

### **Athanasius of Alexandria**

Moreover [Arius] has dared to say, that 'the Word is not the very God;' 'though He is called God yet He is not very God' but 'by participation of grace, He, as others, is God only in name.' And, whereas all beings are foreign and different from God in essence, so too is 'the Word alien and unlike in all things to the Father's essence and propriety,' but belongs to things originated and created, and is one of these. Afterwards, as though he had succeeded to the devil's recklessness, he has stated in his Thalia, that 'even to the Son the Father is invisible,' and 'the Word cannot perfectly and exactly either see or know His own Father.' but even what He knows and what He sees, He knows and sees 'in proportion to His own measure,' as we also know according to our own power. For the Son, too, he says, not only knows not the Father exactly, for He fails in comprehension, but 'He knows not even His own essence.'

For, behold, we take divine Scripture, and thence discourse with freedom of the religious Faith, and set it up as a light upon its candlestick, saying:— Very Son of the Father, natural and genuine, proper to His essence, Wisdom Only-begotten, and Very and Only Word of God is He; not a creature or work, but an offspring proper to the Father's essence.

For God is good, or rather is essentially the source of goodness, nor could one that is good be niggardly of anything; whence, grudging existence to none, he has made all things out of his own Word, Jesus Christ our Lord.

In the beginning wickedness did not exist. Nor indeed does it exist even now in those who are holy, nor does it in any way belong to their nature. But men later on began to contrive it and to elaborate it to their own hurt. Whence also they devised the invention of idols, treating what was not as though it were. For God Maker of all and King of all, that has His Being beyond all substance and human discovery, inasmuch as He is good and exceeding noble, made, through His own Word our Saviour Jesus Christ, the human race after His own image, and constituted man able to see and know realities by means of this assimilation to Himself, giving him also a conception and knowledge even of His own eternity, in order that, preserving his nature intact, he might not ever either depart from his idea of God, nor recoil from the communion of the holy ones; but having the grace of Him that gave it, having also God's own power from the Word of the Father, he might rejoice and have fellowship with the Deity, living the life of immortality unharmed and truly blessed. For having nothing to hinder his knowledge of the Deity, he ever beholds, by his purity, the Image of the Father, God the Word, after Whose image he himself is made. For God has not only made us out of nothing; but he gave us freely, by the grace of the Word, a life in correspondence with God.

Thus then, as we have said, the Creator fashioned the race of men, and thus meant it to remain. But men, making light of better things, and holding back from apprehending them, began to seek in preference things nearer to themselves. But nearer to themselves were the body and its senses; so that while removing their mind from the things perceived by thought, they began to regard themselves; and so doing, and holding to the body and the other things of sense, and deceived as it were in their own surroundings, they fell into lust of themselves, preferring what was their own to the contemplation of what belonged to God.

For transgression of the commandment was turning them back to their natural state, so that just as they had their being out of nothing, so also, as might be expected, they might look for corruption into nothing in the course of time. . . . For this cause, then, death having gained upon men, and corruption abiding upon them, the race of man was perishing; the rational man made in God's image was disappearing, and the handiwork of God was in the process of dissolution.

God's goodness then and loving-kindness being so great, men nevertheless, overcome by the pleasures of the moment and by the illusions and deceits sent by demons, did not raise their heads toward the truth, but loaded themselves the more with evils and sins, so as no longer to seem rational, but from their ways to be reckoned void of reason.

For in speaking of the appearance of the Savior amongst us, we must needs speak also of the origin of men, that you may know that the reason of his coming down was because of us, and that our transgression called forth the loving-kindness of the Word, that the Lord should both make haste to help us and appear among men.

For though the grace which came to us from the Saviour appeared, as the Apostle says, just now, and has come when He sojourned among us; yet this grace had been prepared even before we came into being, nay, before the foundation of the world, and the reason why is kindly and wonderful. . . . How then has He chosen us, before we came into existence, but that, as he says himself, in Him we were represented beforehand?

Whence the Word of God came in his own person, that, as he was the image of the Father, he might be able to create afresh the man after the image. But, again, it could not have taken place had not death and corruption been done away. Whence he took, in natural fitness, a mortal body, that while death might in it be once for all done away, men made after his image might once more be renewed.

For as by receiving our infirmities, He is said to be infirm Himself, though not Himself infirm, for He is the Power of God, and He became sin for us and a curse, though not having sinned Himself, but because He Himself bare our sins and our curse, so, by creating us in Him, let Him say, 'He created me for the works,' though not Himself a creature. . . . Formerly the world, as guilty, was under judgment from the Law; but now the Word has taken on Himself the judgment, and having suffered in the body for all, has bestowed salvation to all.

He sends His own Son, and He becomes Son of Man, by taking created flesh; that, since all were under sentence of death, He, being other than them all, might Himself for all offer to death His own body; and that henceforth, as if all had died through Him, the word of that sentence might be accomplished (for 'all died' in Christ), and all through Him might thereupon become free from sin and from the curse which came upon it, and might truly abide forever, risen from the dead and clothed in immortality and incorruption.

For, being over all, the Word of God naturally by offering his own temple and corporeal instrument for the life of all satisfied the debt by his death. And thus he, the incorruptible Son of God, being conjoined with all by a like nature, naturally clothed all with incorruption, by the promise of the resurrection.