

1 **ON THE INCARNATION**

Of the Word of God

2 **THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS?**3 **ON THE INCARNATION**

Of the Word of God

By -Athanasius of Alexandria

4

- Born 296-298
- Died 373
- Born to a wealthy family in Alexandria
- Educated in a famous Catechetical School
- Was a child during the famous Diocletianic Persecution 303-313
-

5 6 **WHO IS ATHANASIUS**

- At an early age he was taken under the care and instruction of the Bishop of Alexandria
- Later became the Bishop of Alexandria
- Is most famous for his opposition of the Arian controversy
- Attended the Council of Nicaea in 325
- *Athanasius Contra Mundum*
- Exiled 17 times during his life

7

- Wrote a pair of books probably in 318
- *Contra Gentes* or *Against the Heathen*
- *De Incarnatione* or *The Incarnation*
- Written for the instruction of a man named Macarius, a recent convert.
- Was possibly the first book written on the topic
-

8 **WHY USE SUCH AN OLD BOOK?**

- Misplaced assumptions
 - Ancient books are only for professionals

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. – CS Lewis

9 **C.S. LEWIS ON OLD BOOKS**

- The one old one new book rule
- New books are still on its trial

- Modern controversies and concerns are still evolving, and it's hard to know where the arguments might lead.
- Every age has its own outlook and blind spots.

10

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.

11

- Helps us see the unity of the Christian Church
- Helps us in our Devotion

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.

12

But in fact the real difficulty, the supreme mystery with which the gospel confronts us, does not lie here at all. It lies not in the Good Friday message of atonement, nor in the Easter message of resurrection, but in the Christmas message of the Incarnation. The really staggering Christian claim is that Jesus of Nazareth was God made man- that the second person of the Godhead became the 'second man' (1 Cor 15:47), determining human destiny without loss of deity, so that Jesus of Nazareth was as truly and fully divine as he was human.

- JI Packer (Knowing God)

13 **THE PURPOSE AND APOLOGETIC OF -ON THE INCARNATION**

- come now, Macarius and true lover of Christ, let us as a further step in the faith of our religion proceed to set forth somewhat concerning the Incarnation of the Word and His Divine Manifestation amongst us, which Jews calumniate and Greeks deride, but we venerate; in order that, in consequence of the seeming humiliation of the Word, your devotion to Him may be yet greater and more profound.
 - Athanasius of Alexandria. (1903). . (T. H. Bindley, Trans.) (Second Edition Revised, pp. 4142). London: The Religious Tract Society.

14 **THE APOLOGETIC**

For the more He is derided by the unbelieving the greater witness does He furnish of His Godhead: for things which men understand, as impossible, these He clearly shows to be possible; and things which men deride as unseemly, these by His own goodness He makes seemly; and things which men in their wisdom laugh at as human, these by His own power

He clearly shows to be Divine; overturning, by His fancied humiliation through the cross, the vain pretence of idols, and secretly bringing over the mockers and unbelievers to the full recognition of His Divinity and power.

- Athanasius of Alexandria. (1903). . (T. H. Bindley, Trans.) (Second Edition Revised, p. 42). London: The Religious Tract Society.

15 **BACK TO THE BEGINNING**

- It is well, then, in treating of this subject, to speak first of the creation of the universe, and of God its Artificer, in order that one may duly perceive that its re-creation has been wrought by the Word who originally made it. For it will not appear at all inconsistent for the Father to have wrought its salvation in Him through whom He made it

- Athanasius of Alexandria. (1903). . (T. H. Bindley, Trans.) (Second Edition Revised, pp. 4243). London: The Religious Tract Society.

16 **JOHN 1:1-5**

- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

17 **GETTING CREATION WRONG**

- 3 errors-
 - 1- Epicurians- Spontaneous generation
 - 2- Plato- Matter is pre-existent, and God is merely a craftsman
 - 3- Gnostics; dual agency in creation—matter essentially an evil, and God making the best out of it He could.

18 **THE TRUE DOCTRINE OF CREATION**

- So do these men babble. But the godly teaching and the faith according to Christ condemn as godlessness their idle talk. For it knows that, not spontaneously, since Providence is not wanting; nor out of pre-existent matter, since God is not weak; but out of nothing and absolute non-existence God brought the universe into being through the Word, as He says through Moses: 'In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth;'

- Athanasius of Alexandria. (1903). . (T. H. Bindley, Trans.) (Second Edition Revised, pp. 4546). London: The Religious Tract Society.

•

19 **EX NIHILO CREATION**

- Heb 3:11

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

20 **MAN IN GOD'S IMAGE**

- He made all things out of nothing through His own Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. And among these, pitying the race of men above all things on earth, and seeing that from the condition of its own nature it could not continue permanently, He graced them with something yet more, and did not merely create men as He did the irrational living creatures

upon earth, but made them after His own Image, imparting to them a share even of the power of His own Word; in order that, possessing as it were certain reflections of the Word (Λόγος), and being made rational (λογικού), they might be able to continue in happiness, living the true and only real life of the saints in paradise.

- Athanasius of Alexandria. (1903). . (T. H. Bindley, Trans.) (Second Edition Revised, p. 46). London: The Religious Tract Society.

21 **MAN'S TESTING PERIOD**

- But knowing, again, that man's will could turn both ways, in His foresight He made secure the grace given to them by a law and a place. For He brought them into His own paradise, and gave them a law, to the end that if they preserved the grace given, and remained good, they might have the life in paradise without sorrow or pain or anxiety, in addition to the promise of incorruption in heaven; but that, if they transgressed and turned aside and became evil, they might know that they would undergo the corruption in death which was natural to them, and no longer live in paradise, but, thenceforth dying outside it, abide in death and in corruption.

- Athanasius of Alexandria. (1903). . (T. H. Bindley, Trans.) (Second Edition Revised, pp. 4647). London: The Religious Tract Society.

•

22 **THE DOCTRINE OF MAN**

- You are probably wondering why we, having proposed to speak of the Incarnation of the Word, are now discussing the origin of mankind. But this, indeed, is not foreign to the subject before us. For it is necessary for us, in speaking of the manifestation of the Saviour to us, to speak also of the origin of mankind, that you may know that our case was the reason of His coming down, and our transgression called out the loving-kindness of the Word, so that He both hastened to us, and the Lord appeared among men.

- Athanasius of Alexandria. (1903). . (T. H. Bindley, Trans.) (Second Edition Revised, pp. 4748). London: The Religious Tract Society.

•

23 **THE FALL**

- For we were the occasion of His becoming flesh, and for our salvation He showed such loving-kindness as both to be born and appear in a human body. In this way, therefore, God made man, and willed that he should remain in incorruption; but men, having utterly neglected and disregarded the contemplation of God, and having formulated and devised wickedness for themselves (as was said in the former treatise), fell under the afore-threatened condemnation of death; and thenceforward no longer remained as they had been made, but were being utterly corrupted according to their devices, and death ruled as king over them.²

- Athanasius of Alexandria. (1903). . (T. H. Bindley, Trans.) (Second Edition Revised, p. 48). London: The Religious Tract Society.

•

24 **THE SAD STATE OF MAN**

- For on account of the Word being with them, even their natural corruption did not come near them; as also Wisdom says: 'God created man for incorruption, and as an image of His

own eternity; but by envy of the devil death entered into the world.' And when this happened men began to die, and corruption thenceforth was rife amongst them, and prevailed more than was natural over the whole race, since it had the advantage over them also in the Divine threat on account of the transgression of the commandment.

25

- For indeed in their trespasses men had not kept within any defined bounds, but gradually going further, transcended all limits; having in the beginning been inventors of wickedness, and provoked against themselves death and corruption; while afterwards, having turned aside to unrighteousness and exceeding all lawlessness, and stopping at no one evil, but continually devising all kinds of new sins, they have become insatiable in sinning. For there were adulteries and thefts everywhere, and the whole earth was full of murders and rapine. And of law there was no heed in corruption and injustice, but all wickednesses were being perpetrated by all both singly and in common. Cities were warring with cities, and nations rising against nations, and the whole earth was torn asunder with factions and battles, while each strove to rival the others in transgressions.
 - Athanasius of Alexandria. (1903). . (T. H. Bindley, Trans.) (Second Edition Revised, pp. 5051). London: The Religious Tract Society.

26 **ROMANS 1-2**

- Nor were deeds even contrary to nature unknown to them; but as the martyr-apostle of Christ says: 'For their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature; and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was due.'
 - Athanasius of Alexandria. (1903). . (T. H. Bindley, Trans.) (Second Edition Revised, p. 51). London: The Religious Tract Society.
-

27 **JUDGEMENT AND PROMISE**

- Gen 3:15
I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel."