “first born.” Christ is the first born of the new humanity, and the most striking words which I have to quote in full, “His flesh, before all others, was saved and liberated, as being the Word’s body, and henceforth, we becoming incorporated with His body, are saved after the pattern of His body. For in the body the Lord became our guide to the Kingdom of Heaven and to His Father” (Against the Arians, discourse II, par. 61). We must not misunderstand this very bold expression because later on St. Athanasius says that the judgment “dust you are, and unto dust shall you return,” demanded the love of the Logos who put “on Him created flesh by the will of the Father, that where as the first man had made dead through the first transgression, He Himself made it alive by the blood of His own body, and might open for us a way new and living through the veil, that is to say, His flesh (Heb. 10:20).”

2. In him is one of the key words, it goes back to Paul but now in the writings of Athanasius is used in a clear Trinitarian way and has obvious concrete meaning, we have a new beginning in the Second Adam, or the new man Jesus Christ. Death, resurrection, and ascension are promotion of our humanity. It was not a promotion of the Logos, but it was a promotion of our humanity. That promotion is given various names in the writings of St. Athanasius: redemption, renewal, and above all, grace. Grace is not a topic that has been studied carefully in the writings of St. Athanasius. It includes “second birth,” the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Immortality, and receiving above all the Deification of our feeble, mortal human nature.

I end with the words of St. Athanasius from the 10th letter written in 338. “In all these things we are conquerors through Christ who loved us.” This is the grace of the Lord, and these are the Lord’s means of restoration of the children of men. For He suffered to prepare freedom from suffering for those who suffer in Him; He descended that He might raise us up; He took on him the trial of being born that we might love Him who is unbegotten; He went down to corruption that corruption might put on immortality. He became weak for us that we might rise with power. He descended to death that He might bestow on us immortality and give life to the dead. He became man that we who die as men might live again; and that death should no more reign over us, for the Apostolic words proclaim “Death shall not have dominion over us.” (Rom. 6:9).