

Notes from Athanasius' On the Incarnation

This handout is created for those attending the “*Called to Holiness*” class at Saratoga Federated Church. The material is based on the text from Athanasius’ treatise called “*De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*”, or “*On the Incarnation*”.

Background

Sometime between 318 and 323 AD, as a very young deacon, Athanasius wrote this treatise to provide a strong defense for the Christian position that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, creator and craftsman of the world and who entered His creation as a man. Around the time of this treatise, the Arian point of view was starting to grow which claimed that Jesus was created by the Father and to some extent inferior to the Father, even leading some to a view that Jesus was an important prophet but was otherwise a man. After writing this treatise, Athanasius continued to extend and strengthen the view of Jesus within the context of the Trinity which was accepted over the Arian view at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. However, the Arian opposition was strong enough that Athanasius became associated with the motto, *contra mundum* ("against the world").

An English translation of this treatise is located at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/athanasius/incarnation.html>

Handout Structure

This handout uses a four part division that was originally going to be used for the class: *Illustrious God, Our Brilliant Heritage, Darkness, and Coming to the Light*. Excerpts from the treatise, often abbreviated, are placed under the division appropriate for that excerpt’s content. Therefore reading these notes from start to finish does not align with the same flow used in the original treatise. Students on their own are encouraged to read the original and even CS Lewis’s excellent introduction to this treatise (see http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/history/ath-inc.htm#ch_0).

The headings used within the divisions are supplied as a means to highlight or intrigued the reader to the following content, and are not the headings used by Athanasius.

Contents

The Illustrious God.....	2
Our Brilliant Heritage	3
The Darkness	4
Coming into the Light.....	6

The Illustrious God

Scripture teaches that the universe did not come from pre-existent matter but was non-existent and was brought into being by the Word of an absolute and utter God. In Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; Hebrews 11:3 "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that the things which we see now did not come into being out of things already visible."

God is of all goodness and fountainhead; it is impossible for Him to be mean or grudging about anything. Without grudging in existence, He made all things out of nothing through His own Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. This Word of the Father is divine and all things in existence owe it's being to His will and power, and that through Him the Father gives order to creation, by Him all things are moved, and through Him they receive their being.

People have hazard alternative opinions...

A. (No Creator, No Craftsmen) – “all things are self- originated and, haphazard”

- The Epicureans are among these;
- Contrary to all experience, including their own existence, they deny that there is any Mind behind the universe.
- If the matter self-originated and was not the outcome of the Mind then all would be uniform and without distinction.... everything would be either sun, or moon, etc. The diversity of matter argues a prevenient Cause and not a spontaneous generation; and this Cause is how we can apprehend God, the Designer and Creator.

B. (Craftsman, but not Creator) – “God had made all things out of pre-existent and uncreated matter”

- A view expressed by Plato, that giant among the Greeks.
- God like a carpenter who can make things only out of wood that already exists.
- To deny God as the Cause of matter is to impute limitation and cause him to be only a craftsman.
- How could God be called Maker and Artificer (Hebrews 11:10) if His ability to make depended on some other cause, namely on matter itself?

C. (Creator, but not craftsman) - “recognize a God, but do not recognize His role as craftsman, detailing the way of living”

- Gnostics, who have invented for themselves a spiritual path other than that of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- The obvious meaning of Scripture is ignored such as when Jesus illustrated God's purpose and will in Creation using the passage: "He Who created them in the beginning made them male and female.... and that a man should leave his parents and cleave to his wife," He then pronounces that “what God has joined together, let no man put asunder” Showing God as both Creator and Artificer.
- St. John says, "All things became by Him and without Him came nothing into being. How could the Artificer be someone other than the Father of Christ?"

Our Brilliant Heritage

Since man was created from nothing, by nature man is mortal, subject to corruption (to the rules of matter). However, upon this natural Man, God bestowed His own life by the grace, presence and love of the Word. Through this union and presence with the Word, Man was shielded from the natural law and corruption. In other words, God created man for incorruption and as an image of His own eternity, and Man was meant to retain the beauty of innocence with which they were created. So Man is an embodied spirit that bears the Likeness of Him Who is, and if he preserves that Likeness through constant contemplation then his material nature is deprived of its power and remains incorrupt. God bestows on man what other creatures lack – namely the impression of His own Image, a share in the reasonable being of the very Word Himself and in reflecting Him becoming reasonable, expressing the Mind of God even as He does, though in a limited degree. (*Ed: It is in this manner that Man is called to share in the divine nature of God.*). This is the blessed and only true life of the saints in paradise. When Man loses the knowledge of God, and since it is God alone who exists, Man loses existence with God and becomes corrupted. "I have said, Ye are gods and sons of the Highest all of you: but ye die as men and fall as one of the princes." (Psalm 82:6)

God set them in His own paradise, and laid upon them a single prohibition. If they guarded the grace and retained the loveliness of their original innocence, then the life of paradise should be theirs, without sorrow, pain or care, and after it the assurance of immortality in heaven. But if they went astray and became vile, throwing away their birthright of beauty, then they would come under the natural law of death and live no longer in paradise, but, dying outside of it, continue in death and in corruption.

Athanasius asks "what use is existence to the creature if it cannot know its Maker?" Why should God have made man at all into reasonable beings if he had no intention that they were to have knowledge of the Father's Word and Reason, through Whom they had received their being and reason? They would be no better than the beasts, had they no knowledge except of natural, earthly things. The good God gave Man a share in His own Image, that is, in our Lord Jesus Christ by making Man after His same Image and Likeness. This gift of Godlikeness in Man was intended so that they may be able to perceive the Image Absolute, that is the Word Himself, and through Him to apprehend the Father; which knowledge of their Maker is for men the only really happy and blessed life.

The Darkness

Two Conditions

Man could decide to turn away from God, so God secured the grace He had given by making it conditional upon two things— a law and a place. He set them in His own paradise, and laid upon them a single prohibition. They were to guard the grace and retain the loveliness of their original innocence, thereby maintaining their place in the life of paradise a place without sorrow, pain or care, and eventually the assurance of immortality in heaven. In straying from God they would be throwing away their birthright of beauty and become vile. Mankind would come under the natural law of death, be banished from paradise to die outside of it—not just die, but remain in the state of death and corruption.

One Transgression

In doing this transgression, Man by counsel of the devil turned from the contemplation of God to an evil of his own devising and as a result:

- Man lost his knowledge of God and the presence of God within him
- The law of death which followed from the Transgression had Man completely under its dominion and from it there was no escape.
- Man began corrupting and returning back to his nature, to non-existence again, for it is God alone who really exists, and evil is not present being the antithesis of good.
- Man caused his own corruption and death. Scripture says, "I have said, Ye are gods and sons of the Highest all of you: but ye die as men and fall as one of the princes."

Man, who was created in God's image and by his possession of reason reflected the very Word Himself, was disappearing, and the work of God was being undone. God created man for incorruption and as an image of His own eternity; but by envy of the devil death entered into the world.

Sin Surpassing All Limits

“Corruption ran riot among men” even beyond what was natural for God had forewarned a penalty for transgressing the commandment. Man’s sinning surpassed all limits, inventing wickedness and gradually moving from bad to worse, not stopping at any one kind of evil, but with insatiable appetite, devising new kinds of sins that were perpetrated by all, both singly and in common. Adulteries, thefts, murder and plundering filled the earth. Cities were warring with cities, nations were rising against nations, and the whole earth was rent with factions and battles, while each strove to outdo the other in wickedness. As mentioned by the apostle, even crimes contrary to nature occurred where men and women left even that which was natural and went against nature and flamed out in lust toward their own sex, perverting God’s created intent much less their divine calling.

Men foolishly thinking little of the grace they had received defiled their own soul so completely that they not only lost their apprehension of God, but invented for themselves other gods and fashioned idols to replace Truth and revered things that are not, rather than God Who is. As Paul said, “worshipping the creature rather than the Creator.” Evil spirits were worshipped as gods and appeased by sacrificing by fire both beast and men, thereby bringing men increasingly under their insane control. Magic arts were practiced and all of

life's causes were traced to the stars as though nothing existed but that which could be seen. No longer knowing God, even the holiest of men by nature feared death and decay, and mourned the dead as those who perish.

The devil, the enemy of our race, who fell from heaven, endeavors with the other disobedient evil spirits to keep souls from the truth and to hinder the progress of those who are trying to follow it. The apostle refers to this when he says, "According to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience."

What was God to do in face of this dehumanizing of mankind, this universal hiding of the knowledge of Himself by the wiles of evil spirits?

Clueless, yet not without Clues

God did not hide Himself from men and while being made in His image is sufficient for man to have knowledge of the Word and the Father through direct contemplation, God knew man's weakness and safeguarded against a turning from this grace and contemplation by opening other ways for man to obtain knowledge of God:

- a) **The Works of Creation.** Man could look up into the immensity of heaven, and ponder the harmony of creation to come to know its Creator, Ruler, the Word of the Father.
- b) **The Law** provided by God as neglect of the indwelling grace increased, where they could lead a good life and know good merely by knowing the law.
- c) **The Prophets.** They could converse with holy men, and through them learn to know God, the Artificer of all things, the Father of Christ, and to recognize the worship of idols as the negation of the truth and full of sin.

The law and the prophets were close at hand for men, and while sent to the Jews, they were not exclusive to the Jews but were a sacred school of the knowledge of God and the conduct of the spiritual life for the whole world.

No Match for the Devil

However the madness of idolatry and irreligion filled the world and the knowledge of God remained mostly hidden. Men who could teach the world about the Father cannot run everywhere over the world, nor would their words carry sufficient weight if they did, nor would they be, unaided, a match for the evil spirits. Even the best of men were confused and blinded by evil, how could they convert the souls and minds of others? One cannot put straight in others what is warped in oneself. Creation was not enough to teach men about the Father, for it had such great and increasing evils would never have occurred for Creation has been there all the time and it did not prevent men from wallowing in error.

So great was God in goodness and yet men seduced by the pleasures of the moment and by the frauds and illusions of the evil spirits were not able to lift up their heads towards the truth. So burdened with their wickedness, they seemed more to be brute beasts than reasonable men, reflecting the very Likeness of the Word. In fact sin increased such that it surely would have been better for man to have always been brutes than to have shared the nature of the Word and than to revert to that condition. Better that God not have bestowed this grace, then for men to be found unworthy to receive it.

Coming into the Light

“When the sun rises after the night and the whole world is lit up by it, nobody doubts that it is the sun which has thus shed its light everywhere and driven away the dark.”

The Dilemma

What was God to do in face of this dehumanizing of mankind? Could God silently watch such a monstrous and unfitting tragedy as His noble works on the road to ruin through corruption, and in the service of those who are not loving and kind, returning back into non-existence? Man was created reasonable, once sharing the nature of the Word, but now they were deceived and ignorant of Him through their own negligence and the deceit of evil spirits. Likewise, it is unthinkable that God would go back upon His word and that man, having transgressed, should not die. What was God, being Good, to do?

Could God ignore the ruin and death of man?

- Better never to have been created to only be neglected and let perish;
- Indifference argues limitation, not goodness in God, more than if man was never created.
- It impossible for God not to act, because it would be unfitting and unworthy of Himself.

Could God ignore man's transgression and its penalty?

- God could not falsify Himself
- Man's repentance may correct from sinning but it does not guard the Divine consistency for if death did not hold dominion over men (the penalty) then God would remain untrue.

How could the penalty be paid and the corruption undone?

What—or rather Who was it that was needed for such grace and such recall as man required? Who, save the Word of God Himself, Who also in the beginning had made all things out of nothing? His part it was, and His alone, both to bring again the corruptible to incorruption and to maintain for the Father His consistency of character with all men. For He alone, being Word of the Father and above all, was both able to recreate all, and worthy to suffer on behalf of all and to be an ambassador for all with the Father.

The first fact one must grasp is that the renewal of creation has been wrought by the Self-same Word Who made it in the beginning. There is no inconsistency between creation and salvation for the One Father has employed the same Agent for both works, affecting the salvation of the world through the same Word Who made it in the beginning.

The Need for “the Incarnation”

Ending the law of death that barred man's way, and to have life anew required two things:

- (Being Fully God) The restoration of mankind from corruption could only be properly done by Him Who made them in the beginning.¹
- (Being Fully Man) The penalty called for an “in kind” sacrifice, dwelling in a human body was needed in order that He might offer it in sacrifice for other like bodies²

¹ For it became Him, for Whom are all things and through Whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through suffering

Plato says that the Author of the Universe, seeing the universe storm-tossed and in danger of sinking into the state of dissolution, takes his seat at the helm of the Life-force of the universe, and comes to the rescue and puts everything right. So what is incredible in saying that, mankind having gone astray, the Word descended upon it and was manifest as man, so that by His intrinsic goodness and His helmsmen-ship He might save it from the storm?

The incorporeal, incorruptible and immaterial Word of God entered our world. In one sense, indeed, He was never far from creation, for no part of creation had ever been without Him Who is always abiding in union with the Father, but yet fills all things that are. But now He entered the world in a new way.

Not a Mere Display of Power

The Lord did not come to just appear and dazzle the beholders; He chose not to manifest Himself through the sun, moon, stars, fire, wind, etc. For only man had served from God's purpose and rejected what is good and required healing. So, He came as a mere man to heal and to teach the way as a brother to suffering men, and to put Himself at the disposal of those who needed Him.

Not By Will Alone

In order for God to instruct and save mankind He could not do it as He first created them, which was by the mere indication of His will. In the beginning, nothing as existed at all; all that was needed in order to bring all things into being, was that He willed it to be so. Now that man was in existence with an existing evil, what needed to be healed was "things that were", not "things that were not." It was not the non-existent that needed salvation, for a bare creative word would have sufficed. It was natural and right, therefore, for the Word to use a human instrument and by that means reveal Himself gradually to all.

Not by the Whole, but Recognition in the Part

Invisible and imperceptible as in Himself He is, He became visible through His works and revealed Himself as the Word of the Father, the Ruler and King of the whole creation. He manifested Himself in a way so men could bear it, so as not to reduce the value of the Divine appearing by exceeding man's capacity to receive it. Men could not recognize Him in "the whole" who orders and rules creation, so He took to Himself "a part" of the whole, a human body to serve as His instrument, and entered creation. Those who could not lift their eyes to His unseen power might recognize and behold Him in their own likeness. Men would learn to know His Father more quickly and directly by use of a body such as their own and by the Divine works done through it. In comparing His works with theirs, they would judge His not human but Divine. Whether His works shows power over creation (e.g. water), evil spirits, or even death and Hades, there is something to cause the non-believer to no longer be deceived and to see Christ alone is Lord and God and to worship Him alone, and thru Him know the Father.³

² "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself assumed the same, in order that through death He might bring to nought him that hath the power of death, that is to say, the Devil, and might rescue those who all their lives were enslaved by the fear of death."

³ "Having put off from Himself the principalities and the powers, He triumphed on the cross,"

Not by any other Image

Being a God of love and goodness He willed to renew His Image in mankind, so that through it men might once more come to know Him. This could be done only by the coming of the very Image Himself, our Savior Jesus Christ.

- Men could not have done it, for they are only made after the Image;⁴
- Angels could not have done it, for they are not the images of God.

The Word of God came in His own Person, because it was He alone, the Image of the Father Who could recreate man made after the Image.

An illustration ... a painted portrait obliterated with external stains does not cause the artist does to throw away the panel, but he calls for the subject of the portrait to come and sit for it again, and the likeness is re-drawn on the same material. So the All-holy Son of God, the Image of the Father, came and dwelt in our midst, in order that He might renew mankind made after Himself, and seek out His lost sheep and when he says that a man must be born again, he was not referring to a man's natural birth from his mother, but to the re-birth and re-creation of the soul in the Image of God.

The Mystery

It is an important step in our faith to consider the Word becoming Man and His divine Appearing in our midst. Pitying our race, moved with compassion for our limitation, unable to endure that death should have the mastery, He took *our* body, He, the Mighty One, the Artificer of all, Himself prepared this body in the virgin as a temple for Himself, and took it for His very own, through which He was known and in which He dwelt.

This is a paradox or a wonder for as Man He was living a human life, and as Word He was sustaining the life of the universe, and as Son He was in constant union with the Father. Existing in a human body, to which He Himself gives life, He is still Source of life to all the universe, present in every part of it, yet outside the whole; and He is revealed both through the works of His body and through His activity in the world. This is the mystery the Jews traduce, the Greeks deride, but we adore; Our own love and devotion to the Word becomes greater and His Divinity more evident when we see how His Manhood seems so little worth to others and they pour scorn on Him. What is ruled impossible, He plainly shows possible; what is derided as unfitting, His goodness makes most fit; so that what these wiseacres laugh at as "human" He by His inherent might declares divine. By what appears to be His utter poverty and weakness on the cross He overturns the pomp and parade of idols, and quietly and hiddenly wins over the mockers and unbelievers to recognize Him as God.

He was not defiled by being in the body; rather, He sanctified, cleansed and quickened the body by being in it. He "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." For His being in everything does not mean that He shares the nature of everything, only that He gives all things their being and sustains them in it. His body was not a limitation, but an instrument, so that He was both in it and in all things, and outside all things, resting in the Father alone. From such ordinary acts as being born and taking food, He was recognized as being actually present in the body; but by the extraordinary acts which He did through the body He proved Himself to be the Son of God. That is the meaning of His words to the unbelieving Jews: "If I

⁴ The original template, not a copy was needed.

do not the works of My Father, believe Me not; but if I do, even if ye believe not Me, believe My works, that ye may know that the Father is in Me and I in the Father."

The Good Teacher saving the Lost

In coming into the world in a new way, he stooped to our level in His love and Self-revealing to us. He moved as Man among men, he met their senses, so to speak half-way. Men, who had turned from the contemplation of God above, were now looking for Him in the opposite direction, down among the created and tangible things. He became an object of their senses, dealing with them as a good teacher, coming down to their level and using simple means⁵ so they might apprehend the Father through the works which He, the Word of God, did in the body. He did not offer the sacrifice on behalf of all immediately, because He would have ceased to be an object of our senses. Instead, He stayed in His body and let Himself be seen in it, doing acts and giving signs showing Him to be not only man, but also God the Word:

- Were they awe-stricken by creation? They beheld it confessing Christ as Lord.
- Did their minds tend to regard men as Gods? The uniqueness of the Savior's works marked Him, alone of men, as Son of God.
- Were they drawn to evil spirits? They saw them driven out by the Lord and learned that the Word of God alone was God and that the evil spirits were not gods at all.
- Were they inclined to hero-worship and the cult of the dead? Then the fact that the Savior had risen from the dead showed them how false these other deities were, and that the Word of the Father is the one true Lord, the Lord even of death.

His works eclipsed all other human deeds, so that men might be recalled from all paths of error to now know the Father. As He says, "I came to seek and to save that which was lost."

From such ordinary acts as being born and taking food, He was recognized as being actually present in the body; but by the extraordinary acts which He did through the body He proved Himself to be the Son of God. That is the meaning of His words to the unbelieving Jews: "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not; but if I do, even if ye believe not Me, believe My works, that ye may know that the Father is in Me and I in the Father."

The Magnificent Defeat of Death

The reasons for a public and even shameful death by crucifixion:

1. Often men die of 'natural causes,' but the Lord is the very Life itself and cannot do so. By dying quietly or privately, it could appear as if he died of 'natural causes'.⁶
2. The supreme purpose of His coming was to bring about the resurrection of the body and His death on the cross serves as a visible monument to His victory over death thereby giving assurance to all of His power over death and as a pledge that their own bodies, also, would eventually be incorrupt as His own was.
3. He accepted and bore upon the cross a death inflicted by His enemies which they considered supremely terrible and by no means to be faced. He did not choose His own manner of death lest He should seem limited in facing some kinds of death giving grounds for disbelieving the resurrection.

⁵ St. Paul says as much: "Because in the wisdom of God the world in its wisdom knew not God, God thought fit through the foolishness (simplicity) of the News proclaimed to save those who believe.

⁶ Ed: Even when on the cross, Jesus willfully gave up His spirit, supporting the idea that natural causes would not overcome the Source of Life.

4. Christians understand this form of death as supremely good for He came to bear the curse that laid on us and accepted the accursed death of hanging on a tree.
5. The crucifixion demonstrates the call of the Gentiles, for it is only on the cross that a man dies with arms outstretched so that He might draw His ancient people with the one and the Gentiles with the other, and join both together in Him.
6. Proved Him a Prophet. He said "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Myself."
7. In not being divided in death like John the Baptist or Isaiah, He preserved His body whole and undivided, so there would be no excuse to divide the Church.

A marvelous and mighty paradox: the death which His enemies thought to inflict on Him as dishonor and disgrace has become the glorious monument to death's defeat.

Two opposite marvels took place at once in the Death of Christ

1. We all died: *the death of all was fulfilled in the Lord's body*

Man's salvation required first that the penalty of death and corruption be carried out: Death there had to be, and death for all, so that the due of all might be paid. It was by surrendering to death the body which He had taken, as an offering and sacrifice free from every stain, that He forthwith abolished death for His human brethren by the offering of the equivalent. For naturally, since the Word of God was above all, when He offered His own temple and bodily instrument as a substitute for the life of all, He fulfilled in death all that was required.

2. Death and corruption died: *yet, because the Word dwelt in the body, death and corruption themselves in the same act were utterly abolished.*

Man's corruption was woven into the very substance of his body and dominating it as though completely one with it. Life needed to be woven into it instead, so that the body endowed with life might cast corruption off. Knowing that corruption could not be gotten rid of other than through death; the Word and Savior, being immortal and the Father's Son, such that He could not die assumed for Himself a body capable of death, in order that the body might become in dying a sufficient exchange for all. And, yet remain incorruptible through His indwelling, being interwoven with the Life it would no longer be enslaved to the power of death, and by the grace of the resurrection the body would be endowed with immortality and arise from death, remaining eternal.

Therefore He put on a body, so that in the body He might find death and blot it.

The Eternal Union with the Son of God

God made man to be an embodied spirit and willed that man should remain in incorruption. Through this union of the immortal Son of God with our human nature, all men became clothed with incorruption in the promise of the resurrection⁷. For the solidarity of mankind is such that by the virtue of the Word's indwelling in a single human body, this one man has caused death and the corruption to lose their power over all⁸. Illustration: when a great king

⁷ joining of the flesh, mystery of God Ephesians 5

⁸ "The Love of Christ constrains us for... if One died on behalf of all, then all died, and He died for all that we should no longer live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died and rose again from the dead, even our Lord Jesus

enters a large city and dwells in one of its houses; the whole city is honored, and enemies and robbers cease to molest it. The designs of the enemy against mankind have been foiled and the corruption of death has simply ceased to be, as utterly as straw from fire. He abolished the death which man had incurred, and corrected their neglect by His own teaching. Thus by His own power He restored the whole nature of man.

By man death has gained its power over men; by the "Word made Man" death has been destroyed and life raised up anew.

No Fear of Death

Have no fears then. Now that the common Savior of all has died on our behalf, we who believe in Christ no longer die, as men died aforetime, in fulfillment of the threat of the law. That condemnation has come to an end; and now that, by the grace of the resurrection, corruption has been banished and done away, we are loosed from our mortal bodies in God's good time for each, so that we may obtain thereby a better resurrection. Like seeds cast into the earth, we do not perish in our dissolution, but like them shall rise again, death having been brought to naught by the grace of the Savior. As Paul says: "This corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality; but when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?'"

Disciples View of Death

The destruction of death and its conquest by the cross is proven further by the disciples of Christ, who instead of fearing death, by the sign of the cross and by faith in Christ trample on it as on something dead. Death is no longer terrible and they prefer to die rather than to deny their faith in Christ, knowing full well that when they die they do not perish, but live indeed, and become incorruptible through the resurrection. Men and women, and children look beyond this present life and train themselves by bodily discipline to meet death. They mock death as being dead and robbed of all its strength. Death is bound hand and foot, all who are in Christ trample it as they pass and as witnesses to Him deride it, scoffing and saying, "O Death, where is thy victory? O Grave, where is thy sting?"⁹

The unbeliever must embrace the faith of Christ and come to His teaching to conquer death and fear it no more. By nature we fear death and decay; the marvel of marvels is that he who is enfolded in the faith of the cross despises this natural fear and for the sake of the cross is no longer cowardly in face of it. Illustration: proving Indian asbestos impotence of the fire by wearing it and touching fire, or to tread into the territory of the now bound and helpless tyrant.

Raising Daily Monuments to His Victory over Death

The destruction of death by the Incarnate Word continues to be shown by the Lord's effective action today as He daily raises monuments to His victory through His own disciples. The

Christ." And "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. Just as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive"

⁹ Maybe in finding physical dying too strong to start one's contemplation, we can start with what parts of us we are letting die for Christ.

Savior every day is invisibly persuading numbers of people all over the world to accept His faith and be obedient to His teaching. Do dead men prick the consciences of men, so that they throw all the traditions of their fathers to the winds and bow down before the teaching of Christ? The Savior's mighty works is drawing men to religion, persuading them to virtue, teaching them about immortality, quickening their thirst for heavenly things, revealing the knowledge of the Father, inspiring strength in face of death, manifesting Himself to each, and displacing the irreligion of idols

The New Life

Jesus Christ unites in peace those who hated each other because His own love underwent all things for our salvation. This peace that He was to administer was foretold, for Scripture says, "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into sickles, and nation shall not take sword against nation, neither shall they learn any more to wage war." Barbarians of the present day are naturally savage in their habits and cannot bear to be without weapons as they sacrifice to their idols. However when they hear the teaching of Christ, they turn from fighting to farming, and instead of arming with swords they extend their hands in prayer. Instead of fighting each other, they take up arms against the devil and the demons, and overcome them by their self-control and integrity of soul. Evil forces were always setting men to fight each other, fearing lest, if they ceased from mutual strife, they would turn to attack the demons themselves. For in truth the disciples of Christ, instead of fighting each other, stand arrayed against demons by their habits and virtuous actions, and chase them away and mock at their captain the devil. Even in youth they are chaste, they endure in times of testing and persevere in toils. When they are insulted, they are patient, when robbed they make light of it, and they make light even of death itself, and become martyrs of Christ.

But for the searching and right understanding of the Scriptures there is need of a good life and a pure soul, and for Christian virtue to guide the mind to grasp, so far as human nature can, the truth concerning God the Word. One cannot possibly understand the teaching of the saints unless one has a pure mind and is trying to imitate their life. Anyone who wants to look at sunlight naturally wipes his eye clear first, in order to make, at any rate, some approximation to the purity of that on which he looks; and a person wishing to see a city or country goes to the place in order to do so. Similarly, anyone who wishes to understand the mind of the sacred writers must first cleanse his own life, and approach the saints by copying their deeds. Thus united to them in the fellowship of life, he will both understand the things revealed to them by God and, thenceforth escaping the peril that threatens sinners in the judgment, will receive that which is laid up for the saints in the kingdom of heaven. Of that reward it is written: "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared" for them that live a godly life and love the God and Father in Christ Jesus our Lord, through Whom and with Whom be to the Father Himself, with the Son Himself, in the Holy Spirit, honor and might and glory to ages of ages. Amen.