

## ***Jesus Christ FULLY GOD & FULLY MAN IN THE PATRISTICS***

**THE HOLY VINE OF DAVID.** DIDACHE: Regarding the Eucharist, give thanks as follows. First, concerning the cup: We give you thanks, our Father, for the holy Vine of David your servant, which you have made known to us through Jesus, your servant. To you be the glory for evermore. Next, concerning the broken bread: We give you thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge that you have made known to us through Jesus, your servant. To you be glory for evermore. As this broken bread was scattered over the hills and then, when gathered, became one mass, so may your church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom. For yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for evermore. DIDACHE 9.1–4.<sup>1</sup>

**THE IMAGE OF GOD, A SERVANT FOR OUR SAKE.** ATHANASIUS: When it says “God highly exalted him,” the words “highly exalted” do not signify the exaltation of the substance of the Word; that was and is always equal with God. The exaltation is of the manhood. These words are said after the incarnation of the Word, to make it clear that the terms “humbled” and “exalted” refer to the human nature.... The Word, being the image of the Father and immortal, “took the form of a servant,” and as man he endured death for our sake in his own flesh, that thus he might offer himself to the Father on our behalf. Therefore also as man he is said be highly exalted because of us and on our behalf, that as by his death we all died in Christ, so also in Christ himself we may all be exalted, being raised from the dead and ascending into heaven “where Jesus the forerunner has entered for us.”<sup>55</sup> And if it is now for our sake that Christ has entered into heaven, though he was before and always is the Lord and the maker of the heavens, it is therefore for our sake that Scripture speaks of his being exalted. Just as he who himself sanctified all, equally says that he sanctifies himself to the Father for our sakes; it is not that the Word can “become” holy, rather that he himself should sanctify all of us in himself. AGAINST THE ARIANS 1.41.

**FIRE STOOPS DOWN BUT ALSO ASCENDS.** GREGORY OF NYSSA: Fire has by nature an upward tendency, but by divine power it is brought down to earth, and so Elijah was himself raised on high when he was enveloped in the heavenly flame that then hastened to resume its natural upward motion. In the same way the power of the most High, which is something immaterial and formless, received the “form of a servant” in the subsistence<sup>58</sup> it received through the Virgin, and then it brought this to its own sublimity, transmuting that form into its own divine and imperishable nature. AGAINST APOLLINARIS 25.

**THE SERVANT EMBRACED BY THE MASTER.** GREGORY OF NYSSA: The flesh is passable in nature; the Word is active. The flesh is not capable of creating the universe; the Godhead’s power is not capable of suffering.... It is not the human nature that raises Lazarus; it is not the impassible power that weeps for him.... It is clear that the blows of the passion belong to the servant in whom the Master was, but the honors belong to the Master who was enveloped by the servant; so that

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because of the conjunction and connection the attributes of each nature become common to both, and the Master takes on himself the servant's stripes while the servant is glorified by the Master's honor. Hence the cross is said to be the cross of "the Lord of glory," and "Every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord."<sup>62</sup> AGAINST EUNOMIUS 5.5.<sup>2</sup>

**A SERVANT SHOWED US GREATNESS.** ORIGEN: Let us employ an illustration so that we may more fully understand in what way the Savior is the representation of the being of God. The illustration does not fully or adequately express the meaning of the phrase we are discussing; but it may be regarded as adopted to make just this point: that the Son, "though being in the form of God abased himself" because he intended, through the self-abasement, to display to us the fullness of Godhead. Let us suppose a statue of such a size as would fill the whole world, of such immensity that no one could contemplate it. Let us then suppose that another statue was made, identical with the first in respect of the shape of the limbs, the features, the whole outward appearance and the material, like it in all respects apart from the immense size. This would be made for this purpose: that those who could not contemplate and behold the enormous statue might look at the small copy and claim that they had seen the original, insofar as the copy, being a complete likeness, preserved all the lines of the limbs and the features, in fact the whole appearance and the actual material of the other. ON FIRST PRINCIPLES 1.2.8.

**SERVANTHOOD SIGNIFIES SALVATION.** GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: But in respect of his "form of a servant," he comes down to join his fellow servants and assumes a form that is not his own, taking on himself me and what belongs to me, so that in himself he may consume the evil, just as fire consumes wax or the sun consumes the mists of earth, and that I may share in what belongs to him, by reason of this commixture. Therefore he does honor to obedience in action and has experience of obedience as a result of his suffering. For the disposition of obedience was not enough, any more than it is for us, unless we proceed to put it into practice; for disposition is demonstrated by action.... Thus Christ can know our experience at firsthand and take our infirmity into account, along with what we have to endure.... For if because of the concealing screen<sup>69</sup> the light that shone in this life's darkness was persecuted by the darkness (the darkness, I mean, of the evil one the tempter), then what persecution will befall the darkness of people in their weakness? ORATION 30.6.

**IN CHRIST, THE FORM OF A SERVANT IS SINLESS.** LEO THE GREAT: Thus there was born true God in the entire and perfect nature of true man, complete in his own properties, complete in ours. By "ours" I mean those that the Creator formed in us at the beginning, which he assumed in order to restore. For in the Savior there was no trace of the properties that the deceiver brought in and that humankind, being deceived, allowed to enter. He did not become partaker of our sins because he entered into fellowship with human infirmities. He assumed the "form of a servant" without the stain of sin, making the human properties greater but not detracting from the divine. For that emptying of himself, whereby the invisible rendered himself visible, and the Creator and Lord of all willed to be a mortal, was a condescension of compassion, not a failure

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of power. Accordingly, he who made humankind, while he remained in the form of God, was himself made man in the form of a servant. Each nature preserves its own characteristics without diminution, so that the form of a servant does not detract from the form of God. LETTER 28.3 (THE TOME OF LEO).

**OUR TRUE MASTER IS A SERVANT IN TYPE ONLY.** HADRIAN I: For although in prophetic type he was called a servant because of the condition of the servant's form that he received from the Virgin, as the Scripture says: "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is no one like him on the earth?" And even so, with Saint Gregory<sup>73</sup> we understand that this is meant historically as applied to the holy Job but allegorically as applied to Christ. The fact that Scripture described Christ, typically, as a servant in the person of Job is surely no reason why we should give him the name of servant, is it? LETTER TO THE BISHOPS OF SPAIN AND GALICIA.

### ***The Humility of the Son***

**CHRIST STANDS WITH THE HUMBLE.** CLEMENT OF ROME: For Christ is with those who are humble, not with those who exalt themselves over his flock. The majestic scepter of God, our Lord Christ Jesus, did not come with the pomp of arrogance or pride (though he could have done so) but in all humility, just as the Holy Spirit spoke concerning him. For he says, "Lord, who believed our report? And to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed? In his presence we announced that he was like a child, like a root in thirsty ground. He had no attractiveness or glory. We saw him, and he had no attractiveness or beauty; instead his attractiveness was despised, inferior to that of other men. He was a man of stripes and of sorrow, knowing how to endure weakness, and his face is turned away; he was dishonored and not blessed." This is the one "who bears our sins and suffers pain for our sakes, and we regarded him as subject to grief and stripes and affliction." And yet he was "wounded because of our sins and was afflicted because of our transgressions." 1 CLEMENT 16.1–5.

**CHRIST IS A MODEL OF HUMILITY.** CLEMENT OF ROME: And again he himself says, "But I am a worm and not a man, a reproach among men and an object of contempt to the people." "All those who saw me mocked me, they spoke with their lips; they shook their heads, saying, He hoped in the Lord, let him deliver him, let him save him, because he takes pleasure in him."<sup>79</sup> You see, dear friends, the kind of pattern that has been given to us. For if the Lord so humbled himself, what should we do, who through him have come under the yoke of his grace? 1 CLEMENT 16.15–17.

**THE SUFFERING SERVANT.** EPISTLE OF BARNABAS: Surely, then, the Son of God came in the flesh to fill to the brim the measure of the sins of those who had persecuted his prophets to death. This, therefore, is the reason why he submitted to suffering, for God speaks of the chastisement of his flesh as something due to them: "When they have smitten the shepherd, then the sheep of his flock will perish." But this suffering was due to his choice. It was ordained that he should suffer on a tree, since the inspired writer attributes to him the following words: "Save me from the sword," and, "Pierce my flesh with nails, because bands of evildoers have risen against me."<sup>82</sup> And again he says, "Behold, I present my back for scourgings and my cheek for blows; my face I set as a solid rock." EPISTLE OF BARNABAS 5.11–14.

**CHRIST'S KENOSIS, FOR A MYSTERIOUS PURPOSE.** HILARY OF POITIERS: To take the form of a servant and to remain in the form of God are not the same thing, and he who remained in the form of God could not have taken the form of a servant except by his self-emptying, since the combination of both forms is inconsistent. But he who emptied himself is the same as he who took the form of a servant. If he ceased to exist, he could not have taken, since to take entails the existence of the taker. Thus the self-emptying of the form is not the abolition of the nature, since he who emptied himself did not cease to exist, and he who took continued to be. The identity of emptier and taker involves a mystery, but not a ceasing to be.<sup>86</sup> ... Christ was one and the same when he changed his outward fashion and again when he reassumed it. ON THE TRINITY 9.14.<sup>3</sup>

### ***The Word Is Made Flesh***

**THE WORD ASSUMES A PERSONAL EXISTENCE.** GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: If anyone says that the Godhead operated in him by grace, as in a prophet, instead of being joined to the humanity in a permanent union, in respect of substance, such a man is himself devoid of such working of God within him; in fact he is filled with a contrary inspiration. LETTER 101.6, TO CLEDONIUS.

**THE LOGOS DOES NOT INHABIT A MAN, HE BECOMES ONE.** ATHANASIUS: He became man, and did not come into a man. We must be clear about this, to avoid the notion that the Word dwelled in a man, hallowing him and displaying himself in him, as in earlier times the Word came to each of the saints. In that case there would have been no paradox, and those who saw him would not have been startled, as when they said, "Where does this man come from" and, "You are a man. Why do you make yourself God?"<sup>3</sup> They were quite accustomed to this idea, as in the words "the Word of the Lord came" to the various prophets. But in fact the Word of God, "through whom all things came into being,"<sup>5</sup> endured to become also Son of man and "humbled himself, taking the form of a servant"; and for this reason the cross of Christ is "a scandal to the Jews, but to us, Christ is God's power and God's wisdom."<sup>7</sup> For "the Word became flesh," as John says, and in Scripture "flesh" is commonly used for "man." AGAINST THE ARIANS 3.30.

**WE SEE THE WORD LIVING ON EARTH.** GREGORY OF NYSSA: We do not ascribe our salvation to a mere man, nor do we admit that the incorruptible divine nature is liable to suffering and death. But we must certainly believe the inspired utterances that proclaim that the Word "which was in the beginning was God" and that afterwards the "Word made flesh" was seen on the earth and lived in intercourse with people. And therefore we admit into our faith those ideas that accord with the inspired utterance. When we are told that he is light, power, righteousness, life and truth, that "through him the whole universe was made," we count all such statements as worthy of belief, and we refer them to the Word who is God. But when we hear of pain, sleep, need, distress, bonds, nails, the spear, the blood and the wounds and the burial and the tomb and other things of this kind, then, even though these are somewhat contrary to the epithets mentioned above, we nevertheless accept them as things to be believed and as true, in respect of the flesh, which we accept as part of our faith, together with the Word. It is impossible to

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consider the attributes proper to the flesh as existing in the “Word which was in the beginning.”  
AGAINST EUNOMIUS 6.1.

**THE WORD ASSUMES THE WEAKNESS OF FLESH.** GREGORY OF NYSSA: Apollinaris must not falsely represent our argument, saying that we assert that the only-begotten God was not always Christ. Christ existed always, not only in the time of the dispensation but also afterwards. But the human nature did not exist before or after but only during the season of the dispensation. For the humanity did not exist before the birth from the Virgin, nor did the flesh remain, with its own properties, after the ascent to heaven.<sup>14</sup> “If once we knew Christ in the flesh, we do not still know him in this way.” For the flesh did not continue in being because God had been displayed in flesh. Human nature is subject to change, whereas the divine nature is unchangeable. Therefore the Godhead remains unmoved in face of every change, not being altered for the worse (for it does not admit of deterioration, nor is it susceptible of improvement), while the human nature in Christ undergoes a change for the better, from perishable to imperishable ... from short-lived to eternal, from corporeal to incorporeal, freed from the limits of a physical shape. AGAINST APOLLINARIS 53.

**GOD BECOMES REALLY HUMAN.** AUGUSTINE: We are changeable, and we are changed for the better by becoming partakers of the Word. The Word is changeless and suffered no change for the worse when he became partaker of flesh by means of a rational soul. The Apollinarian heretics wrongly suppose that the man Christ either had no soul or had no rational soul. The Scripture, in saying “The Word became flesh,” employs its customary idiom of using “flesh” for “man,” in order to show the humility of Christ more emphatically, to avoid seeming to shun the title “flesh” as if it were something unworthy. The saying, “All flesh shall see the salvation of God”<sup>18</sup> is not to be taken as excluding “souls.” “The Word became flesh” simply means “The Son of God became a Son of man.” ... Just as the accession of flesh to soul to constitute one man does not create a plurality of persons, so no plurality is effected by the accession of man to Word, so as to constitute one Christ. And the statement “the Word became flesh” is intended to make us understand the singularity of this person, not to lead us to imagine the conversion of the divinity into flesh. LETTER 140.12.

### ***The Assumption of the Flesh***

**JESUS THE MEDIATOR IS FLESH AND SPIRIT.** TERTULLIAN: Therefore, learn with Nicodemus that “what is born in flesh” is flesh and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Flesh does not become spirit, or spirit flesh; they can clearly exist in one person. Jesus consisted of flesh and spirit; of flesh as man, of spirit as God. The angel at the time proclaimed him Son of God, in respect that he was Spirit, keeping for the flesh the title Son of man. Thus also the apostle confirms that he was composed of two realities, when he designated him the “mediator of God and people.” AGAINST PRAXEAS 27.

**THE LIMITS OF THE FLESH ARE NOT SHAMEFUL.** TERTULLIAN: At any rate Christ loved humanity, humanity who is solidified in the womb, among all the uncleanness, who issues through the shameful parts, who is reared by means of all the indignities of infancy. For his sake Christ descended, for his sake he preached, for his sake “he humbled himself even unto death, the death of the

cross.” Certainly he loved him whom he redeemed at so great a cost.... Therefore in loving humanity he loved the process of birth also, and his flesh. Nothing can be loved apart from that through which it has existence. Take away the process of birth, and then show me the person. Take away the flesh and then show me whom Christ redeemed. If these constitute those whom God redeemed, how can you represent them as humiliating to him,<sup>24</sup> seeing that he redeemed them? How can you represent them as unworthy of him, seeing that he would not have redeemed them, had he not loved them? He reforms our birth by a new birth from heaven. He restores our flesh from all that afflicts it. He cleanses it when leprous, gives it new light when blind, new strength when paralyzed, exorcizes it when possessed by demons and even raises it to life when dead. So what humiliation was there in being born in flesh? ON THE FLESH OF CHRIST 4.

**OUR HUMANITY WAS ASSUMED BY GOD.** CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: This is why we gave way to them: not to divide the one Son into two, God forbid, but only insofar as to confess that there occurred neither confusion nor mixing, but that the flesh was flesh assumed from a woman, whereas the Word was Word begotten from the Father, or rather that since the Word has become flesh, as John tells us, there is one Christ and Son and Lord. Try and get them all to read carefully the letter of the blessed pope Athanasius.<sup>27</sup> Since in his day certain people were looking for an argument and saying that God the Word made a figurative body for himself out of his own nature, he argues throughout that the body was not consubstantial with the Word. And if it was not consubstantial then there must be two different natures out of which is understood the one and only Son. LETTER TO EULOGIUS.

**TRUE GOD BECOMES TRUE MAN.** CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: We say that the unique Word of God, who was begotten of the very substance of the Father, who is true God of true God, the Light of Light, through whom all things came into being, both things in heaven and things in earth, coming down for the sake of our salvation and humbling himself even to emptying, was made flesh and became man. That is, taking flesh of the holy Virgin and making it his own from the womb, he underwent a birth like ours and came forth a man of woman, not throwing off what he was, but even though he became man by the assumption of flesh and blood, yet still remaining what he was, that is, God indeed in nature and truth. We do not say that the flesh was changed into the nature of Godhead or that the ineffable nature of the Word of God was transformed into the nature of flesh, for he is unchangeable and unalterable, always remaining the same according to the Scriptures. THIRD LETTER TO NESTORIUS (LETTER 17).

**THE EMBODIED WORD WAS LIKE US BUT SINLESS.** HILARY OF POITIERS: If, besides the mystery of weeping, thirst and hunger, the flesh (that is, the whole man) was assumed, then the flesh was subject to natural passions but not so subject as to be overwhelmed by the hurt of sufferings.... The ordinary behavior of the body was accepted to show the reality of his body.... When he took drink and food, he did not submit himself to bodily necessity but to customary bodily behavior. He had a body, but one appropriate to its origin; not owing its being to the faults of human conception, but existing in the form of our body by his divine power. He bore the form of a servant, but he was free from the sins and weaknesses of a human body, so that we might be in him through his birth from a virgin but that our weaknesses should not be in him in virtue of the divine power of his origin from himself. ON THE TRINITY 10.24–25.

**THERE IS ONE CHRIST, NOT TWO SONS.** THEODORET OF CYR: I am not aware that I have ever so far taught a belief in two sons. For I was instructed to believe in one Only-Begotten, Jesus Christ our Lord, God the Word made man. But I understand the difference between flesh and Godhead, and in my opinion it is impiety to divide our one Lord Jesus Christ into two sons, just as also to take the opposite path and to speak of the Godhead of our Master, Christ, and his manhood, as one nature. LETTER 109.

### ***The Human Face of God***

**THE TRUE IMAGE OF GOD.** EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA: The material and senseless image, fashioned by base mechanic hands, of brass or iron, of gold or ivory, wood or stone, may be a fitting abode for evil spirits. But that divine form, wrought by the power of heavenly wisdom, was possessed of life and spiritual being, a form animated by every excellence, the dwelling place of the Word of God, a holy temple of the holy God. Thus the indwelling Word conversed with and was known to human beings, as kindred with themselves; yet yielded not to passions such as theirs, nor owned, as the natural soul, subjection to the body. He did not part with any of his intrinsic greatness. He did not change his proper Deity. For as the all-pervading radiance of the sun receives no stain from contact with dead and impure bodies, much less can the incorporeal power of the Word of God be injured in its essential purity or part with any of its greatness from spiritual contact with a human body. ORATION ON CONSTANTINE 14.3–4.

**THE WORD CAME AS OUR PHYSICIAN.** EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA: The Grecian myth tells us that Orpheus had power to charm ferocious beasts and tame their savage spirit by striking the chords of his instrument with a master hand. This story is celebrated by the Greeks, and generally believed, that an unconscious instrument could subdue the untamed brute and draw the trees from their places in obedience to its melodious power. But he who is the author of perfect harmony, the all-wise Word of God, desiring to apply every remedy to the manifold diseases of the souls of people, employed that human nature that is the workmanship of his own wisdom, as an instrument, by the melodious strains of which he soothed, not indeed the brute creation, but savages endued with reason, healing each furious temper, each fierce and angry passion of the soul, both in civilized and barbarous nations, by the remedial power of his divine doctrine. Like a physician of perfect skill, he met the diseases of their souls who sought for God in nature and in bodies, by a fitting and kindred remedy, and showed them God in human form. ORATION ON CONSTANTINE 14.5.

**THE IMMENSE GOD MAKES HIMSELF SMALL.** EPHREM THE SYRIAN: If anyone seeks your hidden nature, behold, it is in heaven in the great womb of divinity. And if anyone seeks your revealed body, behold, it rests and looks out from the small womb of Mary. The mind wanders among your attributes, O rich One. Copious inner chambers are in your Godhead; contemptible appearances in your humanity. Who will measure you, great Sea who made himself small? We came to see you as God. Behold! You are a human being. We came to see you as a human being, and lo! The banner of your Godhead shines forth. Who can bear your transformations, O true One? HYMNS ON THE NATIVITY 13.7–9.

**THE HUMANITY OF GOD.** EPHREM THE SYRIAN: The body taken from Mary rebuked that one who said that with another body the heavenly One dwelled in her. Perfect is the body, but how did it grow with our bread? It has sweat and spit and tears and even blood. And if the ascended body is unsullied, still it resembles our body since it died. Renounce error and confess that their nature is one. HYMNS ON VIRGINITY 37.9.

### ***Why Did God Become Human?***

**THE NEW ADAM RESCUES HUMANITY.** GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: He who removes the curse from me was called a curse on my account; he who takes away the sin of the world was called sin. And he becomes the new Adam to take the place of the old. In the same way he makes my insubordination his own, since he is the head of the whole body. So long as I am unsubjected and rebellious, by my refusal of God and because of my passions, Christ also is said to be unsubjected in respect of me. But when he has brought all things into subjection ... then he himself has brought his subjection to fulfillment by bringing me over to a state of salvation. ORATION 30.5.

**THE INCARNATION EDUCATES US.** CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: The Lord, as God and man, gives us all kinds of profit and help. As God he forgives our sins; as man he educates us to be free from sin. CHRIST THE EDUCATOR 1.3.(7).

**HE BECOMES MAN TO RAISE HUMANITY.** HILARY OF POITIERS: He is born as man, while remaining God: this is in contradiction of our natural understanding. That he should remain God, though born as man, does not contradict our natural hope. For the birth of a higher nature into a lower state gives us confidence that a lower nature can be born into a higher condition. ON THE TRINITY 9.4.

**THE INCARNATION ENTRAPS DEATH.** CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: thus we were saved by the very weapons with which the devil fought against us. The Lord took from us a likeness to us, that he might save human nature. He took our likeness so that he might give greater grace to that which lacked; that sinful human nature might become partaker of God. "For where sin abounded, grace abounded overwhelmingly."<sup>44</sup> The Lord had to suffer for us, but if the devil had recognized him, he would not have dared to approach him. "For had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." His body therefore became a bait for death, so that the dragon, hoping to swallow him, might vomit up also those whom he had swallowed. For death growing strong had swallowed us up, and yet "God has removed every tear from every face."<sup>46</sup> CATECHETICAL LECTURES 12.15.

**THE WORD ASSUMES HUMAN LIFE TO HEAL HUMANITY.** CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: We maintain, therefore, that since human nature was suffering corruption because of Adam's transgression, and since our intellect was being tyrannized by the pleasures or rather the innate impulses of the flesh, then it was necessary that the Word of God should be incarnated for the salvation of us who are on this earth. This was so he could make his own that human flesh that was subject to corruption and sick with its desires and destroy corruption within it, since he is Life and Lifegiver, bringing its innate sensual impulses to order. This was how the sin that lay within it was to be put to death, for we remember how the blessed Paul called our innate impulses the

law of sin. From the time that human flesh became the personal flesh of the Word it has ceased to be subject to corruption, and since he who dwelled within it and revealed it as his very own, knew no sin being God, as I have already said, it has also ceased to be sick with its desires. The only-begotten Word of God did not bring this about for his own benefit, for he is ever what he is, but evidently he did it for ours. And if we were subject to the evils following from Adam's transgression then Christ's benefit also must come to us, that is, incorruption and the putting to death of sin. This is why he became man. FIRST LETTER TO SUCCENSUS 9.

**THE LORD LIBERATES HUMANITY FROM DEATH.** CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: the Scripture says that he was wearied from the journey, experienced sleepiness, anxiety, pain and all the blameless human passions for this very reason, that we might believe that he did become man, even though he remained what he was, that is, God by nature. By contrast, to assure those who saw him that he was truly God, as well as being man, he worked divine signs, rebuking the sea,<sup>51</sup> raising the dead and performing other wonderful works. He even endured the cross so that by suffering death in the flesh (though not in the nature of the Godhead) he might become the "firstborn from the dead."<sup>53</sup> He opened up the way for human nature to incorruption and despoiled hell, taking pity on the souls who were imprisoned there. FIRST LETTER TO SUCCENSUS 9.

**THE INCARNATION IS GOD'S WORK AS MEDIATOR.** LEO THE GREAT: The distinctive character of each nature and substance remaining, therefore, unimpaired and coming together into one person, humility was assumed by majesty, weakness by power, mortality by eternity; and, in order to pay the debt of our condition, an inviolable nature was united to a nature capable of suffering, so that as a remedy suitable to our healing "one and the same mediator between God and people, the man Jesus Christ," was capable of death in the one nature and incapable of death in the other. Thus, in the whole and perfect nature of true manhood, true God was born, complete in what belonged to him and complete in what belonged to us. And by the words "what belonged to us" we mean what the Creator formed in us from the beginning and what he took on himself in order to restore; for that which the deceiver introduced, and people, being deceived, admitted, had no trace in the Savior. LETTER 28.3 (THE TOME OF LEO).

### ***The Fullness of God Dwelled Within Him***

**THE LORD MEDIATES WITH GOD.** CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: He is called the "apostle and high priest" of our confession, since he ministers to God the Father that confession of faith that we offer both to him and through him to God the Father (and certainly to the Holy Spirit also). We also confess that he is by nature the only-begotten Son of God, and we do not attribute the priesthood, both the name and thing, to another man beside him.<sup>58</sup> For he has become a "mediator between God and people, and the one who reconciles us to peace, since he has offered up himself as a smell of sweet savor to God the Father." THIRD LETTER TO NESTORIUS (LETTER 17).

**THE FINE WHITE LINEN OF THE MANGER.** EPHREM THE SYRIAN: In a manger the Lord of the universe reclined for the sake of the universe. Behold, O Bethlehem, David the king clothes himself in fine white linen. The Lord of David and Son of David hid his glory in swaddling clothes. His swaddling clothes gave a robe of glory to human beings. On this day our Lord exchanged radiance for shame, as the humble One. For Adam exchanged truth for evil, as a rebel. The

gracious One took pity. His upright deeds conquered those of the perverse. HYMNS ON THE NATIVITY 5.3–5.

**DIVINITY WEAVES ITSELF A ROBE.** EPHREM THE SYRIAN: But let us sing the birth of the firstborn, how divinity in the womb wove herself a garment. She put it on and emerged in birth; in death she stripped it off again. Once she stripped it off; twice she put it on. When the left hand snatched it, she wrested it from her, and she placed it on the right hand. The power that governs all dwelled in a small womb. While dwelling there, he was holding the reins of the universe. His parent was ready for his will to be fulfilled. The heavens and all the creation were filled by him. The Sun entered the womb, and in the height and depth his rays were dwelling. He dwelled in the vast wombs of all creation. They were too small to contain the greatness of the firstborn. How indeed did that small womb of Mary suffice for him? It is a wonder if it sufficed for him. Of all the wombs that contained him, one womb truly sufficed: the womb of the great One<sup>63</sup> who begot him. HYMNS ON THE NATIVITY 21.5–7.

**HIS BIRTH SILENCES THE ANGELS.** EPHREM THE SYRIAN: Between his birth and death he placed the world in the middle. By his birth and death he revived it. A thousand thousands stood; ten thousand ten thousands ran. Thousands and ten thousands were not able to investigate the One! All of them in silence, therefore, stood to serve him. He has no consort except the child that is from him. Seeking him is in silence. When Watchers<sup>66</sup> went to investigate, they reached silence and were restrained. HYMNS ON THE NATIVITY 21.19–20.

### ***Born of a Woman That Humankind Might Be Born of God***

**BORN AS A REAL MAN FROM A VIRGIN MOTHER.** CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: Believe also that he, the only-begotten Son of God, for our sins came down to earth from heaven, assuming a manhood subject to the same feelings as ours and being born of a holy Virgin and the Holy Spirit: and this not in appearance or in imagination but in reality. He did not pass through the Virgin as through a channel but truly took flesh and was truly fed with milk from her. He truly ate as we eat and drank as we drink. For if the incarnation was a figment, then our salvation was a figment. Christ was twofold; he was man, in what was visible; he was God, in what was invisible. He ate, as being really man like us (for he had the feelings of the flesh just as we have); but he fed the five thousand with five loaves, as being God. He died, as being really man, but as God he raised the body four days dead. CATECHETICAL LECTURES 4.9.<sup>4</sup>

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