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Hippolytus of Rome **Contra Noetum**

Text introduced,
edited and translated by

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HEYTHROP MONOGRAPHS
London, 1977

**A DISCOURSE OF HIPPOLYTUS,
ARCHBISHOP OF ROME AND MARTYR,
AGAINST THE SECT OF A CERTAIN NOETUS**

A Discourse of Hippolytus, Archbishop of Rome and Martyr, against the sect of a certain Noetus

1.1 – 2.8

INTRODUCTION: THE PATRIPASSIANIST HERESY

Part 1

1.1 – 1.8

Origins: The Doctrine, Decline and Fall of Noetus

1.1

Certain strangers are introducing a strange teaching, disciples as they are of a certain Noetus, who was a Smyrnaean by origin, and lived no great length of time ago.

The disciples of Noetus

1.2

The fellow put on airs and was led on into vanity. Carried away by an alien spirit's fancy, he said that Christ was the Father in person, and that the Father in person had been born and had suffered and died. You see the great vanity of heart and puffed-up pride of an alien spirit that found their way into him!

*Noetus' vanity and his
patripassianist heresy*

1.3

In fact the condemnation which the rest of his doings met with is enough to show that his pronouncements were coming from no pure spirit. For the fact is that he had been thrown out of holy office for blaspheming against the Holy Spirit (*cf. Lk 12, 10*).

*The unclean and
blasphemous spirit that
inspired him explains the
fact of his downfall*

1.4

The fellow was saying that he himself was Moses and his brother Aaron. When the blessed elders heard all this, they called him in and questioned him closely in the name of the Church.* But he denied it and said that he was not aiming at the top ranks.

*His trial for ambition and
his lying denial*

1.5

But afterwards he withdrew and hid behind a certain group of persons and gathered around himself wayward followers and subsequently he kept trying to establish his doctrine in its 'purity'.

*His deceitful formation of
a sect of his own*

1.6

Once again the blessed elders called him in

*His trial for heresy and
condemnation: he openly
defies authority*

*or 'called him to face the Church and questioned him closely'.

1.6 (continued)

and condemned him. But he stood up to them and said, 'What wrong am I in fact doing by giving glory to Christ?'

1.7

*The reaction of
traditional orthodoxy*

The elders' reply to him runs: 'We too have knowledge of a single God — in the true way. We have knowledge of Christ. We know that the Son suffered as in fact he suffered, died as in fact he died; and rose up again on the third day and is at the right hand of the Father, and is coming to judge living and dead. And these things that we state are what we learnt.' Then they condemned the man and expelled him from the Church.

1.8

*Noetus' excommunication
and final severance from
the Church*

He reached such a pitch of bloated pride that he established a teaching centre.

Part 2

2.1 — 2.8

*(a) The Oneness of God: Arguments
a first pair of texts and an exposition*

2.1

*1st text: there is one
God only*

It is these who are even trying to show how the doctrine is established by saying, 'He said in the Law: "I am the God of your fathers; you shall have no other gods besides me" (*Exod 3, 6; 20, 3*).

2.2

*2nd text: there is one
God only*

And again elsewhere, "I am the first", he says, "and I am the last, and in addition to me there is no one" (*Isai 44, 6*).

2.3

*Patripassianist
exposition*

This is the way they are claiming to establish a single God. They reply to queries by saying, 'Well, if I maintain that Christ is God, then he is the Father in person — if in fact he is God at all. But Christ, who is personally God, suffered. Then was it not the Father who suffered? After all, he was the Father in person.'

2.4

*Orthodox comment –
bad exegesis makes for
bad theology*

But this is not the case — because this is not the way in which the Scriptures explain the matter.

(b) The One God appeared on earth: a second pair of texts and an exposition plus an added testimony

2.5

*1st text and
explanation*

But they go on to use other testimonies, too, and say, 'Thus has it been written: "This is our God. No other will be compared to him. He found out the whole way of knowledge and gave it to Jacob his son and to Israel who is his beloved. Afterwards he was seen on earth and conversed with men" (Bar 3,36–38). So you see', he says, 'that this is the God who is one alone, and who subsequently was seen and conversed with men.

2.6

*2nd text and
explanation*

And elsewhere', he says, 'he states: "Egypt laboured and the markets of the Ethiopians and the giant Sabaeen men will come over to thee, and they will be thy slaves, and they will walk behind thee with their hands bound in chains, and thee they will adore, because God is in thee; and to thee they will make their prayers; and there is no God save thee. For thou art God and we did not know, the God of Israel, the Saviour" (Isai 45, 14f). You see', he says, 'how the Scriptures proclaim one God — the one who is visibly revealed.

2.7

*Patripassianist
exposition*

On such testimonies as these, I am bound', says he, 'since the existence of a single one is maintained, to submit this very one to suffering. For Christ was God and suffered for us — he who was the Father in person — so that he might be able also to save us. And we cannot', he says, 'say anything else.

2.8

*The added testimony
of St Paul*

For, what is more, the Apostle maintains a single God

2.8 (continued)

when he says, "To them belong the fathers, and of their race, according to the flesh, is Christ, who is God over all, blessed for ever" (Rom 9, 5).

3.1 – 3.6

SECTION A1 : PROGRAMMATIC NOTE

The use of Scripture and the programme to be followed

(a) On the use of Scripture

3.1

*Heretics misuse Scripture
and so do not attain the
Truth*

And this is the way they themselves, too, wish to explain these individual verses — using them in the way Theodotus spoke in his attempt to establish that [Christ] was a mere man. But neither they nor these latter have had a true thought, inasmuch as the Scriptures themselves, testifying as they do to the truth, prove their lack of learning.

3.2

E.g., the Patripassianists

You see, brethren, how rash and reckless a doctrine they introduced in saying quite shamelessly, 'The Father is himself Christ; he is himself the Son; he himself was born, he himself suffered, he himself raised himself up!'

3.3

*Scripture is the norm of
orthodoxy and truth*

But this is not the case. It is the Scriptures that speak correctly, whatever other notions even Noetus might think up. And just because Noetus has no notion, this does not mean that it is the Scriptures that should be thrown out.

(b) On the programme to be followed

3.4

*Of course, there is one
God — plus the 'economy'*

After all, would not everyone say that there is a single God? — but it is not everyone who would scrap the economy.

3.5

*So Noetian exegesis must
be refuted and a true
exposition made*

So really, in view of all this, the first of our two tasks must be to refute our opponents' understanding of the passages quoted, and to show what they mean in the light of the truth.

3.6

*For a correct exposition of
God's Fatherhood is all-
important*

This is because the primary aim really is to explain that there is 'one God, the Father, from whom is every family tie, through whom are all things, and from whom are all things; and we are in him' (cf. 1 Cor 8, 6 with Eph 3, 15).

4.1 – 4.13

SECTION A2 : THE PRE-INCARNATE WORD
Isaiah 45 correctly interpreted*(a) Opening remarks: the importance of quoting passages in full*

4.1
*Our present refutation of
Noetian exegesis will enable
us to offer a true exegesis*

As I was saying, let us see how he is refuted, then let us in this way come to explain the truth.

4.2
*Noetus' use of Isaiah 45
illustrates their habit of
mutilating the Scriptures*

Now he says: 'Egypt laboured and the markets of the Ethiopians and the Sabaeans' (*Isai 45, 14*), and the rest, so as to be able to say: 'For thou art the God of Israel, the Saviour' (*Isai 45, 15*) – having no thought for what has been said before this. In fact whenever they want to get up to their tricks, they hack the Scriptures to pieces.

4.3
*The passage should be
quoted in full*

But let him quote passages in full, and he will discover the purpose behind what is being said. For the passage's beginning happens to be a little higher up, and it is from here that one must begin to show to whom and about whom he is speaking.

4.4
*The passage quoted
in full*

Now starting from up above, the beginning of the passage goes like this:

Question me about my sons and my daughters, and command me concerning the works of my hands? I made earth and man upon it. With my hand I made firm the heaven. I commanded all the stars. I raised him up, and all his ways are straight. This is he who will build my city and will reverse the captivity, not with ransoms and not with bribes, said the Lord Sabaoth. Thus spoke the Lord Sabaoth: 'Egypt laboured and the markets of the Ethiopians and the giant Sabaean men will come over to thee, and they will be thy slaves, and they will follow behind thee with their hands bound in chains. And thee they will adore, and to thee they will make their prayers, because God is in thee; and there is no God save thee. For thou art God and we did not know, the God of Israel, the Saviour' (*Isai 45, 11–15*).

(b) Correctly interpreted, the passage reveals the mystery of the economy, the existence of the Word

4.5

Certain phrases point to Christ, the Father's own Word

Now, 'In thee', he says, 'is God'. But in whom is God, except in Christ Jesus, the Father's own Word and the mystery of the economy?

4.6

and the Father's incarnate Son

Again, who is the revelation about when he points to the fact of his flesh: 'I raised him up with justice, and all his ways are straight'? Well? About whom is the Father testifying? It is about the Son that the Father says, 'I raised up with justice'. And that the Father raised up his Son in justice the Apostle Paul testifies when he says, 'But if the Spirit of him who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Jesus Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit which dwells in you' (*Rom 8, 11*). There you are! He has confirmed what had been said through the prophet: 'I raised up with justice'.

4.7

In fact, to the Word who, as man, is Son

So the statement 'In thee is God' revealed the mystery of the economy — that once the Word had taken flesh and was among men, the Father was in the Son and the Son in the Father (*cf. Jn 14, 10*), while the Son was living among men.

4.8

i.e., to the Word as mystery of the economy

So this, brethren, is what was being pointed out — that the mystery of the economy really was this very Word who fashioned from the Holy Spirit and the virgin an only Son for God.

(c) The pre-incarnate existence of the Word as Son of man

4.9

Christ himself says that he existed before the incarnation as Son of man in heaven

And this is not just my story, but he who came down from heaven is a witness to it himself. For he speaks as follows: 'No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven' (*Jn 3, 13*).

4.10

The Word was not flesh before the incarnation: the flesh is the Word's self-offering as Son

So what is he after beyond what has been said? Surely he is not going to say that he was flesh while still in heaven? Now

4.10 (continued)

flesh is what was offered up by the Father's own Word as a gift — flesh which had been shown forth as God's perfect Son from the Spirit and the virgin. So it was plain to see that he himself was offering himself up to the Father.

4.11

In heaven the Word was without flesh

But there was no flesh previous to this in heaven. Who, then, was he in heaven but the fleshless Word — he who was sent for the purpose of showing that he who is on earth is in heaven too? For he was Word, he was Spirit, he was Power (*cf. Lk 1, 35*).

4.12

In becoming man he became what he had been called from the beginning — the Son of man

He was taking to himself the name which is common among men and understood by them; and this — 'the Son of man' — he was called from the beginning with a view to the future, even though he was not yet a man.

4.13

This is confirmed by Daniel 7

Just as Daniel attests when he says: 'I looked, and behold! on the clouds of heaven there was one coming like a Son of man' (*Dan 7, 13*). So he said quite justifiably that the Word of God, who has this name from the beginning, is in heaven, and is called it from the beginning.

5.1 — 5.5

SECTION A3 : THE INCARNATE WORD

Baruch 3 correctly interpreted — The incarnate Word is the visible expression of the Father's will

5.1

The text points to another besides the Father

'But what', he says, 'does he mean in the other text: "This is God; no other will be compared to him" (*Bar 3, 36*)?' It is well said. After all, who is there to be compared to the Father? In what he says — 'This is our God; no other will be compared to him. He has found out the whole way of knowledge, and has given it to Jacob his son, and to Israel who is his beloved' (*Bar 3, 36f*) — he puts it well.

5.2

The beloved Son of the Gospels

For who is Jacob his son, Israel who is his beloved

5.2 (continued)

but the very one about whom he cries out with the words, 'This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased: him you must hear' (*Mt 17, 5*)?

5.3

The perfect Israel, the true Jacob, who received all knowledge from the Father and came on earth as man

So the perfect Israel, the true Jacob, received the whole of knowledge from the Father, and 'afterwards he appeared on earth and lived among men' (*Bar 3, 38*).

5.4

This man-who-sees-God has alone revealed the Father's will

And who is Israel but 'man-seeing-God'? But there is no one who sees God save only the son and perfect man, and he who alone made known the mind of the Father.

5.5

This is confirmed by John 1 and 3

After all, John too says: 'No one has even seen God; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father has himself made him known' (*Jn 1, 18*). And again: 'He who has come down from heaven bears witness to what he has seen and heard' (*Jn 3, 13.32*). So this is he to whom the Father gave all knowledge. He it is who 'appeared on earth and lived among men'.

6.1 – 7.7

SECTION A4 : THE UNITY AND DISTINCTION OF GOD

Romans 9 correctly interpreted

(a) Christ and the Father are one God

6.1

The text shows that Christ is God, and Christ himself said as much

And what the Apostle says — 'To them belong the fathers, and of their race, according to the flesh, is Christ, who is God over all, blessed for ever' (*Rom 9, 5*) — gives a good and clear exposition of the mystery of the truth. He is, since he is over all, God. After all, he speaks quite openly as follows: 'All things have been delivered to me by the Father' (*Mt 11, 27*). He who is blessed God over all has been born, and, having become man, is God

6.1 (continued)

for ever.

6.2

This is confirmed by John, who calls Christ 'Almighty', using Christ's own testimony

For John too spoke as follows: 'He who is and who was and who is to come, God the Almighty' (*Apoc 1, 8*). He was quite right to say that Christ is Almighty, because he has said exactly what Christ will testify to him too. For Christ testified to this when he said, 'All things have been delivered to me by the Father' (*Mt 11, 27*). And he does exercise his might over all. Christ was established as Almighty by the Father.

6.3

And Paul had already said the same in 1 Corinthians 15

And Paul too had already spoken thus, when he revealed that all things had been delivered to him:

Christ is the first-fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death . . . But when it says, 'all things are put in subjection under him', it is plain that he is excepted who put all things under him. Then he himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, so that God may be all in all (*1 Cor 15, 23-28*).

6.4

although, of course, Christ is ultimately subject to the Father

If therefore all things have been put in subjection under him except him who subjected them, he exercises his might over all; but the Father over him, so that in all things a single God may be revealed, to whom all things are subjected along with Christ, to whom the Father subjected all things apart from himself.

6.5

and Christ himself, in John 20, calls the Father his God

For this is what Christ said when in the Gospel he acknowledged him who is both his own Father and his God. For his words run

6.5 (continued)

as follows: 'I am going to my Father and your Father, my God and your God' (*Jn 20, 17*).

6.6

What objection could Noetus have to this, which is so clear in Scripture?

Now if Noetus has the effrontery to say that he [Christ] is the Father in person, to what Father will he say Christ is going, according to the Gospel quotation? And if he imagines that we are to abandon the Gospel and believe in his nonsense, he is wasting his time — for we 'must obey God rather than man' (*Acts 5, 29*).

(b) Yet, as Son, Christ is distinct from the Father

7.1

John 10 reveals distinct persons, but a single Power

And if he were to say, 'He himself said: "I and the Father are one"' (*Jn 10, 30*), let him apply his mind to the matter and learn that he did not say, 'I and the Father *am* one', but '*are* one'. 'We are' is not said with reference to one, but with reference to two. He revealed two persons, but a single Power.

7.2

This is confirmed by John 17

And Christ himself resolved the problem when he spoke about the disciples to his Father: 'The glory thou gavest me, I gave to them, that they may be one even as we are one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me' (*Jn 17, 22–23*).

7.3

The Son is the single Mind of the Father

What have the Noetians got to say to this? Surely not that all of us 'is' actually one body in terms of substance! Rather we become one virtually, by our disposition towards singlemindedness. Well, in the same way the son, sent and not recognized by those who are in the world (*cf. Jn 1, 10*), maintained that he is in the Father — virtually, as a disposition. For the son is the Father's 'single Mind'. Those of us

7.3 (continued)

who have the Father's Mind are thereby believers. But those who are not so 'minded' have denied the Son (*cf. 1 Jn 5, 12*).

(c) An objection answered: Philip's question about the Father

7.4

Pace the Noetians, Christ's answer to Philip in John 14 brings out the same distinction

But supposing they were to try also to quote the fact that Philip asked about the Father: 'Show us the Father and we shall be satisfied' (*Jn 14, 8*); and the Lord answered him with the words: 'Have I been with you so long, Philip, and yet you do not know me? He who has seen me has seen the Father. Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?' (*Jn 14, 9–10*) — and they want to say that thereby their doctrine prevails, since [Christ] maintains that he himself is the Father. They should realize that they are putting an enormous obstacle in their own path, and stand condemned by the quotation itself.

7.5

Christ in fact showed himself to be Son — and Philip did not see it

For although Christ declared and revealed himself to be the Son in everything, they attained no knowledge of him, and could not grasp or see the force [of his words]. And Philip did not take in the very thing that was there to see, and was expecting to look at the Father. The Lord said to him, 'Philip, have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me? He who has seen me has seen the Father. How is it that you are saying, "Show us the Father"?' (*Jn 14, 9*).

7.6

And therefore also Image of the Father, through whom the Father can be known

In other words, 'If you have seen me, through me you can know the Father. For through the image which has real likeness, the Father becomes easy to know. But if you do not recognize the image — which

7.6 (continued)

is the Son — how is it that you want to see the Father?’

7.7

Other statements confirm this distinction between the Son and the Father

Statements prior and subsequent to the passage quoted clearly show that this is the case, pointing as they do to the Son who has been put forth (*cf. Rom 3, 25*), sent out from the Father (*cf. Jn 5, 36*), and returning to the Father (*cf. Jn 14, 12*).

8.1 – 8.3

SECTION A5 :

CONCLUSION OF SECTION A (2 – 4)

8.1

In fact the whole of Scripture forcefully testifies to the truth of the threefold distinction of the Godhead

And there are many other passages too — in fact it would be truer to say that all of them testify to the truth. So even an unwilling person is obliged to confess the Father as God Almighty, and Christ Jesus, the Son of God, as the God who became man — him to whom the Father subjected all things except himself (*cf. 1 Cor 15, 27*) — and the Holy Spirit; and that these really are three.

8.2

There is a single divine Power, revealed triply, as we shall show

But if he wants to learn how God is shown to be one, he must know that this [God] has a single Power; and that as far as the Power is concerned, God is one: but in terms of the economy the display [of it] is triple — as will be shown later when we give our account about the truth.

8.3

For there is a single, sovereign God — Noetus can say nothing against our view

Well then, brethren, what we have said is shown to be consistently said: and the reason is that there is one God, in whom we must believe; but he does not become, cannot suffer, cannot die: and he makes all things as he wills, in the way he wills, when he wills (*cf. Ps 134, 6 LXX*). What, then, will Noetus, who has no notion of the truth, dare to say to this?

8.4 — 9.3

SECTION B1 : PROGRAMMATIC NOTE

The use of Scripture and the programme to be followed

(a) On the use of Scripture

8.4

Let us proceed to the Demonstration of the Truth which conquers all heresies

Seeing, then, that even Noetus now stands refuted, let us move on to the demonstration of the truth, with a view to establishing the truth against which none of the great sects has even been able to say a single word.

9.1

Scripture is the sole source of our knowledge of the one true God and the true religion

There is one God, and we acquire knowledge of him from no other source, brethren, than the Holy Scriptures. For just as in the case of a person who might wish to practise the wisdom of this age (*cf. 1 Cor 2, 6*), he will not be able to get at it otherwise than by meeting it in the philosophers' teachings, in exactly the same way those of us who want to practise true piety will not learn how to practise it from any other source than from the utterances of God (*cf. Rom 3, 2*).

(b) On the programme to be followed

9.2

Following Scripture, let us make our religion fully trinitarian in the way the Father has willed that it should be

Well, let us look at what the Sacred Scriptures proclaim, and let us acquire knowledge of what they teach. And let us in future believe in the way the Father wills to be believed, and let us glorify [the Son] in the way he wills the Son to be glorified, and let us receive [the Holy Spirit] in the way he wills the Holy Spirit to be imparted.

9.3

It is not by following private preference that we shall learn how God has willed to reveal himself to us

Not in accordance with private choice, nor private interpretation, nor by doing violence to the things that God has given — but rather let us look at things in the way God himself resolved to reveal them through the Holy Scriptures.

10.1 – 12.4

SECTION B2 : THE PRE-INCARNATE WORD –
expressive of the Father's will in Creation and
the Prophets*(a) The pre-incarnate Word and Creation*

10.1

*Creation depends on the
will of the sole Creator God*

While God was existing alone, and had nothing contemporaneous with himself, he resolved to create the world. What comes into being is at once there before him, as he willed it – what he performed, just as he willed it. So for us it is enough simply to know that there was nothing contemporaneous with God except himself.

10.2

*who is eternally and
internally complex*

But alone though he was, he was manifold. For he was not Word-less nor Wisdom-less nor Power-less nor Mind-less. But everything was in him, and he was himself the All.

10.3

*The process of willing
creation required the
Word*

When he willed, in the way he willed, at times he had fixed, he showed forth his Word, through whom he made all things. Just as when he wills, he makes, so when he puts his mind to it, his work is done; and when he gives utterance, he shows forth, and when he forms [things] he displays his Wisdom. For everything that has come into being he contrives through Word and Wisdom – creating by Word and setting in due order by Wisdom. So it is that he made [things] in accordance with his will. After all, he was God.

10.4

*and revealed the Word
in the world*

But as Leader (*cf. Acts 3, 15*) and Counsellor (*cf. Isai 40, 13*) and Craftsman (*cf. Prov 8, 22 LXX*) for what was coming into being, he brought forth the Word. This Word which he has in himself and is invisible to the world that is being created, he makes visible. In uttering what was formerly a sound, and in bringing forth light out of light, he sent forth in the creation, as its Lord, his own Mind, which previously was visible to himself alone. And him who was invisible to the world that is coming into being, he makes visible, so that through his appearance the world might be able to see and be saved. And so it is that another took his stand beside him. Now when I say 'other', I am not saying there are two gods.

11.1

*as other, but not different
from God – the one
Power of the Father*

11.1 (continued)

But it is like light out of light, or like water out of a spring, or like a sunbeam out of the sun. For there is a single Power that comes out of the All. But the All is the Father, and the Power that comes out of him is the Word.

11.2

*and the Mind of God,
alone directly from the
Father; his Son*

And this is the Mind which went forth in the world and was revealed as son of God. Now everything is through him (*cf. Jn 1,3*), but he himself alone is out of the Father.

11.3

*even certain Gnostic heretics
agree in fact that ultimately
there is one God who willed
to create all things*

So who is proposing a whole crowd of gods being emitted, one after another, at different times? In fact everybody was bound to agree, unwilling though they might be, that the All is ultimately reducible to a single One. Now if all things are ultimately reducible to a single One — even according to Valentinus, and according to Marcion and Cerinthus and all their rubbish — and unwilling though they are, they have fallen in with the view which would agree that the One is the cause of all things, then even those who have no desire to do so in fact concur with the truth which says that one God made [things] as he willed.

(b) The pre-incarnate Word and the prophets

11.4

*The inspired prophets
proclaimed the Father's
design and will*

Now this is he who gave the Law and the Prophets; and in giving them, he forced the latter through the Holy Spirit to give utterance, so that they caught a breath of the Father's own Power and announced the resolve and the will of the Father.

12.1

*In them, in fact, the Word,
unrecognized, was herald-
ing his own coming*

Now while he found his home in these [prophets], the Word was giving utterance about himself. For he himself was already acting as his own herald in revealing that the Word was going to appear among men. That is the reason he cried out with the words: 'I was being made manifest to those who did not seek me; I was found by those who did not ask for me' (*Isai 65, 1*).

12.2

*In sending his Word, the
Father was revealing his
own authority*

And who is he who was made manifest but the Word of the Father? And in sending him the Father was showing men the Power which was from himself. Thus, then, the Word was becoming manifest, just as

11.1 (continued)

But it is like light out of light, or like water out of a spring, or like a sunbeam out of the sun. For there is a single Power that comes out of the All. But the All is the Father, and the Power that comes out of him is the Word.

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unrecognized, was herald-
ing his own coming*

Now while he found his home in these [prophets], the Word was giving utterance about himself. For he himself was already acting as his own herald in revealing that the Word was going to appear among men. That is the reason he cried out with the words: 'I was being made manifest to those who did not seek me; I was found by those who did not ask for me' (*Isai 65, 1*).

12.2

*In sending his Word, the
Father was revealing his
own authority*

And who is he who was made manifest but the Word of the Father? And in sending him the Father was showing men the Power which was from himself. Thus, then, the Word was becoming manifest, just as

12.2 (continued)

he says.

(c) One and the same Word is operative in Creation and the Prophets and is revealed in them.

12.3

Passages in John 1 sum up the the Word's function in creation and the prophets

For the blessed John sums up what has been said through the prophets in showing that this was the Word through whom all things came into being. For he speaks as follows: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made through him, and without him was made nothing' (*Jn 1, 1.3*). And further on he said: 'the world came into being through him, and the world knew him not. He came to his own, and his own people received him not' (*Jn 1, 10-11*).

12.4

The Word of creation and in the prophets is visibly revealed

Well, if he said, 'the world has come into being through him', just as the prophet says, 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made strong' (*Ps 32, 6*), then this Word is the one who is also shown forth as manifest.

12.5— 13.4

SECTION B3 : THE INCARNATE WORD — sent as the visible will of the Father

12.5

It is the incarnate Word on whom our religion is based, as God willed it

Then surely it is the Word incarnate that we behold. It is through him that we get the idea of the Father, but it is in the Son that we believe, and by the Holy Spirit that we adore (*cf. Jn 4, 23*).

13.1

Jeremiah called God's Word 'visible'

So let us look at what has been written. That it was the Word who was going to be manifest who was being proclaimed, Jeremiah says, too: 'Who has stood in the presence of the Lord and has seen his Word?' (*Jer 23, 18*).

13.2

It is this visible Word who was sent

Now only God's Word is visible — that of man is audible. Where he talks of seeing the Word, I can only believe that it is this visible Word that has been sent. But he who has been sent is none other than the Word.

13.3

As we know from Acts 10 — 'through the preaching of Jesus Christ'

And that he was sent, Peter declares to the centurion Cornelius when he says: 'God sent out

13.3 (continued)

13.4

So this means that Jesus Christ is the Father's will

his Word to the sons of Israel, through the preaching of Jesus Christ. He it is who is God, the Lord of all' (*Acts 10, 36*).

But then if it is the Word who is sent out through Jesus Christ, the will of the Father is Jesus Christ.

14.1 – 16.7

SECTION B4 : THE UNITY AND DISTINCTION OF GOD

(a) The three Persons of the Trinity are One God

14.1

What the Scriptures say of the economy appears in John 1

Well then, brethren, all this is what the Scriptures point out to us. This economy the blessed John, too, passes on to us through the witness of his Gospel, and he maintains that this Word is God, with the words: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' (*Jn 1,1*).

14.2

John's words do not imply two Gods, but one God – two persons, not forgetting a third economy of the Holy Spirit

But then if the Word, who is God, is with God, someone might well say: 'What about this statement that there are two gods?' While I will not say that there are two gods – but rather one – I will say there are two persons; and that a third economy is the grace of the Holy Spirit.

14.3

i.e., one Father, two persons, plus the Holy Spirit

For though the Father is one, there are two persons – because there is the Son as well: and the third, too, – the Holy Spirit.

14.4

The relative functions of Father and Son

The Father gives orders, the Word performs the work, and is revealed as Son, through whom belief is accorded to the Father. By a harmonious economy the result is a single God.

14.5

The relative functions of Father, Son and Holy Spirit

This is because there is one God. For the one who commands is the Father, the one who obeys is the Son, and the one who promotes mutual understandings is the Holy Spirit. He who is Father is over all things, and the Son is through all things, and the Holy Spirit is in all things (*cf. Eph 4,6*).

14.6

Only fully trinitarian faith leads to a true notion of God

We can get no idea of the one God other than by really believing in Father and

14.6 (continued)

Son and Holy Spirit. Of course the Jews glorified the Father, but they offered no thanksgiving (*cf. Rom 1, 21*), since they had no knowledge of the Son. The disciples did have knowledge of the Son, but not in the Holy Spirit, so they even denied [him].

14.7

The Father's own Word, in accordance with the Father's will, passed on a fully trinitarian faith whereby God is perfectly glorified

Now the Father's own Word was aware of the economy and the will of the Father — that the Father is determined to be glorified in no other way than this. So after his resurrection he passed this on to his disciples with the words: 'Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (*Mt 28, 19*) — showing that all those who miss out any one of these did not glorify God perfectly.

14.8

The whole of Scripture testifies to this trinitarian faith

For it is by means of this Triad that the Father is glorified. For the Father willed, the Son brought it about, the Spirit made it clear. Now the whole of the Scriptures are a proclamation about this.

(b) Yet it was the Word, distinct from the Father, who became man and suffered as Son

15.1

It is said that you cannot take John literally

But someone will say to me: 'It sounds strange to me when you call the Son "Word". Of course John says "Word", but he is speaking merely figuratively'.

15.2

You can — cf. further, Apocalypse 19

He is not speaking merely figuratively. For this is how he shows that the Word of God existed as such from the beginning and has now been sent, when someway down in the Apocalypse he said: 'And I saw heaven opened, and behold! a white horse. And he who sits upon it is faithful and true, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes

15.2 (continued)

are a flame of fire; there are many diadems on his head. And he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself; and he is clad in a robe sprinkled with blood, and the name he has been called is The Word of God' (*Apoc 19, 11-13*).

15.3

This passage indicates symbolically that it was the Word who suffered in the flesh

So you see, brethren, how the robe sprinkled with blood symbolically expressed the flesh through which even the impassible Word of God underwent suffering, just as I find the prophets attesting.

15.4

And Micah 2 confirms this

For the blessed Micah speaks as follows: 'The house of Jacob provoked the Spirit of the Lord to anger. These are their doings. Are not his words good for them? and do they not walk uprightly? And they rose up in enmity; from the face of his peace they have stripped off his glory' (*Mic 2, 7-8*). This refers to his suffering in the flesh.

15.5

So does Paul in Romans 8, speaking of God's own Son in the flesh

In just the same way the blessed Paul, too, says: 'For God [has done] what the Law, weakened as it was, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit' (*Rom 8, 3-4*).

15.6

This Son in the flesh must be the Word -- to call him Son expresses God's love for man

Now what Son of his own has God sent down through the flesh if not the Word, whom he addressed as Son in view of the fact that he was going to become such in future? And in being called Son, he assumes the common name for loving affection between one man and another.

15.7

*In fact, without flesh
the Word is not perfect
Son: the flesh belongs to
the Word and reveals that
the Word is the one perfect
Son of God*

For the Word was not a perfect Son when he was fleshless and on his own, although because he was Word, he was perfect Only-begotten. Nor could the flesh exist on its own apart from the Word, because it has its subsistence in the Word. So in this way a single perfect Son of God was made manifest.

16.1

*This shows that it was the
Word and not the Father
who became man*

While these are the testimonies about the incarnation of the Word [that we have seen], there are, of course, a great number of others as well. But let us keep our eyes on the subject in hand: that it really was the Father's own Power, brethren, — which is the Word — that came down from heaven, and not the Father in person.

16.2

*cf. John 16 — The Word
came out of the Father*

This is what he says: 'I came out from the Father, and have come' (*Jn 16, 27f*). What is the subject of 'I came out from the Father' if not the Word? What is it that has been born from him if not Spirit — that is, the Word?

(c) An objection answered: we cannot hope to understand how the distinction between Father and Son arose

16.3

*The problem remains —
how was the Son born?
Even in the case of a man
we do not know*

But you will say to me: 'How was he born?' Now in your own case you could not provide the explanation of how you came to be born, even though every day you see what causes a human being, and you cannot give an accurate account of the 'economy' at work behind this.

16.4

*We do not know how
God produces a man,
let alone his Word*

After all, it is not for you to know the skilled and inexplicable technique of the Creator.

16.4 (continued)

All you can do, when you see it, is to realize and believe that man is a work of God. Yet you are enquiring after the origin of the Word — he whom the Father brought forth as he willed, according to his decision!

16.5

Just as it must suffice to know that God created the world, not to mention whence

Is it not enough for you to be told that God created the world? Do you also make so bold as to try to discover what he made it out of as well?

16.6

So it must suffice to know that the Son of God was revealed to save us, never mind how

Are you not satisfied to be told that the Son of God was made manifest for your salvation, if you would have but faith? But in your meddling curiosity do you look for how he was born according to the Spirit? Not more than two people have been entrusted with the explanation of his birth even according to the flesh — yet you dare to try and find out the explanation according to the Spirit! — an explanation which the Father keeps to himself, and which he will reveal later to those who are saints and worthy to look upon his face.

16.7

Let Christ's word suffice, John 3 — it is a matter of the Spirit and thus mysterious: cf. Psalm 109

Let what has been said by Christ be enough for you: that 'that which is born of Spirit is Spirit' (Jn 3, 6). While God indicates through the prophet the fact that the Word has been born, he reserves the explanation of the fact for a later time which he has fixed for the future revelation of it. And he speaks as follows: 'From the womb before the day-star, I gave thee birth' (Ps 109, 3).

17.1 – 17.2

17.1

*For us, the true faithful,
these testimonies suffice –
the faithless will not
believe anyway*

SECTION B5 :

CONCLUSION OF SECTION B (2–4)

These testimonies satisfy the faithful who are living the truth. But the faithless believe in nothing. Indeed, the all-holy Spirit, in the person of the Apostles, declared this in saying: 'Lord, who believed what he heard from us?' (*Isai 53, 1*). So let us not become faithless, lest the saying should ever be fulfilled in us.

17.2

*So let us believe what
tradition tells us about
the saving incarnation of
the Word*

So let us in future believe, blessed brethren, in accordance with the tradition of the Apostles, that God the Word came down from the heavens into the holy virgin Mary, so that once he had taken flesh out of her, and taken a soul of the human kind – a rational one, I mean – and had become everything that a man is, sin excepted (*cf. Heb 4, 15*) he might save fallen Adam and procure incorruption for such as believe in his name.

17.3 – 18.10

THE PERORATION – a Meditation on 1.7 in the Introduction

(a) 'We too have knowledge of a single God – in the true way'

17.3

*Our work of Demonstration
is ended concerning the
one Father and his Word
sent to save*

Thus, then, from every point of view, we have demonstrated our account of the truth: that there is a single Father and his Word, through whom he made all things, is at his side. He it was whom the Father at subsequent times, as we have stated further back, sent for the salvation of men.

(b) 'We have knowledge of Christ'

17.4

*This Word was foretold
by the prophets, born of
the virgin and the Spirit,
a new man*

This was he who was proclaimed through the Law and Prophets

17.4 (continued)

as destined to come into the world. So in the very same way in which he was proclaimed, he became present as well, and manifested himself by becoming a new man from the virgin and the Holy Spirit. While, as Word, he has the heavenly element that he gets from his Father, he has the earthly element he gets by taking flesh from the old Adam through the virgin.

17.5

*He was God embodied,
revealed as true man*

This is he who went forth into the world and was manifested as God embodied, going forth as perfect man — for he truly became man, and not just in appearance or figuratively speaking.

(c) 'We know that the Son suffered as in fact he suffered'

18.1

He lived a human life

Thus although he was God clearly revealed, he did not disown what was human about himself as well — when he is hungry and exhausted and weary and thirsty, and takes fright and flees, and is troubled when he prays, and sleeps on a pillow — he who as God has a nature which knows no sleeping.

18.2

*and suffered in a
human way*

And he asks to be excused the suffering of the chalice — he who was present for this very reason in the world. And in his agony he sweats, and is strengthened by an angel — he who strengthens those who believe in him, and has taught them by his example to treat death with contempt.

18.3

*at the hands of
human beings*

And he is betrayed by Judas — he who knows what Judas is; and he is dishonourably treated by Caiaphas — he who, God as he was, was earlier declared priest by him; and he is scorned by Herod — he who is the future judge of all the earth; and he is flogged by Pilate — he who took upon himself our infirmities; and

18.3 (continued)

he is made the sport of soldiers — he at whose side stand a thousand thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand angels and archangels; and by the Jews he is fixed to the wood — he who fixed the heaven like a vault.

(d) 'who died as in fact he died'

18.4

He died a human death

And with a cry he delivers up the Spirit to the Father — he who is inseparable from the Father; and bowing down his head he breathes his last — he who said: 'I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again' (*Jn 10, 18*). But [to show] that, as Life, he was not being mastered by death, he said, 'I lay it down of my own accord' (*ibid.*). And he is struck in the side by a lance — he who grants to all the favour of life.

(e) 'who rose again on the third day'

18.5

He was buried to rise again — all for us

And he is wrapped in a shroud and placed in a tomb — he who raises the dead; and he is raised again after three days by the Father — he who is himself the Resurrection and the Life. And he has successfully accomplished all these things for us — he who became one of us on our account. For he took upon himself our infirmities and bore our sicknesses and underwent suffering on our account, just as the prophet Isaiah said (*cf. Isai 53, 4*).

(f) 'and is at the right hand of the Father and is coming to judge living and dead'

18.6

His hidden life showed him to be God

This is he who is carolled by angels and gazed on by shepherds, and is long expected by Simeon and witnessed to by Anna. He is sought out by the Magi, and is signalled by a star, and he finds himself at home in his Father's house, too, and is pointed out by John. He received the witness of the Father from above:

18.6 (continued)

'This is my beloved Son; hear ye him' (*Mt 3, 17*).

18.7

*and so did his public
ministry and death*

This is he who is crowned in victory against the devil; this is Jesus the Nazarene, who was invited to the wedding in Cana, and changed the water into wine; and reproves the sea which is tossed by the force of the winds. And he walks on the sea as on dry land, and makes a man born blind see, and makes Lazarus, a four-day-dead corpse, rise again, and performs all sorts of acts of power, and forgives sins and gives authority to his disciples. And struck by a spear, he released blood and water from his holy side.

18.8

*at his death natural
phenomena confirmed
this*

For his sake the sun is darkened, the day has no light, the rocks are rent, the veil is torn apart, the foundations of the earth are shaken, tombs are opened, and the dead are raised up, and the chief powers are deeply shamed. For on the Cross they beheld him who sets the universe in order, and his eyes are closed; and when creation saw that he had given up the Spirit, it was deep disturbed, and in its inability to take in his superabounding glory, it grew dark.

18.9

*as did his post-resurrection
appearances and
ascension*

He it is who by breathing on them gives the Spirit to the disciples, and enters through closed doors. And in full sight of his disciples he is taken up by a cloud into the heavens, and sits at the right hand of the Father, and of the living and the dead

18.9 (continued)

he is there as judge.

(g) The Doxology

18.10

*He is God made man for
us – to him be glory and
power . . . Amen*

This is God who became man on our behalf – he to whom the Father subjected all things. To him be glory and power as well as to the Father and the Holy Spirit in the Holy Church, both now and always and from age to age. Amen.