

ON THE INCARNATION, by Athanasius of Alexandria

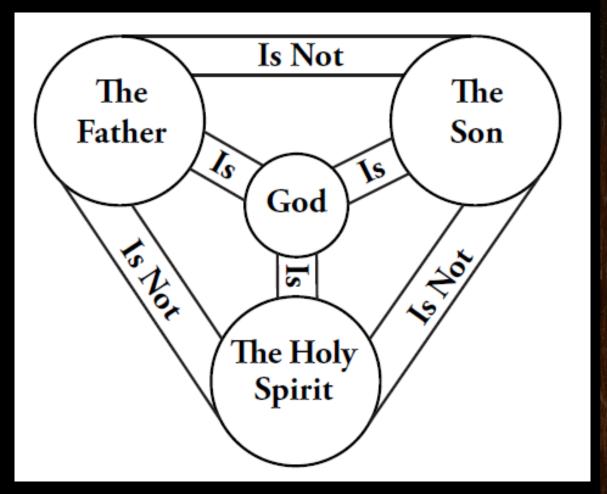
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BOOK OF THE MONTH Westminster Presbyterian Church R. Carlton Wynne April 12, 2023

- Born ~296 AD. Died in 373 AD (77 yrs. old)
- Assistant/Deacon to Alexander of Alexandria (bishop) – (died 238 AD)
- Alexandria, Egypt, was a center of trade, scholarship, business, culture.
 - "[A city] great, splendid, and luxurious. No one lives here idly ... Everyone is master of some trade, and attached to the service of it ... Their only god is money" (Emperor Hadrian, 2nd C; *Scriptores Historiae* Augustae, Saturninus, 8.8)



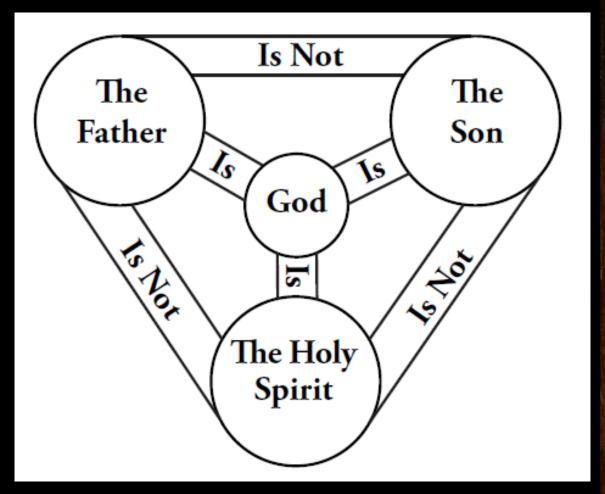
London Macmillan & Co.Ltd.



 Q. 5. Are there more Gods than one? A. There is but one only, the living and true God.

TRINITARIAN ORTHODOXY

 Q. 6. How many persons are there in the godhead? A. There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. (WSC 4–5).



TRINITARIAN HERESIES

 Sabellianism – the belief that the Father, Son, and Spirit are three modes or aspects of God (not three distinct persons).

 Subordinationism – the belief that the Father is the true God, and the Son and Spirit are subordinate beings (not one nature with the Father)

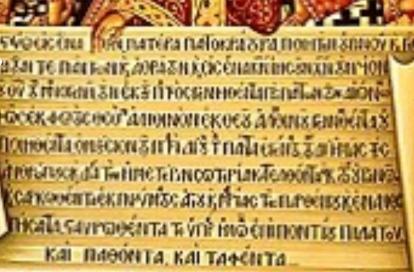
The Nicene Creed (325 AD)

- I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.
- I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages.

God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance [*homoousion*] with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.



HC/NO/O SN AF TIATEPON



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The Nicene Creed (325 AD)

- "... begotten, not made, of one substance [homoousion] with the Father ... "
 - *Homoousios* = the Son is "of the <u>same</u> substance" with the Father (i.e., the Son is divine).
 - *Homoiousios* = the Son is "of a <u>similar</u> substance" with the Father (i.e., the Son is NOT divine).

"Arius says that Christ is God, but mutters that he was made and had a beginning. He says that Christ is one with the Father, but secretly whispers in the ears of his own partisans that He is united to the Father like other believers, although by a singular privilege. Say 'consubstantial' and you will tear off the mask of this turncoat, and yet you add nothing to Scripture." (John Calvin, Institutes, 3.13.5)



ΚΑΙ ΠΑΘΟΝΤΑ, ΚΑΙ ΤΑΦΕΊΝΤΑ.

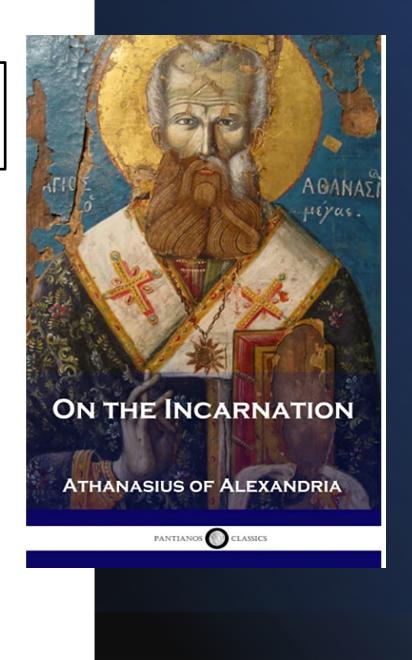
• "Let us be courageous and rejoice always.... Let us consider and lay to heart that while the Lord is with us, our foes can do us no hurt... But if they see us rejoicing in the Lord, contemplating the bliss of the future, mindful of the Lord, deeming all things in His hand . . . - they are discomfited and turned backwards." (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 4, 207)



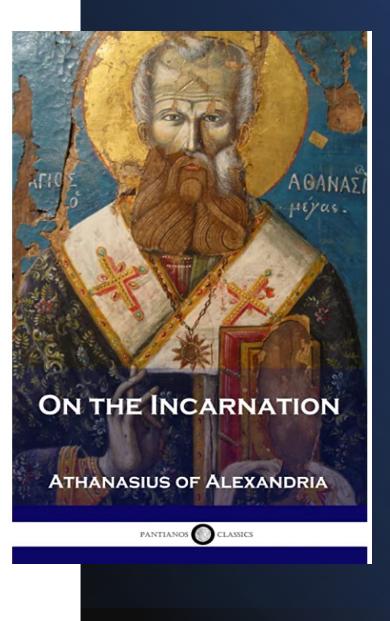
"When I first opened his De Incarnatione *I soon discovered by a very simple test that I was reading a masterpiece . . ."*

– C.S. Lewis

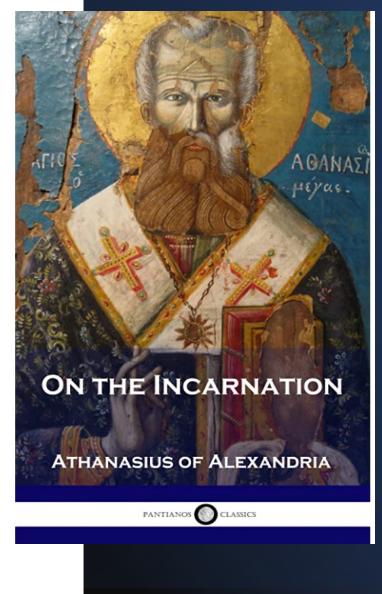
- Written before the rise of the Arian heresy 319 AD, addressed to a convert from heathenism.
- The second volume of two works (the first is Against the Gentiles (Contra Gentes).
- <u>CHAPTER OUTLINE</u>
 - Ch. 1 Creation and the Fall
 - Ch. 2–3 The Divine Dilemma and its Solution in the Incarnation
 - Ch. 4–5 The Death and Resurrection of Christ
 - Ch. 6 Refutation of the Jews
 - Ch. 7–8 Refutation of the Gentiles
 - Ch. 9 Conclusion



Q. #1 – WHAT IS THE INCARNATION?

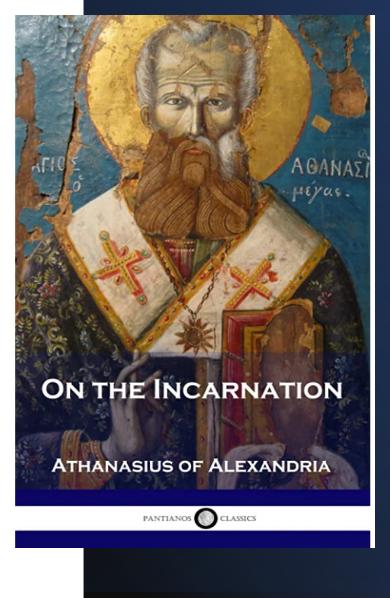


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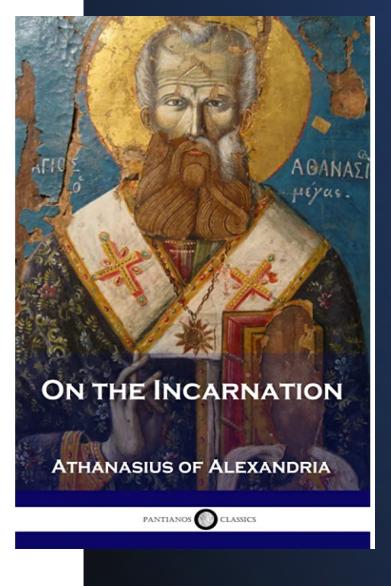
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- The Son or "Word" (Jn 1:1) assumed a human nature.
 - John 1:14 "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ..."



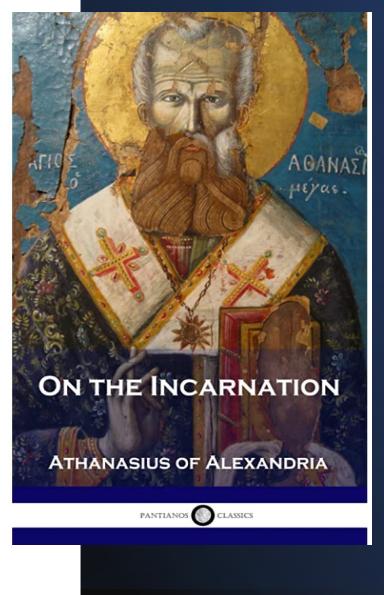
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 - Phil 2:6 "... though he was <u>in the form of God</u> ... [he] emptied himself, <u>by taking</u> the form of a servant ..."



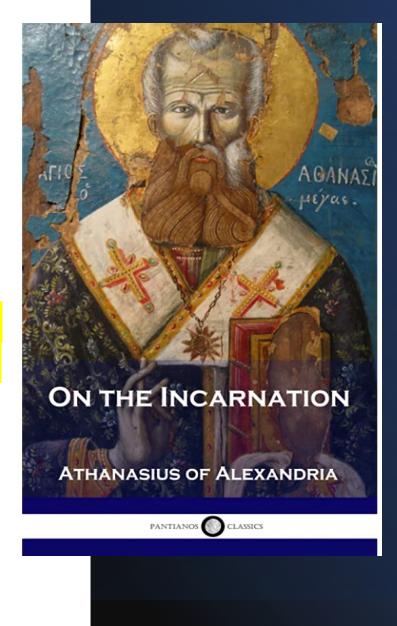
Q. #1 – WHAT IS THE INCARNATION?

- The Son or "Word" (Jn 1:1) assumed a human nature.
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- This assumption is *permanent!*
 - *"… there is one mediator between God and men, <u>the man</u> Christ Jesus." (1 Tim 2:5)*



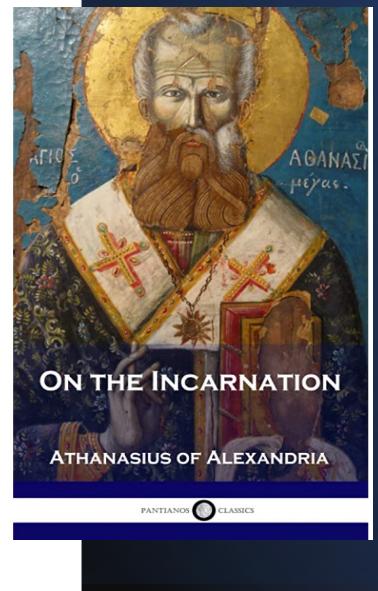
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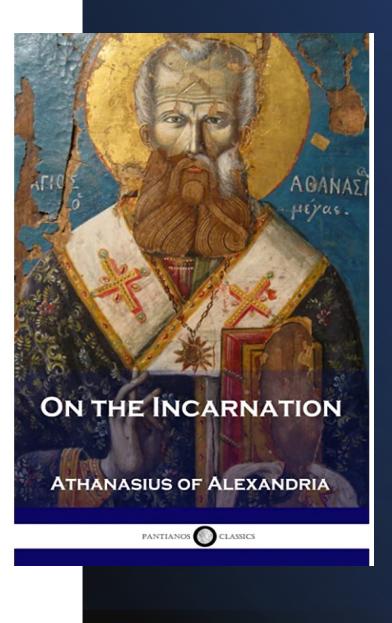
"You must understand, therefore, that when writers on this sacred theme speak of Him as eating and drinking and being born, they mean that the body, as the body, was born and sustained with the food proper to its nature; while God the Word, Who was united with it, was at the same time ordering the universe and revealing Himself through his bodily acts as not man only but God." (34)



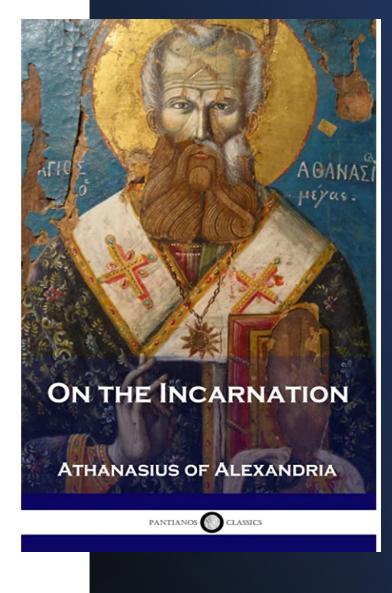
Q. #1 – WHAT IS THE INCARNATION?

"The Word was not hedged in by the body, nor did *His presence in the body prevent His being present* elsewhere as well. When He moved His body He did not cease also to direct the universe by His Mind and might ... At one and the same time – this is the wonder – 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. Not even His birth from a virgin, therefore, changed Him in any way, nor was He defiled by being in the body. Rather, he sanctified the body by being in it." (33)

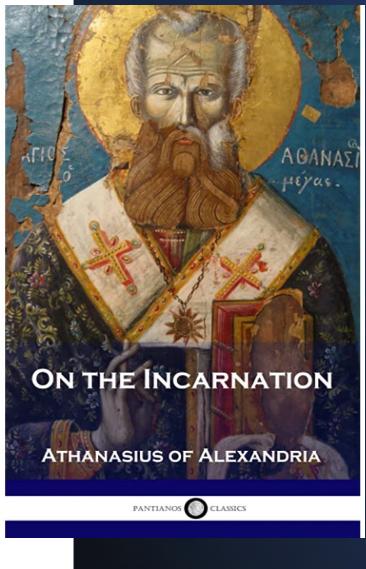




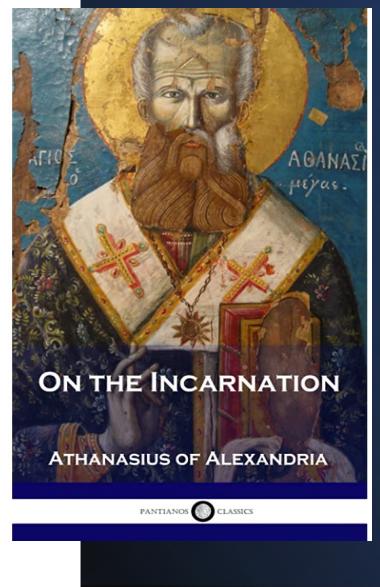
- To vindicate God's goodness by saving fallen humanity from corruption and death.
 - "It would, of course, have been unthinkable that God should go back upon His word and that man, having transgressed, should not die; but it was equally monstrous that beings which once had shared the nature of the Word should perish and turn back again into non-existence through corruption." (19)



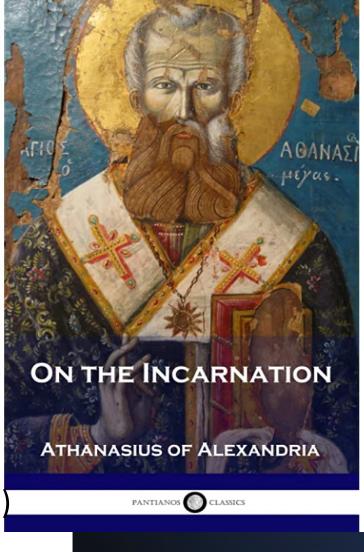
- To vindicate God's goodness by saving fallen humanity from corruption and death.
- To renew humanity in the image of God.
 - "What, then, was God to do? What else could He possibly do, being God, but renew His Image in mankind, so that through it men might once more come to know Him? And how could this be done save by the coming of the very Image Himself, our Savior Jesus Christ? ... 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." (29)



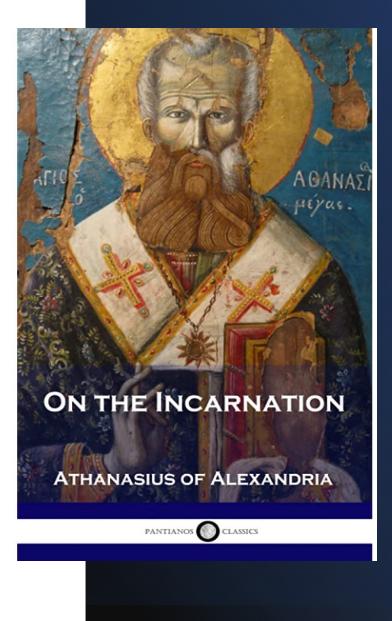
- To vindicate God's goodness by saving fallen humanity from corruption and death.
- To renew humanity in the image of God.
- To pay the debt of death for sinners.
 - "But beyond all this, there was a debt owing which must needs be paid; for, as I said before, all men were due to die ... [T]he Word dwelt among us ... [that] He might offer the sacrifice on behalf of all, surrendering His own temple to death in place of all, to settle man's account with death and free him from the primal transgression." (38)



- CHRIST'S PERFECT DEATH:
 - Public (to show his divine power)
 - Not due to own weakness (not accidental)
 - Pursued by Jesus (as the goal of his life)
 - Not hidden (to prove He didn't fake it)
 - Not noble (to prove he conquered all)
 - Not by dismemberment (for church unity)
 - With arms stretched out (for Jew/Gentile)
 - Lifted up into the air (to make way to heaven)
 - Led to a public resurrection (his victory)



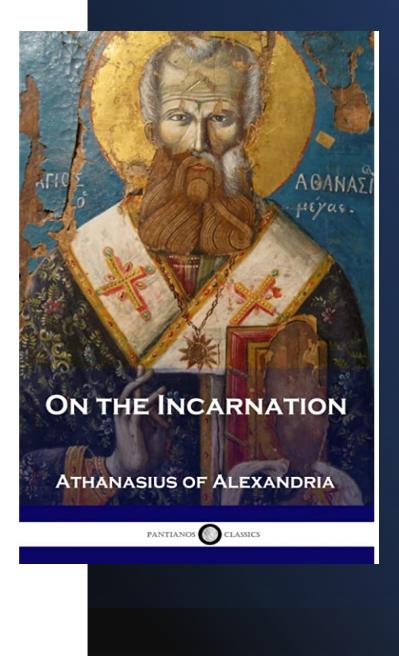
"But He, indeed, assumed humanity that we might become God [lit. 'that we might be made divine' (theopoiēthōmen)]. He manifested Himself by means of a body in order that we might perceive the Mind of the unseen Father. He endured shame from men that we might inherit immortality." (84)



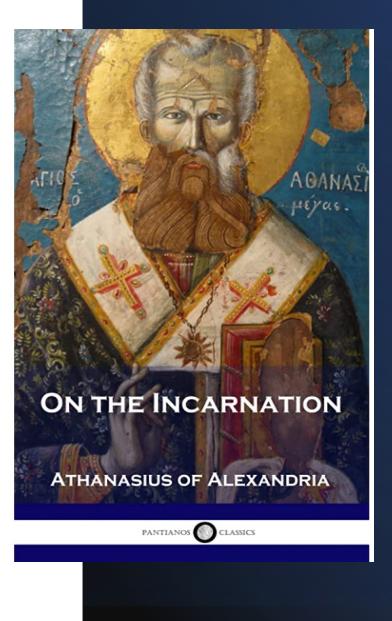
"But He, indeed, assumed humanity that we might become God [lit. 'that we might be made divine' (theopoiēthōmen)]." (84)

"Theopoiēsis is the process of bringing humanity back to the fullness of Christ, to be the ultimate human being created in God's image. It is not to transform human nature into the divine essence, but to bring humans to the fullness of humanity, the fullness of renewal, the fullness of being perfect human beings who are created in the image of the divine and who do not suffer death any longer as they are made incorruptible."

> – Lois Farag, Athanasius of Alexandria: An Introduction to his Writings and Theology (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2020), 125.

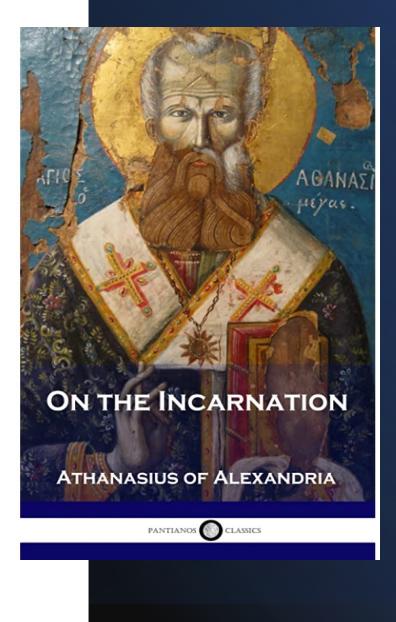


Q. #3 – PROOF OF HIS RESURRECTION?



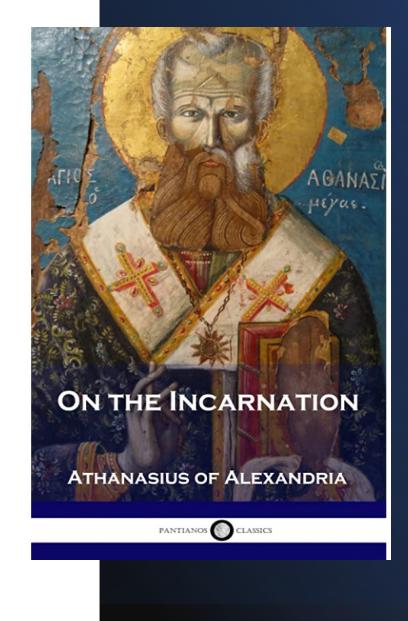
Q. #3 – PROOF OF HIS RESURRECTION?

"But now that the Savior has raised His body, death is no longer terrible, but all those who believe in Christ treat it underfoot as nothing, and 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." (47)

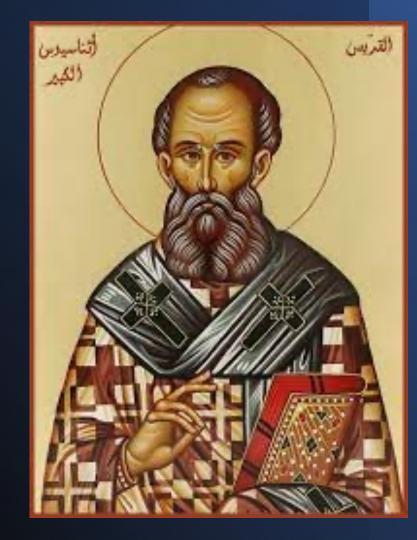


Q. #3 – PROOF OF HIS RESURRECTION?

"If, then, the Savior is neither a mere man nor a magician, nor one of the demons, but has by His Godhead confounded and overshadowed the opinions of the poets and the delusions of the demons and the wisdom of the Greeks, **it must be manifest and will be owned by all that He is in truth Son of God, Existent Word and Wisdom and Power of the Father."** (78)



"The thing is happening before our very eyes, in Egypt ..." (60)



"The thing is happening before our very eyes, in Egypt ..." (60)

Isaiah 19:19–25 – "In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord at its border.²⁰ It will be a sign and a witness to the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt. When they cry to the Lord because of oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and deliver them. ²¹ And the Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day and worship with sacrifice and offering, and they will make vows to the Lord and perform them. ²² And the Lord will strike Egypt, striking and healing, and they will return to the Lord, and he will listen to their pleas for mercy and heal them.²³ In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and Assyria will come into Egypt, and Egypt into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. ²⁴ In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, ²⁵ whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, 'Blessed be **Egypt my people**, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance."

