The Nature of the Atonement in Athanasius

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D. Phil.

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Abstract

This research investigated Athanasius' understanding of the atonement. It first orientated the reader by defending the category of 'atonement', briefly outlined Athanasius' context, the goals of the study, and defended the use of a theological and textual approach rather than a historical and narrative methodology. It then proceeded by means of a sustained reading of substantial extracts from Athanasius to establish his understanding of the atonement. These explorations were organized topically, beginning with his views on creation and humanity, and then turning to his account of the fall and its progress and effects, before then examining his atonement views with regards to creation, the image, the law, and the demonic. The final chapter then summarized the main findings and explored the most important of these at some length.

There are three major findings from this research. The most evident, because it has informed the structure of the dissertation, is that Athanasius' atonement thinking can only be understood against the backdrop of his exposition of creation, humanity, and the fall, rather than another theological topic such as the Trinity. The second is that Athanasius' thinking on the atonement reflects fundamental principles and assumptions evident in some of his most significant topics, suggesting that this topic is also close to the heart of his theological vision. Finally, that his concept of the atonement is multivalent rather than monistic, with more than one mechanism, or 'model', on display. Three of these, creation, image, and law, can be compared to each other and their atoning mechanisms can be shown to operate by principles that vary along differing axis. The fourth, the demonic, is more radically different still,

acting as an intensification and personification of the problem and solution matrix of the previous three categories. Athanasius' atonement thought is irreducibly pluralistic.

Longer Abstract for Theology Department

This dissertation explored Athanasius' concept of the atonement. First, some of the framework for the study were outlined in the introduction. This included a defence of the validity of a category like 'atonement', Athanasius' historical context, the goals of the investigation and the three main findings that were to be argued, and a defence of the validity of the textual and theological methodology utilized instead of the more common narrative and historical methodology. The main body consisted of six chapters that organized Athanasius' thought around key topics—creation and humanity, the fall and corruption, the atonement and creation, the atonement and the image, the atonement and the law, and the atonement and the demonic. The final chapter offered some concluding reflections, summarizing the three key findings of the study and explored the most significant of these in a couple of directions.

The first two chapters function as necessary background to understand Athanasius' atonement thought in the subsequent four chapters. These two chapters focused primarily on *Contra Gentes* and *De Incarnatione.* Athanasius' doctrines of creation, humanity, the fall and the corruption, have their own distinct construction, and the investigation found that key elements of his understanding of the atonement arise from peculiar features in these topics. This is due to Athanasius' conviction that to understand the incarnation one must first grasp humanity's beginnings—humanity's creation, and humanity's fall. The first chapter began by examining elements of Athanasius' doctrine of creation and noted that the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* has a decisive import for his theology, as it establishes that created things acquire existence from without, and are naturally mortal and corruptible, returning to non-existence

unless the Word who called them into existence sustains them. Humanity's distinctive quality is that it is a rational creature. The soul is an image of the Image, or Word, of God, and was intended to direct itself toward the knowledge of God. It was found to have both formal and substantial features, being both a power to know God and the actual knowledge of God. The topic of the knowledge of God was found to be of especial significance, as by means of participating in God through knowledge of him, humanity was capable of experiencing immortality and blessedness—a kind of life beyond what is naturally possible for a creature.

The second chapter then interrogated Athanasius' account of humanity's turn from the knowledge of God. Here also, the concept of a creation *ex nihilo* was found to be formative, with Athanasius' account of the fall grounded on a view that correlated existence and good, non-existence and evil. Athanasius posits that the soul turned from the knowledge of God, but does not offer a reason for this movement, a position in keeping with his view that evil has no cause other than a rejection of the good. This position was found to have parallels in Origen's account of the fall, and it was theorized that the views of both figures may have been due to the influence of the account of the fall in Romans 1. Having turned back from knowing God, the soul turns to that which is closest to it—the body—and becomes fixated on bodily senses and especially pleasure with the result that pleasure becomes the good for the soul. Four consequences of this double turn are then explored—the soul's fear of death, the ever increasing growth of moral corruption, the expression of that corruption in idolatry, and the loss of the image. It was further argued that this progress of sin was exacerbated by two factors—creation and the law. These were originally intended to help secure the image in light of its ability to draw back from the knowledge of God

and to turn toward either good or evil but have resulted in worsening the condition of corruption, with creation enabling the possibility of idolatry and the law strengthening the power of natural corruption. The complex relationship of the image and corruption was also explored, and it was found that it was being in the image that enabled humans to turn to corruption, that corruption in turn defaces the image, but that as the image is never entirely lost, this in turn prevents corruption from finally succeeding in negating the existence of those made after the Image.

With this framework established, the thesis then turned, over the subsequent four chapters, to outline the four strands of Athanasius' atonement thought that are highlighted in *DI* 20. The third chapter discussed Athanasius' view of the atonement with regards to creation, a topic often labelled divinization. This was found to be comprised of several components focusing around the Word taking to himself a creaturely and mortal body by means of the incarnation. The Word assumes the body's mortality and corruption and extinguishes them by means of his own immortality and incorruptibility. In their place he gives to the body qualities that are proper of Divinity—immortality, incorruptibility and life. These are qualities that were enjoyed to some degree before the fall, but were able to be lost because they were participated in by means of an external relationship, mediated through the knowledge of God. Through the atonement, they are now placed on a more secure footing, with the Word giving himself what he receives humanly. As the gift and reception are internal to the person of the Word, and secured by his immutability, the reception of grace is now established for human beings more generally. In this strand of the atonement, the atonement is effected by the incarnation for the Word's body, and is then extended out into the human race more generally by the gift of the Spirit

and eventually by the promise of the resurrection, giving it a two-stage structure: first the body of the Word, and then those who belong to the Word. Notwithstanding this structure, the similarity of the Word's body to that of human beings generally is found to be a key mechanism behind the efficacy of the atonement. The investigation also concluded that in addressing these issues the incarnation was considered to be necessary. No possibility of a salvation by divine fiat modelled on creation was entertained by Athanasius.

The fourth chapter explored the atonement in relation to the image—its renewal, and the republication of the knowledge of God through the works of the incarnate Word. This chapter began by seeking to establish the existence of this strand of the atonement as something distinct from divinization by means of an extended reading of *DI* 13-20. It argued that these chapters of *DI* focus on the Word's revelation of God to the human race by means of the incarnation, and that this revelation of the Father is the mechanism whereby the image is renewed in the human person. The implications of having the image renewed by means of an external relationship patterned off teaching, when this was dismissed as inadequate to address mortality and corruption, was then examined. It was found that, unlike at the beginning, the knowledge of God is now an end in itself and is no longer the means to participate in immortality and blessedness as these are now offered by means of the Word's union with the body. The external nature of this strand of the atonement also suggested the possibility that humanity might again turn from the knowledge of God. This possibility was explored and it was noted that Athanasius does not address the matter, and that there are reasons to think that it might not be as secure as divinization, but that the efficacy of the revelation that came through the works and teaching of the incarnate Word in

comparison to that of creation and the law suggests that this strand is also ultimately secure. This chapter concludes by discussing a number of points of comparison and contrast between this strand and divinization, finding their relationship complex and that this topic is considered to be of particular importance for Athanasius, shaping many of his arguments in *DI* 21 to 31.

The fifth chapter examined the atonement with regards to the law. Recognizing the challenge of disproving an essentially metaphorical usage of 'forensic' language as a circumlocution for divinization ideas, the investigation then highlighted two lines of evidence against such a reading. The first was that it was probable that Athanasius was acquainted with the possibility of using 'forensic' language to communicate forensic ideas, and so the lack of any clear indication that the language is being used metaphorically was suggestive that it might be being used in the same mode as the parallel language for the other two strands. The other strand of evidence was three worked examples of extracts that were argued to be difficult to read as communicating divinization or renewal of the image ideas. One important piece of evidence was that Athanasius is unequivocal that this aspect of the human condition could have been addressed by a divine fiat, and that the atonement was 'fitting' and beneficial rather than strictly necessary. From this investigation it was concluded that there existed in Athanasius' thought a strand of atonement thinking that is recognisably 'forensic'—that the death of Christ was the payment representatively on behalf of all people and substitutionally in their place of a debt incurred by breaking the divine command. Various aspects of this strand of the atonement were then discussed, including the interaction of divinization and 'forensic' ideas in addressing death-as-nature and death-as-punishment, the idea of the curse being transferred from humanity to the

Word, and the death of Christ being offered to the Father. It concluded with an examination of *Contra Arianos* 3.31 where there is significant overlap between divinization and atonement conceived of 'forensically'. From this it was concluded that this strand is distinct from the two previous and is a recognizable example of a 'forensic' concept but that it has some distinct features compared to other forensic theories.

The sixth chapter discussed the atonement with regards to the demonic. It first defends briefly the Athanasian authorship of *Life of Antony*, and then discusses the link between paganism and the demonic. It then explores some the tension in Athanasius' presentation of the demonic—that he clearly considers the demonic world to be intrinsically weak and able to do nothing, yet also presents them as having almost unfettered sway over humanity until they were defeated by the atonement. No simple resolution is offered, although links are noted with his presentation of corruption and deceit, as well as the question of the impassibility or passibility of the incarnate Word. From this it examined the atonement and the demonic, concluding that the demonic does not add a fourth problem and resolution, but is an overlay onto the previous three categories such that as they are resolved, the devil's rule is also overturned.

The conclusion summarizes and discusses the three major findings of the study. First, that the matrix for understanding Athanasius' views of the atonement are his treatments of creation, anthropology and fall, rather than his doctrine of the nature of God, or the Trinitarian structure of the Godhead. Athanasius' understanding of the

atonement is a problem-solution one, and so the atonement's shape derives from his understanding of the human condition. Second, that there are several indicators that Athanasius' thinking on the atonement lies close to the heart of his theological concerns, such that this topic is more significant for his thought than is generally recognized. Thirdly, and most significantly, commentators on Athanasius have misrepresented his thinking on this topic when they seek to press him into holding to only one or two of the later models of the atonement. Athanasius' views on this topic are rather radically pluralistic instead of monistic. *DI* 54, with its image of an unbounded series of waves, should be given weight when considering Athanasius' atonement thought. Some of the ways in which the atonement and creation, atonement and image, and atonement and law differ from each other in terms of different questions such as necessity or extrinsic versus internal relation are explored. This chapter then concludes by reflecting on how the demonic strand of the atonement deconstructs any attempt to find a single overarching integrating concept for the atonement in Athanasius, even the demonic itself, leaving Athanasius' views on the atonement irreducibly pluralist.

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Introduction

Lewis Ayres has raised questions concerning the narratives normally offered in contemporary systematic theology regarding the 'revival' of Trinitarian thought since the 1950s as well as that regarding the nature of Trinitarian theology in the fourth and subsequent centuries.[1] Within his evaluation appears to be a critique of the lack of engagement with 'pro-Nicene' theology at the level of presuppositions and methodology. Contemporary theologians do interact with the theology of the early church but only on modern, and often Hegelian, ground. This is a powerful assessment that has far reaching implications for the interface between systematics and patristics, for the objects of Ayres' criticisms are those theologians of the 20th Century, such as Karl Barth, Karl Rahner and Balthasar, who are particularly associated with the move to return patristic Trinitarian thinking to an important place in contemporary doctrinal formation. If theologians actually seeking to learn from patristics are guilty of such infelicities, what could be said of their contemporaries who are not known even for the attempt? While probably the opposite of what was intended, one of the effects of Ayres' wide-ranging judgement is to raise the possibility that there is little room in systematics for serious engagement with patristics, the distance between the operating assumptions of the early church and the modern world being so different that even where a theologian is self-consciously committed to the same 'pro-Nicene' creeds, the demands on time and personal investment to enter into the mind-set of the early Christians, and not simply accommodate them to contemporary assumption, leaves the effort out of the purview

[1] Lewis Ayres *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). 384ff

of all but the patristic specialist. Such a prospect is to be lamented, if true, for it leaves patristics and theology hermetically sealed from each other, with minimal opportunities for the descriptive fruit of the former to inform the prescriptive constructions of the latter. Avoiding this fate, if Ayres' brief assessment of the last two hundred years of theological engagement with patristics is correct, will not be an easy or simple process, and will likely involve a number of efforts to speak interdisciplinarily. Some of these will be grounded in patristics and will seek to engage with contemporary assumptions at work in systematic theology, others will begin in dogmatics and seek to be informed by the theologizing of the early centuries.

The Use of 'Atonement' as a Category

This study, while not inspired by this challenge from Ayres, has been informed by it at one important point, the organising principle used. Athanasius' writings are investigated in order to shed light on Athanasius' understanding of the 'atonement'—a term and a category of thought that is nowhere to be found in Athanasius' writings, and which could be argued to be anachronistic at best when applied to his works, and alien and distorting at worst. The case could, and often is, made that terminology and structuring principles should not be invoked in authors whose works are innocent of them, that only the terminology and categories self-consciously present should be utilised. Such a principle, however, significantly reduces the possibility of communication between parties across differences in fundamental assumptions, terminology, and concepts. If it is the case that using any language or organising principle not self-consciously invoked will automatically vitiate our understanding of a patristic writer, then surely the converse is also true, and introducing any patristic

terminology or organising principles into contemporary theologizing will distort that discipline as well. Yet, that influence is claimed to be sought and is thought to be potentially highly beneficial. If that is the case in one direction, then it is surely not inconceivable that things may operate similarly in reverse, and the language and conceptual toolkits of later theological discourse may offer useful resources to illuminate areas of patristic thought. What is illuminated will, undoubtedly, be different from what is observed when the investigation relies only upon the language and organising principles of the authors of the period, but there is no reason to think that use of alien categories of thought is *necessarily* disadvantageous as long as the interpreter is aware that the writings being interrogated might not always offer answers to questions asked from within another framework of thought, and is content with the silences from the texts as well as their substances. This is especially the case when these 'alien' categories of thought have often arisen from a desire to make explicit a concept that is considered to have been implicitly present in earlier theological discourse in order to thematise it.

This approach is particularly defensible when it comes to the author and concept in question. Athanasius' style of writing eschews the categorization of later theological thought. Even organising categories such as Christology or Trinity do not exist in Athanasius' writings with the clear demarcations that exist in many later authors. Almost every commentator of Athanasius is aware that, unless their analysis of Athanasius is structured around his works, any conceptual organizing principle, even one more closely aligned to Athanasius' own terminology, imposes upon Athanasius' writing a categorisation and thematization that does not exist in Athanasius' works, and which obscures the multiple links that Athanasius draws between ideas and

categories that are considered to be more distinct and independent in later thought. Athanasius is almost Johannine in the way in which he uses the same basic concepts but places them in differing relationships, and this style of writing is inherently difficult to capture well in an academic mode of categorization. Whatever distorting effect there might be in using a concept like 'atonement', it is arguably only one of degree and not kind. Any attempt to discuss Athanasius' writing in terms of its underlying categories of thought—a common and entirely valid line of enquiry in Athanasian scholarship—is already organizing Athanasius' thought along non-Athanasian lines for he himself never structures his own writings in this fashion. Further, whatever term or category one wishes to utilize, discussion of what the Word has done to save the human race through his incarnation, ministry, death and resurrection, promise of the resurrection and gift of the Spirit is one of the centres of Athanasius' thought, and the statements he makes regarding this issue are often used as one of the more significant lines of argument for his position on the nature of the Word's relationship with God, a topic which scholarship ubiquitously perceives to be significant for Athanasius' thought. In other words, Athanasius has a great deal to say about how salvation has come through the Word, and what he has to say about that is very significant for his overall theological vision. If anything in Athanasius can be validly thematised, then arguably this material should be included in the number of those so permitted.

On the other hand, 'atonement' is arguably one of the least invasive concepts that one might use to discuss an author's thought, being no more prescriptive about the content or underlying assumptions than interrogating a theologian regarding 'creation' or 'humanity' or even 'God'. While even those concepts, as they are commonly used,

have fundamental assumptions that may not be appropriate to all authors who come under the broad label of 'Christian', nonetheless, they are considered to be of a sufficiently wide scope that those cases are exceptional, and these terms are used as formal categories with little inherent substantial content that might influence the outcomes of investigations simply by the use of the terms alone. 'Atonement' is of a similar nature, for the vast majority of Christian thinkers over the centuries have held: 1) something about humanity is other than it could or should be and, 2) God has done something about this in Jesus Christ. The category of 'atonement' relates to the second of these two points. While there are significant debates over the nature of that 'atonement', for the vast majority of thinkers, the term does not itself do more than organise the material that relates to this particular issue. While it is certainly the case that for some writers 'atonement' focuses particularly on the cross, and so has some substantial content to it, its relatively formal openness can be seen in the way in which J. Denny Weaver's narrative *Christus Victor* view of the atonement completely excludes the cross from the atonement and yet it is not seen to be a category error to include his position as a genuine 'atonement' theory.[2] Etymologically, the term appears to derive from "at-one-ment", which, while implying some basic content—that what has been done is effect a reconciliation with God—it does not, in itself, beg any questions regarding a penal or sacrificial character to the atonement. More than many theological terms, 'atonement' is a relatively open term.

Thus, without desiring to foreclose the findings, or impose a distorting framework, this work seeks to investigate the atonement in Athanasius. By this is intended a

[2] See J Denny Weaver *The Non-Violent Atonement.* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans, 2001)

limited and focused study; not a discussion of how the atonement functions in Athanasius, or Athanasius' methodology in constructing his views on the atonement, or the kinds of situations where Athanasius invokes the atonement, as worthwhile as investigations of this nature would be. Instead the interest is more narrowly upon Athanasius' understanding of the atonement: what the atonement actually is, and what it consists of, in Athanasius' writings.

Athanasius' Life in its Context

Nestled around the Mediterranean, in the long Autumn years of the Roman Empire, Alexandria provided the base and geographical focus for Athanasius' extended tenure as bishop despite five periods of exile that saw him physically removed from his See. During Athanasius' career, being bishop of Alexandria was a position of significant leadership not merely within the church in the city but also within broader society throughout the empire because of the importance of Alexandria itself. It had not always been this way. Given the controversy over whether Athanasius had reached the canonically required age of thirty on his accession as bishop in 328, he likely was born in the last decade of the third century and so would likely have lived through Diocletian's Great Persecution before his tenth birthday. Constantine's conversion somewhere around the Edict of Milan in 313 ushered in a dramatic reversal of Christianity's fortunes and a new era of more constructive entanglement with the State.

Athanasius' career cannot be properly understood without reference to the importance of Alexandria to the world beyond its borders, the legacy of the Great Persecution, the

evolving partnership between Church and empire throughout the fourth century, and the long term decline of the empire.

One of the consequences of the Diocletian persecution for Alexandria was a rift regarding the correct pastoral response to those whose behaviour during the pressure was considered less than exemplary—either collaborating with the oppressors, or fleeing from locations where persecution was too intense. This debate spawned a more rigorist wing within the church in and around Alexandria, termed the Melitians after its original leader. This created a long-running point of tension, which if some of the documents and allegations coming from the period are to be given any credence, resulted in aggressive and possibly even violent tactics to promote the interests of each faction. While this group appears to have declined in influence over the fourth century, its endeavours to promote its leaders into positions of Episcopal authority and, one presumes, to enshrine its approach to church life and its vision for the Christian life more broadly, were seemingly effective in the early parts of Athanasius' career, sufficient to generate a response from Athanasius and his supporters. The question of the forcefulness of that response appears to be at the heart of the charges brought against Athanasius, however much fundamental theological differences in Christology were a factor in the enthusiasm with which Athanasius' chief opponents pursued the case. An exacerbating factor was probably the gulf between the broader church's desire for reconciliation between Melitians and Athanasius' sphere of influence and the reports of how Athanasius and his fellow travellers were treating their opponents even apart from accusations of illegality or immorality. This conflict over pastoral practice in a difficult situation, and the question of the degree to which

Athanasius treated the Melitians shabbily generates the formal basis for Athanasius' difficulties with leaders ecclesial and civil, outside of Alexandria.

While the presenting issue was a holdover from the era of official antipathy, the conflict-ridden shape of Athanasius' Episcopal career was the product of the newly emerging path of constructive entanglement between the empire and the church. Never before had a bishop experienced five distinct periods of exile under five different emperors. Now that Christianity was licit, and increasingly favoured, imperial patronage was an important factor in determining the course of theological debates. Athanasius' own life is an indicator of the limits of imperial power in this regard for despite regular and sustained official opposition by his death in mid 373 his reputation was rehabilitated and the theological position he had championed was in the ascendancy. However, this should not distract us from recognizing the significance of this relationship with the empire for the distinctive shape of the Christological debates of the fourth century compared to those doctrinal disagreements of the previous ones. Remove the capacity for his opponents to utilize the state's capacity for socially acceptable coercion, and it is unlikely that Athanasius' Episcopal enemies would have been able to remove a bishop with as much support from his church as Athanasius proved to enjoy. This is even more the case when Athanasius' support from the Western church, mediated through the bishop of Rome, is factored into the equation. In such a scenario, it is conceivable that Athanasius would have been able to focus his energies in Alexandria and the surrounding region, and through personal means. The doctrinal differences with other bishops in the Greek speaking church would still have produced disagreement, but likely of a different nature and more of a long simmering tension than the intense political and conciliar

conflict that occurred under the imperial desire for unity in its religious client. For his part, it is much less likely that Athanasius would have invested so much energy into written works of polemics and persuasion with the wider church if he had a relatively open opportunity to minister personally in and around Alexandria. Even his letters, festal and personal, would be more likely to suffer the same fate as his sermons under such conditions. Origen's literary output was far greater than Athanasius' would have been under those conditions, and the disappearance of most of his writings when there was no serious theological controversy to focus people's attention suggests the likely pattern of reception that would have faced a less controversial bishop's written works. This point cannot be pressed too far, as Athanasius likely wrote what has arguably been his most well known double work, *Contre Gentes-De Incarnatione*, somewhere before his first exile in the early 330s or even 320s, so literary works would have been produced and may even have circulated. Nonetheless, without imperial opposition, Athanasius' career would likely have been far more conventional in nature, and his influence on the theological development of the fourth century far more curtailed as a consequence. Athanasius' footprint on the historical record is itself an indicator of the degree to which the new relationship with the Empire had altered the theological, controversial and pastoral role of at least some senior Episcopal leaders.[3]

There are further lines of complication from Imperial entanglement. Imperial favour did not just radically alter the shape of theological controversy in the fourth century,

[3] For an essentially similar position, albeit from a different angle see pages 100-103 in Peter Gemeinhardt, 'Theologie und Kirchenpolitik' in *Athanasius Handbuch*, Ed. P. Gemeinhardt (Tübingen: Artibus Ingenuis, Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 93-103.

and so create external pressures upon Athanasius, they also created the conditions for some of his response. The rise of fourth century patterns of asceticism, which was probably at least in part a response to the lowered social cost of identifying as a Christian, produced some of Athanasius' most reliable supporters and some of his most desirable recruits to key Episcopal offices. Athanasius' capacity to increasingly secure his authority against his Melitian rivals and the resilience of his opposition when he remained in Egypt during times of official disfavour are, ironically, due to the same conditions that made those matters inimical factors in the first place. More than this, asceticism provided a model of the Christian life for Athanasius that shaped his soteriology and his pastoral practice.

Alexandria's importance is also an important factor. Alexandria was one of the more significant cities in the eastern half of the empire, and as a consequence its bishop had substantial influence on ecclesial affairs throughout the immediate region. From the beginning, Athanasius had to address issues beyond the immediate context of Alexandria and it was this broader sphere of responsibility that provided the ammunition for the charges against him. Moreover, it was the importance of Alexandria, both for the church in Egypt, but also for the Roman Empire more broadly that meant that local debates, whether of a theological or pastoral nature were of importance to a circle far beyond the immediate region. The strength and persistence of inimical attention Athanasius attracted is likely as much due to this factor as it is an indicator of the depth of concern over his conduct or teachings. Similarly, if not for the importance of Alexandria to the broader civil order of the empire, it is unlikely that accusations such as Athanasius' interference with grain shipments would have provoked the reactions that they did. An empire conscious of

its own fragility, suggested by Rome's radical experiments in economic organization and imperial government, is one that will tend to be overly responsive to the possibilities of civil disruption in centres of the importance of Alexandria. Yet, this is also an element with two dimensions. It is likely that if he had not had the institutional importance that came from being a deposed bishop of an important See his situation would not have warranted the attention that enabled him to mount his long running campaign to effect his own ecclesiastical rehabilitation by championing the theological issues he understood to be at the heart of his troubles.

It is this potentially volatile situation that a young man had to confront. He was probably not much older than thirty when he became bishop, and in his late thirties when he unsuccessfully defended himself against the accusations that led to his first exile in 335. Given his age, the strength of his personality, and his constellation of very definite theological convictions that were at odds with those of many of his contemporaries Athanasius' troubles are not surprising. His eventual victory may be unexpected. However, his willingness to fight so long and forcefully for his vision of Christology and his own reputation should not be a mystery for someone who could plausibly be accused of murder in the pursuit of his goals. Athanasius' life, from the moment he appears in the historical record, is one that was in motion across multiple interlocking spheres simultaneously. He was a bishop whose discharging of his role was driven by a fundamental theological outlook and in the service of a distinct ascetical spirituality. He was a theologian and polemicist whose writings were aimed, at least in part, to enable him to discharge his pastoral duties as bishop in Alexandria in his own person and free of outside interference. While his theological outlook was remarkably stable throughout his life, it was not the product of a theorist whose

theological system is honed outside the demands of theological controversy and the practical pastoral needs of a wide-ranging congregation. More than one scholar has noted that Athanasius' theology demonstrates a robustly resilient stability that does not translate into a fixed system,[4] and which serves a goal that can either be described as soteriological,[5] or spiritual,[6] without much being lost under either description. Capturing in a simple turn of phrase this sense of a theologically driven practitioner whose practical interests were broad and whose writings cohere but are not a system has proven to be surprisingly difficult. An earlier iteration of this thesis used the term 'theological project/program' for this purpose, intending by this a similar understanding captured by phrases such as 'the American project' or 'the Enlightenment project'—the sense of a fundamentally practical and flexibly developing approach that nonetheless displayed an underlying conceptual stability over time. This proved inapt and gave readers more the impression of Athanasius as an academic theorist. The phrase has consequently been changed to 'theological vision' in the hopes of better communicative outcomes. In case this also proves less than felicitous, this is the best location to indicate explicitly that by this term there is no intent to suggest that Athanasius was seeking to produce an abstract and theoretical system in his writings. He was a theological driven practitioner in a volatile situation whose writings evidence an underlying stability in thought.[7] This setting is the historical matrix through which his works have been read, although, as will be noted

[4] David M. Gwynn *Athanasius of Alexandria: Bishop, Theologian, Ascectic, Father* in series *Christian Theology in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Khaled Anatolios *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* (London: Routledge, 1998)
[5] Thomas G. Weinandy *Athanasius: A Theological Introduction* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007); Stefanie Frost, 'Der Mensch' in *Athanasius Handbuch* Ed. P. Gemeinhardt (Tübingen: Artibus Ingenuis, Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 318-327, p318; *contra* Gemeinhandt, 'Theologie', 99
[6] Nathan Kwok-kit Ng *The Spirituality of Athanasius: A Key for Proper Understanding of an Important Church Father* in series *European University Studies:* Series 23, Theology; Vol. 733 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2001)
[7] See the survey of scholarly opinion and discussion in Gemeinhardt, 'Theologie', 97-103.

below, his historical context rarely proved to be a resource to ground interpretive decisions for this study and so has rarely been explicitly invoked. Its existence however, while implicit, is present throughout.

Goals of this Study

Beyond the goal of progressing to a better understanding of Athanasius' views of the atonement in their own right, there are three main conclusions arising from this study that will be presented in their turn.

First, the dissertation seeks to address the issue of which theological topics are the framework for understanding Athanasius' atonement thinking. The idea for this thesis arose in a period in modern systematic theology where there was a movement towards self-consciously seeking to recapture an important place for the doctrine of the Trinity, a movement that, as we have noted, has come under criticism from patristic scholars such as Ayres. It was not unusual to find books and articles published that claimed to offer a 'Trinitarian view' of almost any aspect of doctrine, spirituality, ethics, or ministry practice. This thesis was sparked by an interest in using Athanasius as a 'test case' of this tendency in contemporary systematics—to examine Athanasius' account of the atonement with a particular eye for how and where he makes connections between the atonement and the nature of the Father-Son relationship and to draw some conclusions regarding the sense in which Athanasius' account of the atonement can be said to be a 'Trinitarian view of the atonement'. As some of the complexity of Athanasius' views on this matter came into light, it became clear that while Athanasius' thinking is Trinitarian in the sense that his particular views of the

nature of the Word and his relationship to the Father stand behind his views regarding what the incarnate Word did to save humanity, it was not Trinitarian in the more contemporary sense. Athanasius' atonement thinking is not driven primarily by reflecting upon the Trinitarian nature of the Godhead and then asking how that should be expressed in an atonement theory. Instead it became increasingly clear that Athanasius' atonement thinking is structured around a problem-solution matrix. He is explicit in discussing the creation of the cosmos, the creation of humanity, and humanity's decline into corruption as the matrix of ideas that provide the context for understanding the atonement. Athanasius' atonement is fundamentally a solution to a human problem, not a manifestation of a Trinitarian divine structure. This conviction was acquired so early in the research process, and shaped further investigation so profoundly that it has ceased to be only a discrete point thematised within the argument. Instead it has become almost a presupposition, and has shaped the structure of the dissertation itself. In that sense, while it has become almost invisible from the content of the argument, this conclusion is present throughout, and the ability of the first two chapters to orientate the reader for the later four chapters on the atonement proper is the argument for this conclusion.

Second, the thesis hopes to establish that Athanasius' understanding of the atonement is more important for his theological vision than the relative lack of attention paid to it in treatments of Athanasius' thought might suggest. At one level this point is a commonplace finding and to some degree can be anticipated by the structure of the doctoral process itself. Dissertations need to locate areas of research that are sufficiently unexplored to warrant the investigation, but then need to justify the importance of the topic to demonstrate that it can be considered a substantial

contribution to scholarship. Further, the act of sitting closely with a topic often has the effect of discovering that understanding it at depth becomes a vehicle for illumination of broader issues. While not able to avoid these two prongs of the doctoral process entirely, the point being ventured here is more modest. The atonement is not the best hermeneutical key to unlock the underlying structure of Athanasius' thought, although given the basic coherence of Athanasius' thought it is likely that many topics, not least this one, can act as a gateway into the rest of his theology. Nor is the atonement the most significant or central theological topic in his writings. Instead, the claim being presented is that the atonement is a highly significant one for Athanasius, and that many of the concerns and fundamental principles around which his thought coheres and which are on display in his more important topics can be discerned in his writing on the atonement. Athanasius' thinking on the atonement is one of the more important topics for his overall theological vision, one he often draws upon to establish principles in other significant areas, such as Christology. It is not the most significant thing for Athanasius, but it is important, and scholarship on Athanasius would benefit from acknowledging this more fully. This point would become even clearer and incontrovertible if the current investigation were extended to move from just the question of the *nature* of the atonement in Athanasius' thought to the way that it *functions* in his writings, especially the way that Athanasius can draw upon it for pastoral implications in his festal and personal letters, as well as to establish Christological convictions more broadly in his corpus. Even with its current constraints, however, sufficient evidence is in place to establish this point.

Third, the thesis aims to demonstrate that Athanasius' thinking on the atonement is not monistic but polyvalent. If there is a single point to the dissertation beyond the

opportunity to unfold some of the features of Athanasius' atonement thought, it is this one. At present the general tendency is to try to present Athanasius' atonement thinking in simple terms, where a single line can be drawn through the various theological topics that the commentator wishes to discuss. Consequently, Athanasius' thought is most commonly presented in terms fitted to later theological discourse, where a single model of the atonement is identified in his writings and this is generally related to a single set of concerns arising from his doctrines of anthropology and fall. Invariably this is cast as a version of what is often called a divinization theory of the atonement, where the sole problem facing humanity is the natural corruption and mortality that faces humanity once its communion with God has been sundered. There is no question that if one aspect of Athanasius' atonement thinking is to be abstracted from the matrix of his thought, then divinization has the best call for that role. It offers the greatest insight into the connections between this topic and the concerns driving the rest of his theological vision for the most efficient investment of effort. Nonetheless, divinization is not all that Athanasius has to say on this matter, it is not even all that he has to say that is significant. While decisions in selection of material are always required, the problem here is the tendency to present this one aspect of his thought as though it is the entirety of his understanding. This distorts not only Athanasius' understanding of the atonement, but also his view of the human condition. The hope is that this investigation will play a part in expanding the scope of scholarship's engagement with Athanasius' views on this matter. Athanasius' concept of the atonement is, ultimately, irreducibly polyvalent and not monistic. While the problem of corruption and mortality would be sufficient to support an entire approach to the atonement, Athanasius does not present as a thinker who defers to Occam's Razor. Consequently, through the exploration of three other dimensions of the

atonement—image, law, and the demonic—the dissertation seeks to demonstrate that divinization cannot support all the weight of Athanasius' understanding of the problem or the solution. Athanasius does not work with a single model of the problem or of the atonement, but instead seeks to display the diversity of factors imperilling humanity and accomplishments of the incarnate Word in delivering the human race from them. This pluralism in his understanding goes beyond mere formal content, and extends even to the underlying principles at work in these different dimensions of the atonement. Models that he rejects as completely unsuitable for one approach, such as a teacher-student relationship for divinization, are the very models that he invokes for another, such as renewal of the image. The way that the atonement addresses the demonic is even more profoundly different again from the comparisons that can be drawn across the dimensions of creation, image and law. Athanasius' approach to the atonement is profoundly multivalent.

Methodological Issues

There are methodological issues that need to be briefly canvassed before the study begins. First, the argument is developed through sustained engagement with substantial extracts from Athanasius' writing. After some initial discussion, the main body of each chapter arises as a suitable extract is invoked, and where space permits quoted, and then its significance for the point at hand is discussed. Subsequently, another appropriate extract is added and the next stage of the argument is produced through an investigation of that extract's implications, and this process continues until the topic is suitably explored, at which point some concluding reflections on that topic as a whole and its implications are offered. This method has disadvantages, namely

that there is less space in the thesis for the candidate's own words, and that the structure of the chapters is less forgiving for readers, as the chapter arises organically from one extract to the next, which both requires more attention to discern where in the argument one is at any particular point and means that some significant secondary observations occur seemingly at random in chapters as they arise from discussions on the relevant extracts. It is acknowledged that these features make the thesis neither overly reader friendly nor offer as much scope for the candidate to develop his own thoughts. However, it is considered that the advantages pertaining to this method make it reasonable. The most notable strength of this approach is that claims regarding aspects of Athanasius' thought are developed by explicit, and close, interaction with specific texts from Athanasius' writings that are easily accessed by the reader. This ensures that it is relatively easy for the reader to observe the source from which the author has derived a particular claim as well as the argument which enlists that extract as evidence for the contention at hand. Thus, with the immediate context available, the reader may independently judge the strength of the argument offered.

Second, in choosing the extracts with which to interact, the decision has been made to prioritize those texts which this writer considered to be most illuminating to the point at hand over offering texts that cover the range of works from Athanasius' corpus. In particular, texts which offer more expansive discussion of a point, or which illuminate a topic in light of where the discussion has ventured earlier in the chapter, have been chosen over seeking equal representation from all parts of Athanasius' corpus. The latter approach would probably entail including extracts that are repetitive and/or unnecessarily enigmatic as to their substantial content due to their brevity or

tangential discussion of the issue at hand. One consequence of this methodological decision is the over representation of certain works in the thesis than others, and some in some chapters more than in others. There is no equivalent to *Contra Gentes*[8], or the summary of its argument in the first few chapters of *De Incarnatione*[9], elsewhere in the corpus for extensive discussion of the doctrines of creation, anthropology and the fall and subsequent development of sin, and so the argument from the first two chapters are drawn overwhelmingly from those locations. There is almost nothing on the atonement in *CG*, and so it is rarely referenced once the discussion moves to the atonement in the later chapters. Once the atonement is in view, then *DI* tends to be the most quoted work. This is due to its habit of discussing the atonement at some length and in its own right, compared to other works of Athanasius that often raise an aspect of the atonement more tangentially, and in a form of words whose brevity leaves the meaning somewhat ambiguous without appeal to other locations where Athanasius discusses those themes at more length to interpret that ambiguous form of words. After *DI*, the three volumes of *Contra Arianos*[10] tend to feature most heavily in these later chapters, as their length enables them to introduce aspects of various topics that are not covered in the relatively shorter work of *DI*.

Third, the structure of the thesis has been strongly influenced by the organisation of the twin works of *CG* and *DI*. Partly as a reflection of the decision to prioritize those sections within Athanasius' writing which discuss the atonement and related themes more expansively, *CG/DI* does not simply appear in the extracts with a high degree of frequency, but also has informed the way the thesis itself has been configured. As this twin-work is the closest work that exists to Athanasius presenting something along the

[8] Henceforth *CG*.
[9] Henceforth *DI*.
[10] Henceforth *CA*.

lines of a modern interest in 'the doctrine of the atonement in its theological context' in a sustained fashion (with the caveat that that is not, in fact, what Athanasius is assaying to do), it was considered to be closer to Athanasius' own mode of explaining this topic to follow the basic categories and their relationship that Athanasius utilises in these two books. Accordingly, the thesis begins with a chapter discussing Athanasius' understanding of the nature of creation, and the unique position of humanity within it, and the place the Word has in creation and in humanity's constitution. The second chapter then discusses the nature of humanity's turn from God and sin's subsequent progress and effects. With this theological framework established, the thesis then turns to the atonement itself, and this is examined over the next three chapters under three basic categories: the atonement and creation, which discusses the topic generally classified as 'divinization', the atonement and the Image, which examines the twin topics of God's self-revelation in the incarnation and ministry of the Word as well as the renewal of the image in humanity, and the atonement and the Law, which discusses the existence and basic features of Athanasius' 'forensic' dimension to the atonement in the death of the body of the incarnate Word. The penultimate chapter then examines how the atonement addresses the problem of demonic influence over the human race. The final chapter offers some concluding reflections about the interaction of the creation, image and law strands of the atonement discussed with each other, how the demonic strand of the atonement further modifies those findings, and how the three major findings argued throughout the work have been established.

Fourth, the current era in patristic scholarship is one dominated by a narrative methodology, where the goal is to construct, and then fine tune, an account of the

history behind the texts. Whether it is a reconstruction of the development of a theological idea, or the interplay of politics, personal relationships and theological controversy, or the attempt to draw a portrait of a historical figure, texts are read through the lens of the narrative. They are used to help establish a narrative, and then that narrative is employed to guide the interpretation of their meaning. There is no question concerning the profound utility and fruitfulness of this approach. Where a narrative of this kind can be established and then refined it offers significant benefits to the reading of the texts of the patristic era, not simply in their ability to bear witness to the historical realities that produced them, but also to the theological ideas in the texts themselves.

However, no methodology can function as the silver key that unlocks all conundrums. While not wishing to invoke Foucault too greatly, there is a case for the conviction that methodologies must be forged appropriate to the object under investigation. For all its strengths, the narrative methodology has its own inherent limitations. Among those most pertinent to this investigation are the following. First, the narrative approach is at its strongest when there is a pre-existing and reliable narrative in place that can function as an interpretive lens for the reading of texts. It is weakest when a narrative of this kind has not been formulated in the area under investigation, either due to lack of broad-ranging primary source material, or due to relative lack of interest in formulating such a framework in the last century or so of scholarship. When it comes to Athanasius' atonement thinking, this limitation needs to be acknowledged as significant. There is not currently a reliable narrative of atonement thinking either in the period before Athanasius or amongst his contemporaries that is sufficiently robust to constructively assist our reading of his works that touch on

atonement themes. While beginning the task of constructing such a broad-ranging narrative would be a valuable endeavour, it is not the one that was intended for this investigation.

Second, the narrative approach is arguably ill-suited to a figure such as Athanasius on a topic such as the atonement. The narrative approach encourages us to read texts as though their primary horizon is the immediate historical context that can be constructed through its method. The writer's historical setting is the best explanation for his words, because the theology articulated is a response to situation. To the degree this is true, it applies to all human disciplines, and not just theology—all human rationality is particular and located, not abstract and universal. Competent readers must be aware of where the documents are located and the identity of the author (and often that of the recipient as well). In philosophy, historiography or literature documents must be read in light of when they occurred: there is nothing unique to theology at this point. However, in all these fields of knowledge, context is a resource of variable benefit for resolving interpretive questions. Certain kinds of genres are much less in conversation with their immediate circumstance than others. Grasping the meaning and import of Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* is less context dependent than Luther's *Freedom of a Christian.* Certain kinds of theological thinkers also conceive of the theological task as being either more or less a reflection upon experience. Luther, with his dictum that theologians are born not through reading and study but through living, dying and being damned, is more experiential than is Athanasius, with his Episcopal self-understanding, and tendency to present correct theology as a restatement of universal and historic tradition. When an historian of Athanasius can observe:

> When the *Contra Gentes-De Incarnatione* was written (c.328-35), Athanasius was still a relatively young man. Across some forty years of controversy and teaching, he would never deviate from the fundamental principles laid down in that first double treatise.[11]

It is questionable how much an awareness of context may assist in interpreting the intricacies of his writings. A similar implication derives from the debate over the dating of *CG-DI.* That controversy would never have achieved the potency that it demonstrated if the fundamental theological ideas expressed in Athanasius' writings displayed significant chronological development. If his thought is this stable across multiple genres of, and purposes in, writing and throughout a long career, then once a foundational understanding of his milieu is grasped, as briefly outlined above, it is entirely possible that a narrative approach will struggle to illuminate Athanasius' thinking.

Third, this method is more adept at looking through the texts to observe non-theological historical realities, than at looking at the texts to expound the theological ideas within them. Because the primary resource it harnesses to understand texts is not theological in nature, it functions best when it is able to explain theological ideas to the degree that they can be related to that non-theological narrative. However, even when the theological text in question is a response to elements of that narrative, there will often be significant details in the theology of the text that are not explicable purely through the lens of the narrative—the writer has drawn on other resources not accessible to the narrative approach. In this situation a strongly narrative approach is likely to assist in answering the question of how the atonement *functions* in Athanasius' writings—why it appears in some documents and not others, how

[11] Gwynn *Athanasius,* 72

Athanasius draws upon it as a resource for pastoral or other doctrinal issues—but it is less likely to progress our grasp of what Athanasius himself thought was the *nature* of the atonement. Those views are less likely to arise as a response to circumstances.

Consequently, this study has invested in a method more towards the other end of the methodology axis in question. Existing narratives and reconstructions of Athanasius' milieu are only present for the most part tacitly, rather than explicitly, in the dissertation. Athanasius is read as a fourth century figure, not as one from the second or eighth, but while this is an essential starting point for understanding Athanasius' writings on the atonement, narratives have rarely offered many resources to help interpret his theological understanding of the topic in the texts under examination. In part this approach can be observed from the way most chapters are constructed. Whereas the narrative approach often generates works that offer broad ranging conclusions regarding the narrative behind the texts at some length in the scholar's words and within this is situated occasional and relatively short extracts of the historical figure's own writings that serve primarily to illustrate the utility of the narrative to illuminate the texts, this study tacks in the opposite direction. This expresses the conviction that narratives are servants of good reading but are not strictly necessary to understand the main features of what a writer like Athanasius thought about the nature of a topic like the atonement. Better narratives of a more focused nature would reframe some of our conclusions, but in their absence, a general understanding of the fourth century and of Athanasius' setting is sufficient ground to read his writings and progress in our grasp of his understanding of the nature of the atonement. This is not to argue for the relative superiority of this method over narrative methods—highlighting the particular limitations of narrative approaches that

are germane to this investigation is not an argument that these are to be considered acute problems. Rather it is to make the case that in investigating the past, and in interrogating theological texts, a degree of chartered methodological pluralism is warranted. It is legitimate to read historical theological texts theologically rather than historically, and focusing on the meaning of the theological ideas in the texts and their relationship to each other, rather than to their historical setting, can illuminate the theological vision of the writer. While his execution was at time idiosyncratic, T.F. Torrance's attempts along these lines demonstrated that reading patristic theological texts with primarily theological questions at the fore is potentially profitable for theology and that there is nothing about the method itself that has to result in eccentric conclusions. Although from a previous era, E. Przywara's *An Augustine Synthesis* also demonstrates the fundamental utility of theological readings. Within Athanasian scholarship, K. Anatolios's *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* is an example of a generally well regarded work that heavily prioritizes a theological reading of Athanasius' corpus, with quite minimal use of narrative approaches. Works such as these indicate the validity and usefulness of primarily theological investigations of patristic texts. It is not claimed that this is the only way to approach his writings, but it is done in a confidence that it is a legitimate and fruitful way to understand Athanasius' views on the nature of the atonement.

Chapter One

Creation and Anthropology

Athanasius' view of the atonement is best understood in light of his teaching on the nature of humanity and the nature and consequences of sin. While this is arguably true for most accounts of the atonement, Athanasius is explicit that the incarnation and death of the Word can only be understood in the light of humanity's origins.

> Ἴσως θαυμάζεις τί δήποτε περὶ τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως τοῦ Λόγου προθέμενοι λέγειν, νῦν περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων διηγούμεθα. Ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἀλλότριόν ἐστι τοῦ σκοποῦ τῆς διηγήσεως. Ἀνάγκη γὰρ ἡμᾶς λέγοντας περὶ τῆς εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐπιφανείας τοῦ Σωτῆρος, λέγειν καὶ περὶ τῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀρχῆς, ἵνα γινώσκῃς ὅτι ἡ ἡμῶν αἰτία ἐκείνῳ γέγονε πρόφασις τῆς καθόδου, καὶ ἡ ἡμῶν παράβασις τοῦ Λόγου τὴν φιλανθρωπίαν ἐξεκαλέσατο, ὥστε καὶ εἰς ἡμᾶς φθάσαι καὶ φανῆναι τὸν Κύριον ἐν ἀνθρώποις. Τῆς γὰρ ἐκείνου ἐνσωματώσεως ἡμεῖς γεγόναμεν ὑπόθεσις, καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμῶν σωτηρίαν ἐφιλανθρωπεύσατο καὶ ἐν ἀνθρωπίνῳ γενέσθαι καὶ φανῆναι σώματι.[12]

For our inquiry the interest is in the link drawn between humanity's origin and the redemptive history of the incarnate Word. Part of this is implicit – indicated by the extended attention Athanasius gives to the topic before beginning his account of the Word's incarnation, death, and resurrection. However, part of this is explicit, "it is necessary, when we speak of the appearance of the Saviour to us, to speak also of the beginning of mankind." Athanasius believes the topics are fundamentally connected: the incarnation and cross cannot be correctly understood without an understanding of humanity's origins.

[12] *DI* 4.1-11 c.f. *DI* 1.24-36; 20.1-24.

Such an expansive treatment of the interconnection of the two topics does not recur outside of *CG/DI.* Nonetheless, the fact of their indissoluble and mutually-informing connection is a recurring element throughout Athanasius' corpus. In his anti-Arian polemics, Athanasius frequently makes explicit that the incarnation and death of the Word had human salvation as the goal. They were neither an expression of an inherently passible nature of the Word, nor a means for the Word to be promoted to further glory by the Father.

> οὐκ ἄρα καταβὰς ἐβελτιώθη, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἐβελτίωσεν αὐτὸς τὰ δεόμενα βελτιώσεως· καὶ εἰ τοῦ βελτιῶσαι χάριν καταβέβηκεν, οὐκ ἄρα μισθὸν ἔσχε τὸ λέγεσθαι υἱὸς καὶ θεός, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον αὐτὸς υἱοποίησεν ἡμᾶς τῷ πατρὶ καὶ ἐθεοποίησε τοὺς ἀνθρώπους γενόμενος αὐτὸς ἄνθρωπος.[13]

> ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ Λόγος οὐκ ἐπλανήθη, ἀλλ' ὁ αὐτὸς ὤν, ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ καὶ εὐεργεσίᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀνείληφε σῶμα ἀνθρώπινον [14]

> ὁ δὲ κύριος οὐκ ἔχων πρὸ ἑαυτοῦ αἰτίαν τοῦ εἶναι λόγος ἢ μόνον ὅτι τοῦ πατρός ἐστι γέννημα καὶ σοφία μονογενής, ὅταν ἄνθρωπος γένηται, τότε καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν τίθησι, δι' ἣν μέλλει σάρκα φορεῖν. προηγεῖται γὰρ τοῦ γενέσθαι αὐτὸν ἄνθρωπον ἡ τῶν ἀνθρώπων χρεία, ἧς ἄνευ οὐκ ἂν ἐνεδύσατο σάρκα.[15]

As we can observe here, the link between the two topics is robust. In anti-Arian contexts, Athanasius' concern is to establish the nature of the Word by examining the kind of works that the Word has performed. This approach is predicated on the conviction that the works are grounded ontologically in the nature of the Word and that his nature can only be approached epistemologically through the works. The focus is on the nature of the 'work' of the incarnation and its entailments such as

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[13] *CA* 1 38.7.4-5.
[14] *Life of Antony* 74.14-15 c.f. 75.17-18 ἃ πεποίηκεν ὁ Χριστός, θεὸν αὐτὸν ἀποδείκνυσιν, ἐπιδημήσαντα ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων. *Antony* is not an overtly anti-Arian text, but Athanasius' portrayal of Antony's speech still gives a window into Athanasius' views.
[15] *CA* 2. 54.2.5-8

passibility, death, resurrection, and glorification. Athanasius' concern is to establish the soteriological nature of this complex work, and then, from this, to argue for the Word's fully divine status as true Word/Son/Image of God.

Such a strategy can only function if the connection between humanity – its nature and need – and the incarnation, is considered to be so strong as to exclude any other *telos* for the incarnation. In Athanasius' presentation, his opponents appear to consider the work of Christ to benefit both humanity *and* the Word.[16] However, Athanasius believes humanity's origin is the only explanation for the incarnation and cross. Indeed, he holds this premise so firmly that he typically does not even argue for it but simply assumes it. It is the basis for both his polemical strategy and the foundation upon which he builds his argument for the soteriological nature of the incarnate Word's activity.[17]

[16] Athanasius never seeks to defend soteriological dimension to the Incarnate Word's works. This is presumably shared ground between all sides of the relevant debates in the fourth century. Instead, his concern appears to be to demonstrate that soteriology is the *sole* concern and, in particular, to exclude the Word as a beneficiary of his own work. Such an approach suggests, assuming Athanasius has understood his opponents' positions correctly, that Athanasius is contending against a view that the works of the Word have multiple beneficiaries and effects. That is, his distinctive position is the *exclusively* soteriological nature of the incarnation and its effects, for it was generally agreed that soteriology was *an* aspect to the Word's work. This does not necessarily entail the thesis that two different visions of salvation were at stake in the fourth century as argued by R. C. Gregg and D. E. Groh *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation.* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981). There continues to be a lack of positive evidence for such a clearly different understanding of soteriology between the various actors to support the proposal. This is significant, as it is difficult to imagine that Athanasius would pass over such a significant point of difference in theology given his overall rhetorical strategy. Instead, his arguments read as though he assumes a similar understanding of salvation is at work and from that common ground seeks to demonstrate that only his particular Christological understanding is appropriate.

[17] It is the case that occasionally Athanasius does state the negative explicitly, such as in *CA* 2. 54.2.5-8 quoted above. Athanasius states that the need of man preceded the Word taking on flesh and is the reason for it. This is a typically Athanasian positive statement of the connection, where the use of the definite article implies the exclusivity of the connection between soteriology and incarnation but does not absolutely exclude any other cause of the incarnation. However, in this instance Athanasius also explicitly states the connection in the negative as well, 'apart from which he did not put on flesh.' With this Athanasius commits himself to the view that without humanity's sin and God's decision to save, the incarnation would never have occurred. The incarnation was for humanity's salvation *alone* for Athanasius.

View of Creation

Athanasius presents the human race in its primordial condition as enjoying a state beyond what it could attain by its own nature. As a creature, humankind is inherently mortal, subject to death and dissolution. It is the nature of created things to not exist and, upon coming into existence, to return to non-existence.[18]

> τῶν μὲν γὰρ γενητῶν ἐστιν ἡ φύσις, ἅτε δὴ ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ὑποστᾶσα, ῥευστή τις καὶ ἀσθενὴς καὶ θνητὴ καθ᾽ ἑαυτὴν συγκρινομένη τυγχάνει·…. τὴν γενητὴν πᾶσαν φύσιν, ὅσον κατὰ τοὺς ἰδίους αὐτῆς λόγους, ῥευστὴν οὖσαν καὶ διαλυομένην·[19]

> τὸ ἀνθρώπων γένος ἐλεήσας, καὶ θεωρήσας ὡς οὐχ ἱκανὸν εἴη κατὰ τὸν τῆς ἰδίας γενέσεως λόγον διαμένειν ἀεί [20]

> ὥσπερ οὐκ ὄντες γεγόνασιν, οὕτως καὶ τὴν εἰς τὸ μὴ εἶναι φθορὰν ὑπομείνωσι τῷ χρόνῳ εἰκότως. Εἰ γὰρ φύσιν ἔχοντες τὸ μὴ εἶναί ποτε, τῇ τοῦ Λόγου παρουσίᾳ καὶ φιλανθρωπίᾳ εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἐκλήθησαν, ἀκόλουθον ἦν κενωθέντας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τῆς περὶ Θεοῦ ἐννοίας καὶ εἰς τὰ οὐκ ὄντα ἀποστραφέντας, οὐκ ὄντα γάρ ἐστι τὰ κακά, ὄντα δὲ τὰ καλά, ἐπειδήπερ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος Θεοῦ γεγόνασι, κενωθῆναι καὶ τοῦ εἶναι ἀεί. Τοῦτο δέ ἐστι τὸ διαλυθέντας μένειν ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ καὶ τῇ φθορᾷ. Ἔστι μὲν γὰρ κατὰ φύσιν ἄνθρωπος θνητός, ἅτε δὴ ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων γεγονώς.[21]

For Athanasius the natural state of contingent entities is non-existence. Their creation is an interruption of their basic state – "having a nature to never exist, they were called to existence." Existence is a foreign condition requiring action from outside. Even once this has occurred, their basic nature remains as entities that are from

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[18] Jon M. Robertson, *Christ as Mediator a Study of the Theologies of Eusebius of Caesarea, Marcellus of Ancrya, and Athanasius of Alexandria*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 183: "…an *ex nihilo* origin determined the nature of the creature, which in turn determined the capability of that creature."
[19] *CG* 41.10-12, 16-17
[20] *DI* 3.17-18
[21] *DI* 4.18-27

nothing and for whom mortality and the return to non-existence is natural. Accordingly, if creatures were left to themselves, they would quickly return to their former condition of non-existence.

In order to forestall this, God establishes a relationship between the Word and creation.

> ὁρῶν οὖν τὴν γενητὴν πᾶσαν φύσιν, ὅσον κατὰ τοὺς ἰδίους αὐτῆς λόγους, ῥευστὴν οὖσαν καὶ διαλυομένην· ἵνα μὴ τοῦτο πάθῃ, καὶ πάλιν εἰς τὸ μὴ εἶναι ἀναλυθῇ τὸ ὅλον, τούτου ἕνεκεν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἀϊδίῳ Λόγῳ ποιήσας τὰ πάντα, καὶ οὐσιώσας τὴν κτίσιν, οὐκ ἀφῆκεν αὐτὴν τῇ ἑαυτῆς φύσει φέρεσθαι καὶ χειμάζεσθαι, ἵνα μὴ καὶ κινδυνεύσῃ πάλιν εἰς τὸ μὴ εἶναι· ἀλλ' ὡς ἀγαθὸς τῷ ἑαυτοῦ Λόγῳ καὶ αὐτῷ ὄντι Θεῷ τὴν σύμπασαν διακυβερνᾷ καὶ καθίστησιν, ἵνα τῇ τοῦ Λόγου ἡγεμονίᾳ καὶ προνοίᾳ καὶ διακοσμήσει φωτιζομένη ἡ κτίσις βεβαίως διαμένειν δυνηθῇ, ἅτε δὴ τοῦ ὄντως ὄντος ἐκ Πατρὸς Λόγου μεταλαμβάνουσα καὶ βοηθουμένη δι' αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ εἶναι· μὴ ἄρα πάθῃ ὅπερ ἂν ἔπαθεν, εἰ μὴ ὁ Λόγος αὐτὴν ἐτήρει, λέγω δὴ τὸ μὴ εἶναι.... Αὐτὸς γοῦν ὁ παντοδύναμος καὶ παντέλειος ἅγιος ὁ τοῦ Πατρὸς Λόγος, ἐπιβὰς τοῖς πᾶσι καὶ πανταχοῦ τὰς ἑαυτοῦ δυνάμεις ἐφαπλώσας, καὶ φωτίσας τά τε φαινόμενα καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα πάντα, εἰς ἑαυτὸν συνέχει καὶ συσφίγγει, μηδὲν ἔρημον τῆς ἑαυτοῦ δυνάμεως ἀπολελοιπώς, ἀλλὰ πάντα καὶ διὰ πάντων, καὶ ἕκαστον ἰδίᾳ, καὶ ἀθρόως ὁμοῦ τὰ ὅλα ζωοποιῶν καὶ διαφυλάττων·[22]

Athanasius presents the relationship between the Word and creation in spatial and ontological terms. The Word contains the world within himself, and so the Word is present everywhere, empowering, filling, illuminating, directing and unifying the universe.[23] The universe is filled with the Word's power and unifying direction so as to continue in existence both because the Word encloses creation within himself, and

[22] *CG* 41.17-42.6

[23] As observed in the extract above, with the theme of the Word's unifying agency in creation expanded in the later parts of *CG* 42. See G. Florovsky, "The Concept of Creation in Saint Athanasius" *Studia Patristica* VI, no IV (1962): 46-49 for a discussion of Athanasius' view of creation's relationship to the Word with an eye to both the being/act and energies/essence debates and the previous history of the doctrine. *C.f* M. C. Steenberg, *Of God and Man: Theology as Anthropology from Irenaeus to Athanasius*. (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 164 for similar, albeit briefer, reflections upon *CG* 41.

because creation shares in the Word.[24] Its enduring relationship with the Word preserves creation from chaos and dissolution and grants it resources that are inherent to the Word: order and existence. For Athanasius, this is no mere giving of properties external from the giver. Rather, creation shares in the Word himself. The relationship envisaged is participatory, where creation enjoys qualities that are properly the attributes of the Word but which are also enjoyed, in a creaturely way, by the universe as a consequence of its sharing in, and being enclosed by, the Word. This spatial and ontological relationship to the Word is the sole ground for the universe's ongoing existence.[25]

Such a relationship between the Word and creation is understood by Athanasius to be entirely appropriate, given God's reason for creating. Athanasius presents the creation of the universe as an expression of the goodness of God.

> Ὁ Θεὸς γὰρ ἀγαθός ἐστι, μᾶλλον δὲ πηγὴ τῆς ἀγαθότητος ὑπάρχει· ἀγαθῷ δὲ περὶ οὐδενὸς ἂν γένοιτο φθόνος· ὅθεν οὐδενὶ τοῦ εἶναι φθονήσας, ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων τὰ πάντα πεποίηκε διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου Λόγου τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ·[26]

[24] *C.f.* Khaled Anatolios, *Coherence*, 51-53; John Behr, *The Nicene Faith*. (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 180-181; Robertson, *Mediator*, 182-183 for an essentially similar account.

[25] Rebecca J. Lyman *Christology and Cosmology: Models of Divine Activity in Origen, Eusebius, and Athanasius*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 136-139 highlights the contrast between Athanasius' view of the interaction between God's nature as good and his will with that of some of his predecessors. The connections between this issue and Athanasius' soteriological emphasis on divinization through participation in the divine nature are brought out, however the account of the divine will's potency in creation is too weak, possibly due in part to a lack of appreciation for the relationship between the Word and creation, and looking only to the interplay of nature and will to do all the work in Athanasius that it accomplished in the earlier thinkers. Note a similar argument in Ng *Spirituality*, 64-66. Ng emphasizes the Word's mediating role in creation, but understands this as only a participation in the Word's will and power and not as a participation in the Word himself.

[26] *DI* 3.13-16

Like Plato, in the *Timaeus*, and in line with much previous Christian tradition, Athanasius considers the existence of contingent entities to have its cause in God's goodness.[27] God created all things because he begrudged existence to nothing.[28] This suggests that creation is its own reason for existing, an end of God's generosity, rather than a means to some end beyond itself.

In *CG* 41.15-16, takes this idea a step further, stating that God 'wills everything to exist, in order that he may also be able to be benevolent.'[29] Here God is more than a disinterested party in creation's origin. With φιλανθρωπεύεσθαι, a present infinitive, the focus is on God's active kindness – which also suggests that this purpose is not completed with the act of creation itself. Creation exists to provide a context for the ongoing exercise of God's kindness as it continues to provide existence to a realm that would otherwise dissolve.

At this point, God is not entirely disinterested; nonetheless creation is arguably entirely the beneficiary of the arrangement. God's kindness is able to be expressed, but Athanasius does not suggest any benefit that accrues to God apart from the ability to exercise his kindness in a way that would be impossible without there being a creation.

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[27] Lyman, *Christology*, 48-49 identifies Origen as articulating a strikingly similar understanding of this point

[28] Similarly Peter J. Leithart, *Athanasius*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2011), 89

[29] ἀλλὰ πάντας εἶναι βούλεται, ἵνα καὶ φιλανθρωπεύεσθαι δύνηται. *CG* 41.15-16. *C.f.* Anatolios, *Coherence,* 41

However, when Athanasius turns from discussing God's motivation in bringing creation as a whole into existence to the subject of humanity's particular existence there is a distinct change. His version of the 'divine dilemma' regarding how God could respond to humanity's sin and consequent destruction highlights God's self-interest as a motivation for action.

> Τί δὲ καὶ ὄφελος τῷ πεποιηκότι Θεῷ, ἢ ποία δόξα αὐτῷ ἂν εἴη, εἰ οἱ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ γενόμενοι ἄνθρωποι οὐ προσκυνοῦσιν αὐτῷ, ἀλλ' ἑτέρους εἶναι τοὺς πεποιηκότας αὐτοὺς νομίζουσιν; Εὑρίσκεται γὰρ ὁ Θεὸς ἑτέροις καὶ οὐχ ἑαυτῷ τούτους δημιουργήσας.[30]

Here God does profit in making humanity: he receives glory and worship. This theme only occurs in the negative context of how God should respond to the prospect of our continuing in sin. Nonetheless, the way it is framed also suggests a genuine positive content to the concept. Athanasius is not simply talking about a possible loss of glory arising from humanity's worshipping of others – which could imply that God's glory *became* contingent on human choices after the species was created. Rather, there is a sense in which God's glory is increased – and not merely be maintained – by humanity's existence and worship. God intended to receive a 'profit' on humanity's creation, to receive some benefit that he did not enjoy previous to humanity's existence.[31]

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[30] *DI* 13.10-14

[31] Anatolios, *Coherence,* 42 notes the same implications from *DI* 13, although he appears to broaden the implications to the creation as a whole, while maintaining the focus of the extract on the occasion of human sin. This is potentially less of a difference than it may appear at first glance as Anatolios stresses more than our account the extent to which Athanasius' cosmology is understood in terms of his anthropology rather than *vice versa* see page 32.

Athanasius indicates a significant difference that exists between humankind and the rest of creation.[32] This difference is not simply humanity's nature, which we will soon consider, but God's level of investment. Athanasius presents God as having a stake in the outcome of humanity's existence that has no parallel within the rest of creation. In this, Athanasius breaks with previous voices in the Christian tradition, such as Irenaeus, who explicitly exclude such a possibility of God having received something from humanity's existence, and so exclude this as a purpose for humanity's creation.[33]

Humanity's Distinctive Feature: Knowing God

Arguably most central to Athanasius' understanding of humanity is the idea of the knowledge of God.[34] For Athanasius, following previous philosophic and Christian traditions, humanity was created rational in order to dedicate itself to the task of knowing non-sensual realities.

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[32] It should be observed, however, that this difference is not an outright contradiction. In *CA 2* 51.3.4-8 Athanasius observes:

> Τὰ γὰρ γινόμενα καὶ κτιζόμενα προηγουμένως ἕνεκα τοῦ εἶναι καὶ τοῦ ὑπάρχειν πεποίηται, καὶ δεύτερον ἔχουσι τὸ ποιεῖν, περὶ ὧν ἂν αὐτοῖς ὁ Λόγος προστάττῃ, ὡς ἐπὶ πάντων ἔστιν ἰδεῖν τὸ τοιοῦτον. Ἀδὰμ γὰρ ἐκτίσθη, οὐχ ἵνα ἐργάζηται, ἀλλ' ἵνα πρῶτον ὑπάρχῃ ἄνθρωπος· μετὰ ταῦτα γὰρ ἔλαβε τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ ἐργάζεσθαι

Here Athanasius clearly argues for the priority of existence over works and does so by stating that primarily things were created just to be what they were and only secondarily to carry out the obligations placed upon them by the Word. Given Athanasius' focus on Adam and, in the material following our extract, Moses as his 'worked examples' this suggests that even for human persons existence as an end in itself is the primary good and obedience to the Word's requirements is secondary. As the glory that God receives from humanity appears to be linked, in *DI* 13, with humanity's service or lack of it, it suggests that the end of glorifying God is secondary to simply existing as human beings. Glory to God is significant, but it does not place humanity in a radically different position to the rest of creation, whereby humanity alone is a means to an end beyond itself. Humanity's existence, like the rest of creation, is ultimately an end in itself. *c.f.* Behr, *Nicene,* 194 for an alternative solution to the issues raised by *DI* 13.

[33] For example Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* IV.14.1. However, see III.23.1 for similar language to Athanasius that God could lose honour in the estimation of creatures by the ultimate victory of sin; although, even here, it is without the suggestion that God benefits from humanity's service.

[34] Frost, 'Mensch', 318

> ὑπεράνω μὲν τῶν αἰσθητῶν καὶ πάσης σωματικῆς φαντασίας γινόμενος, πρὸς δὲ τὰ ἐν οὐρανοῖς θεῖα νοητὰ τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ νοῦ συναπτόμενος. ὅτε γὰρ οὐ συνομιλεῖ τοῖς σώμασιν ὁ νοῦς ὁ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, οὐδέ τι τῆς ἐκ τούτων ἐπιθυμίας μεμιγμένον ἔξωθεν ἔχει, ἀλλ᾽ ὅλος ἐστὶν ἄνω ἑαυτῷ συνὼν ὡς γέγονεν ἐξ ἀρχῆς· τότε δή, τὰ αἰσθητὰ καὶ πάντα τὰ ἀνθρώπινα διαβάς, ἄνω μετάρσιος γίνεται,[35]

Here, as *CG* begins, Athanasius expounds upon the distinctive nature of humanity. He points to the capacity of the rational soul to transcend the realm of bodily and sensory experience and enter into the contemplation of divine realities in such a profoundly realist fashion that the soul clings to these things it contemplates. As the context in *CG* 2 makes clear, this is not merely a discussion of an abstract capacity of the soul. It is a statement of the soul's natural and proper function, the end for which it was made and the role for which it was fitted.[36]

As the extract suggests, this purpose for humanity takes place within the context of a dualist anthropology. Athanasius conceives of the human person as an amalgam of two contrary natures: a rational soul and a body.[37] The soul is rational and was intended to transcend the realm of senses and bodily sensation and dwell in the heavens. In order to do this it must refrain from becoming entangled in the world of sensory and bodily experience and 'dwell within itself'—to be by itself and detached from the body is to be raised on high. This obligation upon the soul to detach from its own body so as to pursue only non-sensate realities is a consistent feature of

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[35] *CG* 2.18-25

[36] c*ontra* the stimulating suggestion by Charles Kannengiesser, *Arius and Athanasius: Two Alexandrian Theologians*. (Aldershot, Hampshire, Great Britain: Variorum, 1991), 108-109 that for Athanasius the soul is a post-fall reality for humanity, our reading suggests that soul and mind, while not synonyms, have far more semantic overlap in Athanasius' thought.

[37] Athanasius' anthropology would seem to parallel Eusebius of Caesarea's here. See Lyman, *Christology*, 101-102

Athanasius' understanding of the proper orientation of the soul. It is this ability to transcend the body that sets humanity apart from irrational animals, as "…only man reasons about the things outside himself, and consider things not present"[38] and is held out as the archetypical signpost of the existence of a rational soul.

In line with previous Christian tradition, and against some strands of philosophic thought, Athanasius considers that the rational dimension of humanity's existence must centre on knowing God to the extent that the denial of God is 'to not have a mind.'

> τὴν ἑκάστου ψυχὴν εἶναι, καὶ τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ νοῦν. δι' αὐτοῦ γὰρ μόνου δύναται Θεὸς θεωρεῖσθαι καὶ νοεῖσθαι...οὐ γὰρ ἐχόντων ἔστι νοῦν ἀρνεῖσθαι τὸν τούτου ποιητὴν καὶ δημιουργὸν Θεόν.[39]

Hence, the knowledge of eternity, virtue, and the other non-sensate rational realities are all dimensions of the knowledge of God and are not realities with a substantial existence apart from him.[40]

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[38] μόνον τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὰ ἔξωθεν ἑαυτοῦ λογίζεσθαι, καὶ ἐνθυμεῖσθαι τὰ μὴ παρόντα. *CG* 31.5-6

[39] *CG* 30.18-19, 22-23

[40] Athanasius never appears to see the need to state this explicitly, but it is apparent in the general tenor of his writings. In *CG* 2.10-11 human beings are given a knowledge of τῆς ἰδίας ἀϊδιότητος, 'his own eternity,' not just eternity generally. Similarly, in lines 20-21, the heavenly realities that humans cling to by the power of the mind are not just νοητὰ. 'intelligible', but also θεῖα 'divine.' This seems to reflect Athanasius' basic understanding of the nature of reality and God's place within it. In *CG* 4.18-19 Athanasius declares ὄντα δέ φημι τὰ καλά, καθότι ἐκ τοῦ ὄντος Θεοῦ τὰ παραδείγματα ἔχει. Reality is the thing that is the good and is so because the God who exists is the model or plan of reality – and so, presumably, the fact that God is good means that goodness must also be a defining trait of that which has him as its model. Such logic predicates a strong connection between God's nature and the nature of reality, in line with what we have observed with our discussion of Athanasius' doctrine of creation. Things can only exist by taking on some of God's own qualities, there can be no 'existence' that is not in some sense as sharing in God's nature because there is no other existence other than ἐκ τοῦ ὄντος Θεοῦ. Given such a framework, it is difficult to imagine that Athanasius could have a view of eternal, non-contingent, non-sensible realities that exist apart from God. All such qualities must be substantially θεῖα, and ἰδίας with regards to God.

> τὰ αἰσθητὰ καὶ πάντα τὰ ἀνθρώπινα διαβάς, ἄνω μετάρσιος γίνεται, καὶ τὸν Λόγον ἰδών, ὁρᾷ ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ τὸν τοῦ Λόγου Πατέρα, ἡδόμενος ἐπὶ τῇ τούτου θεωρίᾳ, καὶ ἀνακαινούμενος ἐπὶ τῷ πρὸς τοῦτον πόθῳ.[41]

The relationship between God and the Word structures the form in which humanity appropriates the knowledge of God. Humanity's rational mind is raised above the senses and thus it automatically sees the Word. Consistent with previous observations regarding the ontological relationships, the activity of knowing is understood in spatial terms: the soul ascends to the realm of reason and there, presumably outside the material creation in the enclosing layer of the Word, sees the Word himself. In seeing the Word, the soul also sees God: the latter vision and knowledge being contained in the former.

Athanasius indicates why these two objects of knowledge are so interconnected by referring to God as 'the Father of the Word.' Because the Word is the Son of God, and both terms are tokens of the generation from the Father,[42] the Son participates in the Father's nature and essence such that the essence of the Father is also the essence of the Son. Consequently, there is a genuine sense in which the Father and the Word are one thing. Hence, for Athanasius, each party is contained in the other: the Father is in the Word, and the Word is in the Father—a strongly realist reading of John 14:11 and its implications are ubiquitous throughout Athanasius' writings. Because the

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[41] *CG* 2.24-27

[42] ταῦτα τῆς ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεννήσεώς εἰσι γνωρίσματα. *De Decretis* 17.4.1

Father exists in the Word, and the Word is not separated from the Father's essence, the act of seeing the Word carries with it the vision of God also.[43]

Athanasius sees this knowledge of God as fundamentally important for humanity's wellbeing: the soul 'taking pleasure' in its knowledge of God is renewed by its desire for God. This idea that knowing God is good for the soul is critical to Athanasius' anthropology. Humanity was, after all, created for the purpose of knowing God.

> Θεός, ὁ ὑπερέκεινα πάσης οὐσίας καὶ ἀνθρωπίνης ἐπινοίας ὑπάρχων, ἅτε δὴ ἀγαθὸς καὶ ὑπέρκαλος ὤν, διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου Λόγου τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον γένος κατ' ἰδίαν εἰκόνα πεποίηκε· καὶ τῶν ὄντων αὐτὸν θεωρητὴν καὶ ἐπιστήμονα διὰ τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁμοιώσεως κατεσκεύασε, δοὺς αὐτῷ καὶ τῆς ἰδίας ἀϊδιότητος ἔννοιαν καὶ γνῶσιν, ἵνα, τὴν ταυτότητα σώζων, μήτε τῆς περὶ Θεοῦ φαντασίας ποτὲ ἀποστῇ, μήτε τῆς τῶν ἁγίων συζήσεως ἀποπηδήσῃ, ἀλλ', ἔχων τὴν τοῦ δεδωκότος χάριν, ἔχων καὶ τὴν ἰδίαν ἐκ τοῦ πατρικοῦ Λόγου δύναμιν, ἀγάλληται καὶ συνομιλῇ τῷ Θείῳ, ζῶν τὸν ἀπήμονα καὶ μακάριον ὄντως ἀθάνατον βίον.[44]

Humanity was constituted with the ability to obtain the knowledge of God, up to and including his eternity. Humans were made to: possess the idea of God; to enjoy communion with the saints; and to have fellowship with God. The result of this would be enjoyment of the 'blessed immortal life.' Athanasius sees this as a central goal of God creating humanity with the knowledge of himself.

> ἐν οἷς πρὸ πάντων τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς τὸ ἀνθρώπων γένος ἐλεήσας, καὶ θεωρήσας ὡς οὐχ ἱκανὸν εἴη κατὰ τὸν τῆς ἰδίας γενέσεως λόγον διαμένειν ἀεί, πλέον τι χαριζόμενος αὐτοῖς, οὐχ ἁπλῶς, ὥσπερ πάντα τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς ἄλογα ζῷα, ἔκτισε τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ εἰκόνα ἐποίησεν αὐτούς, μεταδοὺς αὐτοῖς καὶ τῆς τοῦ ἰδίου Λόγου δυνάμεως, ἵνα ὥσπερ σκιάς τινας ἔχοντες τοῦ

[43] *c.f.* Robertson, *Mediator,* 145, 211-214. The latter section deals particularly with conditions in the incarnation, but Robertson clearly draws the interconnections with Athanasius' broader concerns that Word is an 'immediate mediator' (his term) of the Father which have manifest implications for the Word's role before the incarnation. A similar point, in the context of creation's revelation of the Word, is made by Steenberg, *God,* 164-165.

[44] *CG* 2.6-15

> Λόγου καὶ γενόμενοι λογικοὶ διαμένειν ἐν μακαριότητι δυνηθῶσι, ζῶντες τὸν ἀληθινὸν καὶ ὄντως τῶν ἁγίων ἐν παραδείσῳ βίον. [45]

Here humanity's distinctive and defining feature is considered to be its rationality, existing so that humanity might remain in blessedness. This note of abiding for ever in blessedness or of living the life of immortality (previous quote) is of decisive importance in Athanasius' account. Like the creation as a whole, humanity has no inherent power to exist—'was unable, by reason of its own origin, to remain forever.' Accordingly, there is a tension between God's purpose for humanity and humanity's inherent capabilities as a creature. 'God then, had so created man and willed that he should remain in incorruptibility,'[46] and yet, 'man is mortal by nature, inasmuch as he was created from non-existence.'[47]

But knowing God overcomes the problem. Humanity's knowledge of God effects a participation in God's life, 'For God has not only created us from non-existence, but he also granted us by the grace of the Word the life according to God.'[48] This enables humans to transcend their created nature, and experience a kind of life beyond their own potential: "They are…corruptible by nature, but by the grace of the participation of the Word they could have escaped the entailments of their nature…"[49] Humanity thus gains the immortality and blessedness proper to God's own existence, "But because of his similarity to he who exists, if he had kept this through the

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[45] *DI* 3.16-24
[46] Οὕτως μὲν οὖν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον πεποίηκε, καὶ μένειν ἠθέλησεν ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ· *DI* 4.11-12
[47] Ἔστι μὲν γὰρ κατὰ φύσιν ἄνθρωπος θνητός, ἅτε δὴ ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων γεγονώς. *DI* 4.26-27
[48] Ὁ μὲν γὰρ Θεὸς οὐ μόνον ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ἡμᾶς πεποίηκεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ κατὰ Θεὸν ζῆν ἡμῖν ἐχαρίσατο τῇ τοῦ Λόγου χάριτι. *DI* 5.1-2
[49] ὄντες μὲν…κατὰ φύσιν φθαρτοί, χάριτι δὲ τῆς τοῦ Λόγου μετουσίας τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν ἐκφυγόντες, *DI* 5.5-6

contemplation of him, he would have blunted the corruption from nature, even to remain incorruptible,"[50] and as we saw earlier, "remain in blessedness, living the true life which is really that of the saints in paradise."[51]

What is envisaged at this point has analogies with creation's sharing in the Word but exceeds it. Both creation and humanity are offered a participation in divinity that enables them to avoid corruption and mortality. It would appear that this is all that creation as a whole is offered, however humanity enjoys something beyond this relatively distant and partial participation.[52] The language of 'life according to God,' 'blessedness,' 'living the true life which is really that of the saints in paradise,' and 'incorruptible' all suggest that the participation in the divine life intended for humanity is more substantial and raises humanity to a higher existence. Knowing God effects a more substantial participation in God, leading to greater benefits.[53] For Athanasius, humanity was profoundly divinized from the beginning, demonstrating the great height from which it has fallen.

The Soul and the Word

As the extracts have indicated, it is the Image of God that enables mortal humans to know God and so to participate in the divine life resulting in an alien immortality and blessedness. Humanity is made 'after the likeness' of the Image of God, who is the

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[50] Διὰ δὲ τὴν πρὸς τὸν ὄντα ὁμοιότητα, ἣν εἰ ἐφύλαττε διὰ τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν κατανοήσεως, ἤμβλυνεν ἂν τὴν κατὰ φύσιν φθοράν, καὶ ἔμεινεν ἄφθαρτος· *DI* 4.27-29

[51] *DI* 3.23-24

[52] *C.f.* Anatolios, *Coherence*, 56

[53] Once again Athanasius' anthropology appears to follow Origen: Lyman, *Christology*, 68; Ng, *Spirituality*, 67

Word of God. God "made them according to his own Image;"[54] "has made the human race according to his own Image."[55] Athanasius appears to have understood Genesis 1:26-27 in light of Colossians 1:15. The Word and Son of God is the true, eternal Image and Likeness of the Father. The language of Genesis 1 of humanity being made 'in the image of God' and 'after the likeness of God' is therefore understood as creating humanity in terms of a relationship with the Word, rather than a likeness with some property of the Godhead *sans* the mediation of the Word.[56] Humanity being 'in the Image of God' means that humanity is like the Word, rather than like the Father or the Godhead, in contrast to some strains of later Western anthropology.

This gives humans an element of the Word's own power and a reflection of the Word within themselves, "giving them a portion even of the power of his own Word; so that having as it were shadows of the Word."[57] Thus it is that the human race is already godlike in significant ways upon its creation. Humanity is, in an ontologically significant way, assimilated to the Son of God—having its own mirror image of the Word within itself.[58] Those qualities of the soul that appear incongruous for a

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[54] κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ εἰκόνα ἐποίησεν αὐτούς *DI* 3.20-21

[55] τὸ ἀνθρώπινον γένος κατ' ἰδίαν εἰκόνα πεποίηκε *CG* 3.8-9

[56] For a similar summary Johannes Roldanus, *Le Christ et l'homme dans la théologie d'Athanase d'Alexandrie*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 65.

[57] μεταδοὺς αὐτοῖς καὶ τῆς τοῦ ἰδίου Λόγου δυνάμεως, ἵνα ὥσπερ σκιάς τινας ἔχοντες τοῦ Λόγου *DI* 3.21-22

[58] *contra* Louth, "Athanasius'Understanding of the Humanity of Christ." *Studia Patristica* XVI, no. 2 (1985): 309-318. On pages 313-318 he appears to consider κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ εἰκόνα, as a gift of grace separate from, and external to, humanity's constitution. This seems to result from a misreading of *DI* 3.19, with its mention of πλέον τι χαριζόμενος αὐτοῖς ' The grace spoken of at this point is not added onto humanity's nature, but describes how humanity has been made: not like the irrational animals, but in the likeness of God. Athanasius' point is that to be constituted in the likeness of God is a gift uniquely bestowed on humanity, not that being in the likeness of God is a relationship between God and humanity without grounding in humanity's human nature, and so easily lost with the advent of sin. It is true that κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ εἰκόνα has a relational dimension, but it is more than a statement that humanity and God are in relationship, pointing also to that which is inherent to humanity that makes that relationship possible. See also George Dion Dragas, *Saint Athanasius of Alexandria: Original*

creature made from nothing to enjoy: rationality, immortality, and eternity, are all consequences of the soul's profound relationship with the Word himself. They are expressions of the fact that the soul is a portion of the Word's power—a reflexion of the Word, and like the one who is himself defined by his Likeness to God.[59]

Athanasius' understanding of the soul and its relationship to the Word would appear to verge on making the soul divine. Eternity, rationality, and immortality are all qualities that Athanasius places on the Creator side of the divide. When Athanasius goes further and speaks of the soul as being a reflexion of the Word, and a portion of the Word's power within a person, it does suggest that—especially given the strongly realist tenor of his theology—humanity contains a 'spark of the divine' in a somewhat realist sense.

This would appear to be an apparent contradiction of one of Athanasius' fundamental principles (the division of reality into 'God' and 'creature' as mutually exclusive categories). Yet, given the overall coherence of Athanasius' theology, as well as his statement that the inherent relationship of the soul to the Word is an 'extra grace,' and

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Research and New Perspectives. (Rollinsford, N. H.: Orthodox Research Institute, 2005) 33, 38; Behr, *Nicene,* 190; Ng, *Spirituality*, 68

[59] Steenberg, *God*, 166-7 offers a similar reading of the implications of humanity being made in the Image. However, he offers an extension of this idea to suggest that creation itself functions as an image of the Image, although in a weaker fashion than humanity, because of its ability to reveal the Word, and hence God. While concurring with this assessment of how creation functions, one does not concede that 'image' language sufficiently captures this aspect of Athanasius' doctrine of creation. Being in the image in humanity is linked to humanity's ability to know God rather than reveal God. While being the Image enables the Word to reveal the Father, being in the image appears to function in a complementary, rather than imitative, fashion in the creature explicitly described by Athanasius as being in the image. In the absence of an explicit statement from Athanasius that he sees creation as a weaker but comparable instance of humanity's being in the image the way that being in the image functions in humanity would preclude reading creation's revelatory capacity as being an indication of its image status. Ability to know God through his Word, rather than capacity to reveal God through his Word, appears to be the effect of being made in the image of the Image of God.

his attribution of the soul's immortal, eternal, and rational nature to this primordial and basic relationship with the Word (rather than a set of qualities that express an autonomous nature), it seems more likely that we are dealing with rhetorical overstatement.

This conclusion is strengthened by Athanasius' treatment of the freedom to choose between good and evil. As we will observe shortly, he grants this to the soul on the basis of its rationality, and yet denies it to God—who is the source of that same rationality of the soul. This strong inversion of how the freedom of reason functions ethically as one moves from God to the human soul is a strong indicator that, despite the divine qualities of the soul, the Creator-creature chasm stands intact. The soul is divinized, not divine.[60]

The Soul's Capacity to Know God

The chasm stands, but can be bridged. Athanasius is famous for his conviction that the chasm was divinely crossed by the incarnation of the Word. However, that is a redemptive crossing which reflects a more primordial fording of the soul to the Word,

[60] Steenberg, *God,* 172: "...spiritual communion with God's own being, causes the soul to well up in itself—and to communicate to the body—the eternal attributes of the divine life" suggest a similar conclusion to this possible interpretive problem. Even so, it arguably remains a weak point in Athanasius' polemic against 'Arianism'. If the soul is not divine, but a creature, then it is a creature that appears to have been divinized in such a way with its creation that that divinization is effectively its nature. That is, Athanasius' rational and eternal creaturely soul looks very similar to his account of 'Arianism's' rational and eternal creaturely Word. While that may not be fatal for his argument, for a soul divinized by the divine Word differs from a divinized Word, Athanasius in his arguments against a divinized Word does at times appear to attack the very possibility of such a category as a creature completely divinized upon its creation. Such a position is obviously undermined by the existence of the soul as an item within that very set. It is undoubtedly a difficult interpretive issue, Meijering's discussion: E. P. Meijering, *Orthodoxy and Platonism in Athanasius: Synthesis or Antithesis?* (Leiden, E. J. Brill: 1968), 25-29 illuminates some of the difficulties and canvasses solutions to the problem. Anatolios' approach to see the soul more as a relationship with God than as a creaturely 'thing' arguably gains some of its explanatory power by its relative advantage in dealing with this issue.

one already observed. The soul is able to move from the material realm of sense and ascend 'on high;' the soul naturally moves from the creaturely realm to the divine. There it perceives the Word, and in that perception has communion with God the Father himself. This way in which the knowledge of God is ordered so that it is mediated through the Word on the divine side and through the soul on the human side is fitting given the anthropology that Athanasius has elucidated It is particularly fitting that the knowledge of God is given in and through the agency of the Word, given the nature of the Father-Son relationship. But it is just as fitting that the knowledge of God is given through the activity of the soul contemplating the Word. The soul is significantly similar to the Word and has, in a creaturely fashion, qualities that are proper to the Word. Because the soul is so like the Word, it is appropriate that the Word is known by the soul. Without this similarity there would be no divinizing knowledge. The soul is an instrument fit to fulfil its task of giving life to the mortal body and to connect the human person to the divine life.

Here also Athanasius follows the logic of his position and argues that the soul, and its rational mind, is sufficient for a person to know God.

> πρὸς δὲ τὴν ταύτης γνῶσιν καὶ ἁπλανῆ κατάληψιν οὐκ ἄλλων ἐστὶν ἡμῖν χρεία, ἀλλ' ἡμῶν αὐτῶν· οὐδ', ὥσπερ ἐστὶν αὐτὸς ὁ Θεὸς ὑπεράνω πάντων, οὕτω καὶ ἡ πρὸς τοῦτον ὁδὸς πόρρωθεν ἢ ἔξωθεν ἡμῶν ἐστιν· ἀλλ' ἐν ἡμῖν ἐστι, καὶ ἀφ' ἡμῶν εὑρεῖν τὴν ἀρχὴν δυνατόν, καθὼς καὶ Μωϋσῆς ἐδίδασκε λέγων· Τὸ ῥῆμα τῆς πίστεως ἐντὸς τῆς καρδίας σοῦ ἐστιν. ὅπερ καὶ ὁ Σωτὴρ σημαίνων καὶ βεβαιῶν ἔλεγεν· Ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστιν. ἔνδον γὰρ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἔχοντες τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, δυνάμεθα ταχέως θεωρῆσαι καὶ νοῆσαι τὸν τοῦ παντὸς βασιλέα, τοῦ Πατρὸς σωτήριον Λόγον. καὶ μὴ προφασιζέσθωσαν Ἕλληνες οἱ τοῖς εἰδώλοις θρησκεύοντες· μηδὲ ἄλλος τις ἁπλῶς ἑαυτὸν ἀπατάτω, ὡς τὴν τοιαύτην ὁδὸν οὐκ ἔχων, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τῆς ἀθεότητος ἑαυτοῦ πρόφασιν εὑρίσκων. πάντες γὰρ εἰς αὐτὴν ἐπιβεβήκαμεν καὶ ἔχομεν, εἰ καὶ μὴ πάντες αὐτὴν ὁδεύειν, ἀλλὰ παροδεύειν ἐκβαίνοντες θέλουσι διὰ τὰς ἔξωθεν αὐτοὺς ἑλκούσας ἡδονὰς τοῦ βίου. καὶ εἴ

> τις ἂν ἔροιτο, τίς ἂν εἴη αὕτη· φημὶ δὴ τὴν ἑκάστου ψυχὴν εἶναι, καὶ τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ νοῦν. δι᾽ αὐτοῦ γὰρ μόνου δύναται Θεὸς θεωρεῖσθαι καὶ νοεῖσθαι·[61]

Athanasius' language is bold and forceful. The beginning of the road to God is within us and can be found, all have at least begun the journey, and require nothing beyond ourselves to have an unerring understanding of the way. He emphasises the accessibility, self-sufficiency, universality, and impeccability of the soul's pathway to God. As Weinandy has recognised, 'What we find here is Athanasius clearly articulating and ardently defending human beings' natural ability to come to a knowledge of God because they were "naturally" created in the image of the divine Word who embodies all divine truth.'[62]

The passage also reminds us of how important spatial categories are to Athanasius. 'For the road to God is not as far from us as God himself is high above all, nor is it outside of us.' Again the basic contrast of 'far off' and outside versus 'within' is invoked,[63] and again what is 'within' us is identified as the soul 'and the mind within it'.[64] Athanasius' equation of the soul and the mind with the path to God possibly underlies the suggestion here that the path to God remains open even after the Fall.

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[61] *CG* 30.3-20

[62] Weinandy, *Athanasius*, 20

[63] *contra* Thomson's translation *DI* p.83, we take ἔξωθεν in line 17 as indicating the source of the ἑλκούσας ἡδονὰς τοῦ βίου and not their destination or effect. The path to God, our soul and mind, and hence faith and the Kingdom of God is within us. The pleasures of life that draw us from that path are outside us. This appears to be the basic internal/external dichotomy that Athanasius seeks to establish. That the desires draw us from the path to God is also true, but not the focus of ἔξωθεν. (Robert W. Thomson, *Contra Gentes; and De Incarnatione*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

[64] The language of the relationship of the soul to the mind stated in this section, τὴν ἑκάστου ψυχὴν εἶναι, καὶ τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ νοῦν, makes it probable that Athanasius conceived of the soul as having a mind, but that the function of thinking associated with the mind could naturally be applied to the soul as a whole.

When he writes that 'all of us have set foot upon it' he indicates that all are at least on the road, even if his theology indicates that they are moving in the wrong direction.

This understanding of Athanasius has been strongly contested by Anatolios. For him, any suggestion of knowing God apart from the incarnation would make Athanasius incoherent: 'such a position is obviously at variance with the whole argument of the double treatise.'[65] Such a reading, he suggests, is a consequence of introducing a scholastic Nature-Grace schema onto Athanasius, and so reading *Contra Gentes* as existing before the incarnation. He is arguably less clear as to what alternative interpretation is to be preferred, but appears to suggest that Athanasius is here speaking of an ability we now have by virtue of the incarnation.[66]

It is difficult to follow Anatolios at this point. There is nothing within the context of *CG* 30 or its broader section 30-34 to suggest that the effects of the incarnation are on view in this section overall. Instead, Athanasius gives every appearance of expounding the nature of the soul on its own terms, in an effort to prove the existence

[65] Anatolios, *Coherence,* 66 however it is important to note the extra discussion on pages 188 and following which adds some important qualifications. Anatolios appears to be responding to how Louth has argued the difference between the two volumes as an irreconcilable conflict of optimistic versus pessimistic anthropology. Andrew Louth "The Concept of the Soul in Athanasius' *Contra Gentes-De Incarnatione*" *Studia Patristica* 13 (1975), 227-31. *c.f* Robertson, *Mediator,* 148-151 for a similar attempt at resolution between the two perspectives as that attempted here seeking to avoid either outright contradiction or reconstruction of *CG 31-33.*

[66] Athanasius' language in *CG 30.10-12*, ἔνδον γὰρ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἔχοντες τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, δυνάμεθα ταχέως θεωρῆσαι καὶ νοῆσαι τὸν τοῦ παντὸς βασιλέα, τοῦ Πατρὸς σωτήριον Λόγον, is a clear indication that Athanasius is not contemplating a path that functions autonomously from the Word's incarnation. It is because we have faith and the kingdom of God within ourselves that we are able to quickly apprehend the Word. If this emphasis on faith and the kingdom of God were insufficient, Athanasius refers to the Word as σωτήριον ('saving'). Together, these function as signs that Athanasius holds to a genuine path existing between us and God through the soul and the Word, but only entered into when someone comes to the know the Word as Saviour in the context of faith and the kingdom of God as internal realities. Not two paths but one path with two constitutive elements – our soul, and the mediating and saving Word – is on view.

of a rational and eternal soul. Such an endeavour, one might suggest, could only be weakened by the introduction of capabilities that must be attributed to the effects of the incarnation rather than held up as evidence for the existence of the soul. While it is no doubt true that Athanasius' thinking on creation and anthropology is shaped by his understanding of the gospel, that is not sufficient ground to hold that his discussions of the nature of the soul, or even the nature of idolatry, is not being located before the incarnation.[67] Even without a Nature-Grace schema, some aspects of Athanasius' two-work approach are concerned with humanity's 'beginnings;' others with the incarnation; and still others with the effects of the incarnation. There is a chronological dimension proper to Athanasius' account that Anatolios' approach threatens, and Behr's all but explicitly undertakes to dissolve. [68]

Two brief comments can be made regarding whether Athanasius is fatally inconsistent in *CG* 30:

First, we need to realise that the capability that Athanasius discusses here exists in the soul due to its relationship with the Word. The soul is a shadow of the Word's power and derives its abilities from its participation in the Word. The soul's capacity for knowing God and participating in the divine life is mediated entirely, and exclusively, through the Word. Thus, the 'optimistic' anthropology of *CG* is actually an optimistic Wordology.

[67] This is especially so with regards to idolatry, given that Athanasius sees the incarnation as dealing a fatal blow to idolatry in *DI*, yet expounds its inevitable progress in *CG*.
[68] Behr, *Nicene*, 173-4

Second, far from undercutting his overall argument by suggesting an alternative way to God apart from the Word, it is arguable that this extract reinforces a key component of Athanasius' overall polemical strategy. Throughout *CG* Athanasius has carefully demonstrated that there is no ontological barrier between humanity and God, but that the problem is ethical; a misuse of the rational freedom that is constitutive of human nature. To suggest, as Anatolios does, that there is no path to God through the soul other than by means of the incarnation voids that strategy, for it re-establishes an ontological barrier. Athanasius' point is that the path exists, and people do not, will not—and, as we will see, arguably even cannot—take it; and that this, as a free choice of the rational soul, is culpable. That the path continues to exist after the entry of sin does not mean that Athanasius thinks that the soul is able to retrace its own steps merely that, if it could, the path remains. The soul is still a shadow of the Word, knowledge of God is still given by the Word through the soul's contemplation. This arrangement is not created by the incarnation, but rather renewed and even secured in a way previously impossible. Athanasius' view of the atonement regarding this aspect of the human condition is that, through the incarnation, the Word redirects the soul back onto the path, not that he creates a path that did not exist in any sense before his incarnation. Athanasius is clear and forceful in his assertion that human beings had no deficiency of nature, either originally or now, that could account for their abandonment of God and pursuit of corruption. The soul was of a nature that fitted it to be an instrument for the knowledge of God, and remains so. Moreover, as we will observe in later chapters, Athanasius' account of the atonement requires this feature of the human person; it does not create the entire framework *ex nihilo*. While the language of a 'path to God' may be provocative, it is simply another way of stating

that humanity was made with a rational and eternal soul so that humanity could know God and that this continues even with the entry of sin.

Conclusion

From our observations it is clear that Athanasius' anthropology is consistent with his doctrine of creation in general, and is also an intensification of it at key points. The relationship that exists between the Word and creation is even stronger and more intimate when it comes to the soul's nature. The soul is, in important respects, a smaller copy of the Image of the Father and so has qualities that are properly the qualities of the Word. This fundamental relationship of soul to the Word defines the nature of the soul, and is the basis for humanity's ability to share in immortality and blessedness. This study agrees with scholars such as Lyman and Ng that this gives Athanasius' anthropology an Origenistic cast. It is this quality, and this quality alone, that Athanasius holds up as the defining trait of humanity *qua* humanity. Everything that enables humanity to experience a state otherwise inaccessible to a creature derives from the 'extra grace' bestowed upon humanity: made like the Likeness of God; made in the image of the Image of God; given an element of the power of the Word of God. Contrary to Louth, we conclude that these things constitute the extra grace given, and do not merely supplement it. There is a primordial relationship between the Son of God and humanity giving humanity its distinctly human properties and purposes. Against Anatolios, our finding is similar to Weinandy and Robertson, that this is part of humanity's constitution and not simply something that came into existence with the incarnation. Athanasius' anthropology anticipates his eschatology and his Christology partly conditions his anthropology. There is a sense in which

humanity was divinised from the beginning by the Word of God. In the beginning humanity was made like the Word of God, and this enabled the soul to perform some of the functions of the Word of God and this in turn enabled the human person to enjoy aspects of the kind of existence that was the Word's eternal birthright.

As we will observe in chapters three to six, Athanasius' understanding of the atonement rests upon this framework of his theological anthropology. It forms the basis for Athanasius' multifaceted vision of the atonement. In between, however, humanity's 'beginning' includes a much darker chapter, that of humanity's turning from the knowledge of God. It is to that defection from primordial paradise that we turn next.

Chapter Two

Fall and Corruption

In the previous chapter we examined Athanasius' understanding of creation and his theological anthropology as background to his atonement thinking. There is however a second dimension to the human condition in Athanasius' account, that of the progress of sin. Sin subverts, reverses, and debilitates the elements of humanity's constitution, with the consequence that God's purpose for humanity cannot be realised. Athanasius states the link between the atonement and human sin:

> Ἴσως θαυμάζεις τί δήποτε περὶ τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως τοῦ Λόγου προθέμενοι λέγειν, νῦν περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων διηγούμεθα. Ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἀλλότριόν ἐστι τοῦ σκοποῦ τῆς διηγήσεως. Ἀνάγκη γὰρ ἡμᾶς λέγοντας περὶ τῆς εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐπιφανείας τοῦ Σωτῆρος, λέγειν καὶ περὶ τῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀρχῆς, ἵνα γινώσκῃς ὅτι ἡ ἡμῶν αἰτία ἐκείνῳ γέγονε πρόφασις τῆς καθόδου, καὶ ἡ ἡμῶν παράβασις τοῦ Λόγου τὴν φιλανθρωπίαν ἐξεκαλέσατο, ὥστε καὶ εἰς ἡμᾶς φθάσαι καὶ φανῆναι τὸν Κύριον ἐν ἀνθρώποις.[69]

In light of this connection, whereby the hominization of the Word is incomprehensible without an understanding of humanity's origin in creation and sin, it is necessary to consider Athanasius' treatment of the nature and effect of sin.[70]

The Turn from God

Athanasius' account of the origin and progression of sin is grounded in the composition of humankind. Athanasius, in keeping with mainstream Christian

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[69] *DI* 4

[70] The methodology involved here in seeing the fall into sin as a pre-condition for understanding the incarnation in Athanasius' thought is arguably in significant tension with the concerns stated by Behr, *Nicene,* 169

rejections of Gnosticism and other dualisms, repudiates any notion of evil's presence in the original constitution of humankind and, as a corollary, any notion of its substantial existence.[71]

> Ἐξ ἀρχῆς μὲν οὐκ ἦν κακία· οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ νῦν ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἐστίν, οὐδ' ὅλως κατ' αὐτοὺς ὑπάρχει αὕτη· ἄνθρωποι δὲ ταύτην ὕστερον ἐπινοεῖν ἤρξαντο, καὶ καθ' ἑαυτῶν ἀνατυποῦσθαι· ὅθεν δὴ καὶ τὴν τῶν εἰδώλων ἐπίνοιαν ἑαυτοῖς ἀνεπλάσαντο, τὰ οὐκ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα λογιζόμενοι..[72]

While this is a commonplace in patristic thought, we will see that Athanasius integrates this interplay of 'evil' and 'what was not' into his account of sin.[73]

Athanasius subjects this schema of humanity fabricating its own non-existing evil to more detailed analysis in the early sections of *CG.*

> οἱ δὲ ἄνθρωποι, κατολιγωρήσαντες τῶν κρειττόνων, καὶ ὀκνήσαντες περὶ τὴν τούτων κατάληψιν, τὰ ἐγγυτέρω μᾶλλον ἑαυτῶν ἐζήτησαν, ἐγγύτερα δὲ
>
> τούτοις ἦν τὸ σῶμα, καὶ αἱ τούτου αἰσθήσεις. ὅθεν τῶν μὲν νοητῶν ἀπέστησαν ἑαυτῶν τὸν νοῦν, ἑαυτοὺς δὲ κατανοεῖν ἤρξαντο. ἑαυτοὺς δὲ κατανοοῦντες, καὶ τοῦ τε σώματος καὶ τῶν ἄλλων αἰσθητῶν ἀντιλαμβανόμενοι, καὶ ὡς ἐν ἰδίοις ἀπατώμενοι, εἰς ἑαυτῶν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔπεσαν, τὰ ἴδια προτιμήσαντες τῆς πρὸς τὰ θεῖα θεωρίας· ἐνδιατρίψαντες δὲ τούτοις, καὶ τῶν ἐγγυτέρω μὴ ἀποστῆναι θέλοντες, ταῖς μὲν τοῦ σώματος ἡδοναῖς συνέκλεισαν ἑαυτῶν τὴν

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[71] So Behr, *Nicene,* 173; Steenberg, *God,* 174. Leithart, *Athanasius,* 89 refers to sin as 'decreation' and on page 96 as a contingent intrusion into creation that gains its potency from creation's inherent mutability.

[72] *CG* 2

[73] Behr, *Nicene,* 174 argues that Athanasius' capacity to say that evil both has and has not existed from the beginning indicates that his account is derived from the Word of the cross rather than being a direct exposition of the primordial beginnings. Arguably it is more probable that Athanasius here is adopting a strategy similar to his argument that the Word both is and is not originated. It is not a brutal paradox, but there is an identifiable sense in which the language can be used and a sense in which it may not be. Evil did not exist in the beginning in the sense that it does not come from the hand of God. It is introduced by humanity 'in the beginning' inasmuch as the accounts in Genesis 2-3 and Romans 1 are of the 'origins' of humanity, even if there are other things portrayed in Scripture as preceding them. See Weinandy, *Athanasius,* 13, 15-16 and arguably Steenberg, *God,* 174 for a similar reading that Athanasius is using 'beginning' in two different senses when he says that sin did and did not exist from the beginning.

> ψυχήν, τεταραγμένην καὶ πεφυρμένην πάσαις ἐπιθυμίαις· τέλεον δὲ ἐπελάθοντο τῆς ἐξ ἀρχῆς αὐτῶν παρὰ Θεοῦ δυνάμεως.[74]

Here Athanasius seems to parallel elements of Origen's explanation for the beginning of sin; suggesting that the problem began when human beings found the knowledge of God unsatisfying and withdrew from participation in those realities that would have been entailed by apprehending them.

Such an understanding of the nature of sin in Origen seems implied at several points in *De Princeps*. In 2.8.3 Origen states,

> If, then, those things which are holy are named fire, and light, and fervent, while those which are of an opposite nature are said to be cold; and if the love of many is said to wax cold; we have to inquire whether perhaps the name soul, which in Greek is termed ψυχή, be so termed from growing cold out of a better and more divine condition, and be thence derived, because it seems to have cooled from that natural and divine warmth, and therefore has been placed in its present position, and called by its present name….We have therefore to see if, perchance, as we have said is declared by the name itself, it was called ψυχή, i.e., *anima*, because it has waxed cold from the fervour of just things, and from participation in the divine fire, and yet has not lost the power of restoring itself to that condition of fervour in which it was at the beginning.[75]

Origen suggests that the human soul, in its present state, is a declension from a previous condition where it participated in the divine fire. Implicit in Origen's reference to Matthew 24:12 is that the soul originally participated in divine fire by love for it and then 'cooled from that natural and divine warmth' as it 'waxed cold from the fervour of just things'. The reason for humanity's current condition is not

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[74] *CG* 3

[75] *De Princeps,* 2.8.3.

so much a rejection of divine realities for an alternative, as a more or less uncaused decrease in fervour and love for them.[76] Origen is even more explicit in 2.9.2:

> For the Creator gave, as an indulgence to the understandings created by Him, the power of free and voluntary action, by which the good that was in them might become their own, being preserved by the exertion of their own will; but slothfulness, and a dislike of labour in preserving what is good, and an aversion to and a neglect of better things, furnished the beginning of a departure from goodness. But to depart from good is nothing else than to be made bad. For it is certain that to want goodness is to be wicked. Whence it happens that, in proportion as one falls away from goodness, in the same proportion does he become involved in wickedness. In which condition, according to its actions, each understanding, neglecting goodness either to a greater or more limited extent, was dragged into the opposite of good, which undoubtedly is evil."[77]

Originally the 'understandings' created by God had goodness within them. Everyone subsequently turned away from the good, not due to a positive preference for an alternative, but simply due to a lack of interest in undertaking what was necessary. Origen posits laziness, an antipathy towards effort in preserving the good, and a dislike and neglect of 'better things' as the reason for departure from goodness. 'Evil' is then the name given to the vacuum created by the vacating of good. As people move further and further away from good they, of necessity, became involved in wickedness, but this eruption of wickedness was never the subject of positive choice. People never chose wickedness and so rejected good, rather people rejected good, or tired of loving it, and evil was born as a consequence.[78]

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[76] See John Clark Smith, *The Ancient Wisdom of Origen*. (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1992), 38-39; Henri Crouzel, *Origen. Trans. A. S. Worrall*. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), 210. In contrast, in a footnote Weinandy, *Athanasius,* 17 makes the same link between Athanasius' understanding as Origen's but suggests that both writers see the fall as due to people 'being more concerned about themselves then they are about God.'

[77] *De Princeps,* 2.8.3.

[78] Lyman, *Christology,* 49 notes that for Origen evil is non-being and separation from God rather a substance and independent force in its own right. *C.f* Smith, *Origen,* 74

This schema (minus Origen's alleged speculation concerning a pre-creation fall of souls), appears substantially similar to that outlined by Athanasius. Athanasius similarly posits that souls were made to maintain their participation in God through contemplation of him; that they drew back from this and, as we will see, that as a consequence of this withdrawal they are now entangled in the material world.

Although little literary dependence can be identified, it is probable that behind both Origen and Athanasius is the account of the rise of human evil in Romans 1:18ff. If the passage is read as an historical account, Romans 1 seems to offer an alternate account of the fall from Genesis 3: one which does not speak of humans choosing something other than God and his commands, but rather speaks of people considering the knowledge of God insufficiently worthwhile to be retained. They neither glorified God, acknowledged him, nor gave thanks—and thus drew back from participating in the divine realities enclosed within the knowledge of God. All other dimensions of humanity's progression into wickedness detailed by the Apostle then derive as a consequence from this primordial drawing back from the knowledge of God.

Such a reading of Romans 1 may well inform Athanasius' interpretation of Genesis 3 in *CG 3*.[79] Clear references to Romans 1 occur several times in *CG* and *DI*, giving an interpretive framework throughout Athanasius' exposition of the fall.[80] Genesis 3, on

[79] See William C. Weinrich, "God Did Not Create Death: Athanasius on the Atonement" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 72 (2008), 293-295. Weinrich does not explicitly claim that Genesis 3 is being read in light of Romans 1, but does make the case that Athanasius' account follows Romans, Ephesians and the Wisdom of Solomon and that the latter is the interpretation of the Genesis account that is decisive for the Pauline passages.
[80] *CG* 19, 26, 35, 47; *DI* 5, 11

the other hand, is mentioned only when it is being explicitly discussed and even then, as we have suggested, the exposition appears to be driven by Romans 1.

As our extract from *CG* 3 highlights, in place of the knowledge of God, humanity turned to 'things nearer to themselves': the body and its senses.[81] Given that Athanasius seems to consider the body as fundamental to human existence, it is probable that the discussion here is an analysis of humanity's fundamental orientation: either towards God and the knowledge of him, or towards the body and its experiences.[82] This is supported by the terms Athanasius uses in the passage to describe the transfer from God to the body. Language such as "holding back", "seek in preference", "removing their mind from", "began to regard themselves," fell into lust of themselves," "preferring what was their own," "not being willing to leave," and the like indicate that Athanasius is speaking of the basic stance persons take towards the knowledge of God and their own bodily existence. Humanity transfers its commitments from God to the body: God's 'distance' (implied) is contrasted with the body's 'closeness' (mentioned three time) and its intimate inherent connection to the human person, being 'what was their own.'

Athanasius sees the fall occurring in two stages: first, humans draw back from the knowledge of God; then they become entangled in bodily sensation. This is suggested by his use of the aorist tense for the opening sequence of participles, "held in

[81] So Francis Margaret Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and its Background*. 2nd ed. (London: S.C.M. press, 2010), 54; Behr, *Nicene*, 176, notes that this helps establish the dignity of the body.
[82] This also has Origenistic antecedents see Origen's *Contra Celsus* 7.39 where seeing with the eye of sense and the eye of mind are presented as alternatives.

contempt," "held back," and "sought," which portrays them perfectively, as completed actions: humankind held divine realities in contempt, so held back from them, and so sought something closer. While there is no causal or temporal conjunction between "held in contempt" and "held back", the movement away from God, and "sought", the movement towards the body, the perfective nature of the aorist tense in this instance suggests that each action in the sequence is complete before the next element in the sequence is introduced.

Some support for this reading can be derived from a parallel passage in *DI.* 4 where Athanasius states: ἄνθρωποι δὲ κατολιγωρήσαντες καὶ ἀποστραφέντες τὴν πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν κατανόησιν, λογισάμενοι δὲ καὶ ἐπινοήσαντες ἑαυτοῖς τὴν κακίαν. Here again there is a series of aorist participles, four in this case, instead of three, and again there are two participles describing humanity's rejection of the contemplation of God—men 'neglected' and 'turned aside' from it. But this time, this move away from the knowledge of God is not partnered with a move toward the body, but with a human attempt to create *ex nihilo*, the thought and invention of evil. As we will observe later in the chapter, humanity's endeavours to create evil for itself are a consequence of its turn to the body, so it is a reasonable pedagogical and rhetorical step for Athanasius to pass over the intermediate stage of the soul's attachment to the life of the body, and focus on the subsequent entailment, the fabrication of evil from a whole cloth.

However, this replacement of the soul's attachment to the body with humanity's invention of evil only reinforces the view that the rejection of the knowledge of God and the adoption of the life of the body as a proper sphere for the life of the soul are not co-ordinate causes for Athanasius, still less does the soul reject the knowledge of

God *because* of a pre-existing attachment to the life of the body. For while it might be argued that in *CG.* 3 the aorist participles are presented as occurring simultaneously, and the turning aside from the knowledge of God and the turning to the body arise together, few interpreters of Athanasius would see this as a reasonable understanding of the sequence of aorist participles in *DI* 4. For Athanasius, evil can only ever arise indirectly, as a consequence of abandoning the pursuit of (and participation in) the good, and cannot be a positive force that contributes to the rejection of the good. So in *DI* 4 the chain of four aorist participles must indicate some kind of temporal sequence, and the second set of two participles relating to the introduction of evil must occur subsequent to the first two relating to the repudiation of the contemplation of God. Yet, immediately subsequent to the material quoted above, Athanasius goes on to state, ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς πρώτοις ἐλέχθη, which as Thomson *Athanasius* on p. 143 suggests in footnote 1, is most naturally to be understood as referring back to the extended discussion in *CG* 3.[83] If so, then the language in *DI* 4 is a summarised recapitulation of the narrative expounded in *CG* 3 and following. This in turn suggests that the aorist participles in *DI* 4 function in the same way that they function in *CG* 3, indicating a temporal sequence to the actions so delineated.

Hence, it is natural to read the sequence of actions as a chronological sequence, rather than as occurring contemporaneously. Such a reading is supported by an explicit statement that Athanasius makes later in *CG*:

[83] Thomson, *Athanasius,* 143, fn 1.

> ἅπερ πάντα κακία καὶ ἁμαρτία ψυχῆς ἐστιν. αἰτία δὲ τούτων οὐδεμία, ἀλλ᾽ ἡ τῶν κρειττόνων ἀποστροφή.[84]

Given that, as we will see, Athanasius posits a number of explanations for evil actions, his statement here is a reference to primary causality. Human evil does not arise because human beings choose the good rather than the best, or treat means as though they were ends. Human evil has, in that sense, no cause or underlying rationality to explain it. It exists simply as the consequence of having rejected better things. Implicit in this view is Athanasius' conviction that evil has no substantial existence. If evil does not exist, it has no rationale or positive content either. It cannot exert an influence to bring itself about, and cannot be a cause of human choice or action. Evil can be explained only as something arising from the rejection of the good. Humanity turned away from God because it made light of the knowledge of God. This, for Athanasius, is the entry of sin, and its primordial act. Humanity did not trade God because it calculated that being caught up in the body and its experiences would be advantageous.[85] Humanity simply had contempt for the knowledge of God and withdrew from it. Athanasius' view of sin's origin is theocentric, and an application of the notion that creation is *ex nihilo*.[86]

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[84] *CG* 5

[85] *contra* Steenberg, *God*, 174 and Anatolios, *Coherence*, 35, the position of Peter Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius*. 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 15 is less clear due to its brevity, but seems likely to be essentially the same as Steenberg's and Anatolios' positions.

[86] One of the effects of this is that ontological and ethical questions are inextricably intertwined for Athanasius. Existence is good, evil is non-existent and possibly even non-existence. Corruption is therefore, as we will see, understood as a process of depravation in both the ethical and ontological spheres. Dragas, *Athanasius*, 30-31 appears to either offer the same observation regarding good and evil in human choice using differing vocabulary, or a complementary insight.

The Turn to the Body

As that which is 'nearer' to the soul, the body then conditions the form of the subsequent actions taken by the person. Orientating itself to the body and its senses, humanity is then enmeshed in the pleasures that derive from bodily existence, "they entangled their soul with bodily pleasures, vexed and turbid with all kind of lusts".[87] What had been a relatively passive step back from giving itself to the knowledge of God becomes an entire transfer of energies and loyalties to a new suitor.

> ἑαυτοὺς δὲ κατανοοῦντες, καὶ τοῦ τε σώματος καὶ τῶν ἄλλων αἰσθητῶν ἀντιλαμβανόμενοι, καὶ ὡς ἐν ἰδίοις ἀπατώμενοι, εἰς ἑαυτῶν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔπεσαν, τὰ ἴδια προτιμήσαντες τῆς πρὸς τὰ θεῖα θεωρίας· ἐνδιατρίψαντες δὲ τούτοις, καὶ τῶν ἐγγυτέρω μὴ ἀποστῆναι θέλοντες, ταῖς μὲν τοῦ σώματος ἡδοναῖς συνέκλεισαν ἑαυτῶν τὴν ψυχήν, τεταραγμένην καὶ πεφυρμένην πάσαις ἐπιθυμίαις· τέλεον δὲ ἐπελάθοντο τῆς ἐξ ἀρχῆς αὐτῶν παρὰ Θεοῦ δυνάμεως.[88]

Once they 'fell into lust of themselves', then arises a choice of 'what was their own' in preference for 'what belonged to God'. Once the soul is reorientated to the body, then the body's existence and sensations (which Athanasius considers to be so closely linked to the soul that they are 'what was their own') are the object of an active choice over and against the divine realities that belong to God. As a consequence the soul now spends its time with them, with everything pertaining to bodily life. The body has become the soul's 'home'.

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[87] *CG* 3. Anatolios, *Coherence,* 64 highlights the significance of the 'closer' language for the soul's choice of the body, although his treatment presents it as a choice of selfishness *over* God whereas we have argued that the rejection of God comes first and is unexplained, with the choice of the body a subsequent choice once true good has been lost.

[88] *CG* 3

This is a significant change of domicile, for in the previous chapter of *CG* Athanasius had invoked Adam as a picture of humanity's original state – contemplating intelligible reality and living with the saints in the place that Moses figuratively called 'Paradise'.[89] Life in the garden was the life of contemplation of God. And so, in the latter part of chapter three Athanasius returns to the 'first created man' and connects his description of the descent to the body to the transgression in Paradise and its consequences.[90] In choosing the body, humanity has exchanged Eden for life outside the garden as its true home.

This 'exile' from the garden imposed upon the first man is also a prison that each person forces on their own soul.[91] By focussing on the body and its sensations, each person commits their soul to detention in the body: "they imprisoned their souls in the body."[92] Unwilling to leave what was near to them (the body and its sphere) they commit themselves irrevocably to its life, locking the soul up in the various desires of the body and loosing entirely their hold on their primordial capacity to transcend the body, 'wholly forgot the power they originally had from God'.[93]

All other aspects of humanity's sin and progress into evil derive from this flight to the body and its desires. Athanasius highlights four aspects, each with its own set of

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[89] *CG* 2
[90] Although, as we will observe later in the chapter, it is necessary to also examine Athanasius' treatment of the issue in *DI* 3 to see the other dimension of the connection that Athanasius draws between losing the knowledge of God and leaving the garden.
[91] Dragas, *Athanasius,* 82 suggests that Athanasius attributes the fall not only to Adam but to all human beings because he does not have any tension between the general and the particular. This certainly is a solution to the observable phenomenon that Athanasius tends to treat Adam as 'everyman' rather than some kind of primordial representative or the like, but it perhaps presses Athanasius to address later questions that he is not addressing.
[92] *CG* 3
[93] *CG* 3

features and further consequences: fear of death, corruption, idolatry and the service of demons, and the loss of the image and power of the Word. We will turn to each, with the exception of the subordination of humanity to the demonic, which will be covered in chapter six.

Fear of Death

> ἀποστάντες γὰρ τῆς πρὸς τὸν ἕνα καὶ ὄντα, Θεὸν λέγω, κατανοήσεως καὶ τοῦ πρὸς αὐτὸν πόθου, λοιπὸν εἰς διαφόρους καὶ εἰς τὰς κατὰ μέρος ἐπιθυμίας ἐνέβησαν τοῦ σώματος. εἶτα, οἷα φιλεῖ γίνεσθαι, ἑκάστου καὶ πολλῶν ἐπιθυμίαν λαβόντες, ἤρξαντο καὶ τὴν πρὸς αὐτὰς σχέσιν ἔχειν· ὥστε καὶ φοβεῖσθαι ταύτας καταλεῖψαι. ὅθεν δὴ καὶ δειλίαι, καὶ φόβοι, καὶ ἡδοναί, καὶ θνητὰ φρονεῖν τῇ ψυχῇ προσγέγονεν. οὐ θέλουσα γὰρ ἀποστῆναι τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν, φοβεῖται τὸν θάνατον καὶ τὸν χωρισμὸν τοῦ σώματος.[94]

Pursuing and participating in the body's desires has an effect upon the soul. The soul becomes attached to these desires, limiting its own horizon to what what is proper to the body.[95] Consequently, the soul is colonized by traits that are neither proper to it, nor part of its original condition: the four horsemen of bodily desires: δειλίαι, φόβοι, ἡδοναί, and θνητὰ φρονεῖν. In Athanasius' thinking, the first two and the final item in this set are naturally linked. The soul's contemplation of mortality engenders a fear of its ensuing death. Consistent with Athanasius' argument in *CG* 31-33, as was observed in the previous chapter, this fear (and arguably even the thoughts) is contrary to the soul's own immortal nature. Thoughts of immortality are natural and proper to the soul and are adduced as clear evidence that the soul has a nature that, at least at this point, is contrary to the body's own mortality. Indeed, so strongly is this fear of death incompatible with the soul's own nature, that in the third chapter of *CG*.

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[94] *CG* 3
[95] See Steenberg, *God*, 176

Athanasius suggests that the soul does not fear its own death, so much as that of the body. For when the body dies, the soul will be separated from the body and its desires (although it would arguably be more precise to Athanasius' thought to argue that the separation of the soul from the body enables the body to die, as the body is enlivened and moved by its union with the soul). The soul's fear is the forcible division that death effects between itself and the body's desires. Having rejected the knowledge of God, it refuses to voluntarily forgo the body's desires, and so its existence is now characterised by a contemplation of the body's mortality and a fear that death will compel a detachment from the only good that it now recognises.[96]

This fear is no illusion, for with humanity's rejection of the knowledge of God, death is now a certainty.

> ἄνθρωποι δὲ κατολιγωρήσαντες καὶ ἀποστραφέντες τὴν πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν κατανόησιν, λογισάμενοι δὲ καὶ ἐπινοήσαντες ἑαυτοῖς τὴν κακίαν, ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς πρώτοις ἐλέχθη, ἔσχον τὴν προαπειληθεῖσαν τοῦ θανάτου κατάκρισιν, καὶ λοιπὸν οὐκ ἔτι ὡς γεγόνασι διέμενον· ἀλλ' ὡς ἐλογίζοντο διεφθείροντο· καὶ ὁ θάνατος αὐτῶν ἐκράτει βασιλεύων. Ἡ γὰρ παράβασις τῆς ἐντολῆς εἰς τὸ κατὰ φύσιν αὐτοὺς ἐπέστρεφεν, ἵνα, ὥσπερ οὐκ ὄντες γεγόνασιν, οὕτως καὶ τὴν εἰς τὸ μὴ εἶναι φθορὰν ὑπομείνωσι τῷ χρόνῳ εἰκότως. Εἰ γὰρ φύσιν ἔχοντες τὸ μὴ εἶναί ποτε, τῇ τοῦ Λόγου παρουσίᾳ καὶ φιλανθρωπίᾳ εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἐκλήθησαν, ἀκόλουθον ἦν κενωθέντας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τῆς περὶ Θεοῦ ἐννοίας καὶ εἰς τὰ οὐκ ὄντα ἀποστραφέντας, οὐκ ὄντα γάρ ἐστι τὰ κακά, ὄντα δὲ τὰ καλά, ἐπειδήπερ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος Θεοῦ γεγόνασι, κενωθῆναι καὶ τοῦ εἶναι ἀεί. Τοῦτο δέ ἐστι τὸ διαλυθέντας μένειν ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ καὶ τῇ φθορᾷ. Ἔστι μὲν γὰρ κατὰ φύσιν ἄνθρωπος θνητός, ἅτε δὴ ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων γεγονώς. Διὰ δὲ τὴν πρὸς τὸν ὄντα ὁμοιότητα, ἣν εἰ ἐφύλαττε διὰ τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν κατανοήσεως, ἤμβλυνεν ἂν τὴν κατὰ φύσιν φθοράν, καὶ ἔμεινεν ἄφθαρτος·[97]

[96] See Weinandy, *Athanasius,* 15
[97] *DI* 4

In this passage Athanasius explains that people are 'mortal by nature' due to their nature as entities that have been created from nothing. This natural mortality is graciously suspended due to their 'likeness to the Image', which can only be preserved by maintaining the knowledge of God through ongoing contemplation. But once humanity has rejected the knowledge of God, nature reasserts itself. Humanity is 'turned back' to 'what is according to nature'—having lost the participation in the Word that allows humanity to endure. The loss of the knowledge of God results in a fundamental shift for humanity from a provisional immortality to a certain mortality.[98]

However, Athanasius indicates that this return to mortality has a second dimension to it, when he speaks of 'transgressing the commandment'. Here his attention appears to be focused upon the narrative in Genesis 2-3, and certain features of that account—most notably Eden, and the command from God. Athanasius argues that these two elements were given in light of humanity's primordial condition.

> Εἰδὼς δὲ πάλιν τὴν ἀνθρώπων εἰς ἀμφότερα νεύειν δυναμένην προαίρεσιν, προλαβὼν ἠσφαλίσατο νόμῳ καὶ τόπῳ τὴν δοθεῖσαν αὐτοῖς χάριν. Εἰς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ γὰρ παράδεισον αὐτοὺς εἰσαγαγών, ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς νόμον· ἵνα εἰ μὲν φυλάξαιεν τὴν χάριν καὶ μένοιεν καλοί, ἔχωσι τὴν ἐν παραδείσῳ ἄλυπον καὶ ἀνώδυνον καὶ ἀμέριμνον ζωήν, πρὸς τῷ καὶ τῆς ἐν οὐρανοῖς ἀφθαρσίας αὐτοὺς τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν ἔχειν· εἰ δὲ παραβαῖεν καὶ στραφέντες γένοιντο φαῦλοι, γινώσκοιεν ἑαυτοὺς τὴν ἐν θανάτῳ κατὰ φύσιν φθορὰν ὑπομένειν, καὶ μηκέτι μὲν ἐν παραδείσῳ ζῆν, ἔξω δὲ τούτου λοιπὸν ἀποθνήσκοντας μένειν ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ καὶ ἐν τῇ φθορᾷ.[99]

As was touched on in the previous chapter, humanity's rational principle arising from its participation in the Word results in a very different outcome than what

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[98] *c.f.* Dragas *Athanasius*, 9, 39; Steenberg, *God*, 169
[99] *DI* 3

characterises the Godhead. For the Godhead, there is no ability of the will to turn this way or that. As Athanasius argues in *CA* 3.62 God's nature operates at a 'higher level' than his will, and so God always necessarily acts in a good way as an expression of his good nature, but is not subject to 'necessity', understood as a kind of external compulsion. God's rationality results in God being capable of only choosing the good. However, rationality functions differently for human beings. For them the power of the Word in the human person gives rise to an ability to turn one way or another – to the capacity for free choice of good or evil, and not just choice of the good.[100]

In light of this, God did not leave humanity with just the resources provided by the 'extra grace' of being in the image of his Image. God sought to provide two external means to secure the grace they had been given. One of these was location, and one was law.[101] Humanity was brought into paradise, and the life lived in the knowledge of God is described in terms of that locality. It is not merely a blessed life, it is also 'life in paradise'. And losing that life is not merely to die, but to die outside paradise, such that Athanasius contrasts 'live in paradise' and 'dying outside it'. Immortality and mortality, life and death, are presented as being tied to where humanity resides, in paradise, or outside of it. As we observed in the previous chapter, it is a characteristic of Athanasius' ontological thought that it is described in spatial terms. In this instance, it serves to reinforce the idea that God provided an external aid in an attempt to secure his intentions for humanity despite humanity's ethical mutability. It appears

[100] Dragas, *Athanasius,* 36 appears to be making a similar point by noting the natural weakness of the human *physis* that then requires the *charis* to be safeguarded.
[101] See Young, *Nicaea,* 54; Behr, *Nicene,* 190; probably Weinandy, *Athanasius,* 29; Dragas, *Athanasius,* 37-38 although note that Dragas differs in understanding the *nomos* here as not forensic.

arguable that in some sense for Athanasius, the life intended for humanity – 'without anxiety, without pain, and without care' – was available only in paradise, and that having been excluded from paradise, humanity now only has one possibility before it – to die, and then to remain in corruption.

In this schema, the law has a role to play that will be significant for Athanasius' view of the atonement. The law was coordinate with paradise in the divine strategy for securing the anthropological grace, since keeping the law was the condition for continuing to live in paradise. Significantly, the law given requires nothing beyond the obligations that came upon humanity as a consequence of receiving the grace of being in the image of the Image. Whether due to law or grace, command or nature, humanity was required to remain good and guard the grace entrusted to them. The law adds no new obligation upon humanity, but rather intensifies the obligations that already existed as a consequence of God's generosity in giving humanity the capacity to share in the divine life.

It should be clear that *nomos* is being understood here in an essentially nominalist sense and not simply as a circumlocution for the natural obligations arising from the image. The main argument for such a reading of a 'forensic' dimension to Athanasius' account will become apparent in the chapter on the atonement and the law. However two points should be noted in support of this reading of *nomos* here. First, in *CA* 2.51 Athanasius discusses the cases of Adam, Noah, and Moses as examples of the fact that people exist first and then receive a command from the Word—they are not brought into existence for the purpose of fulfilling the command. Such an argument

presupposes a distinction between *nomos* and creaturely existence—even existence in the image—since the command is both anterior and ancillary to existence. Second, in *DI* 12 the law, the prophets and creation are all given to humanity due to God's knowledge of humanity's weakness, and as an assistance in case humanity neglected the knowledge of God available to them simply by means of the image within them. Here, as above, the vision of law seems close to the nominalism in *DI* 3. Law is something given in view of humanity's weakness; different from—yet supportive of—being in the image. 'Law' and 'commandment' represent a new and distinct, albeit related, factor.

While not the subject of explicit commentary, it seems probable that this two-fold complementary demand of law and grace arises from the two aspects of humanity's situation. Humans, as made in the likeness of the Likeness of the Father, need to preserve that likeness through contemplation and ethical behaviour. But that likeness can be effaced by human choices. The 'greater gift' which is human nature can be rejected.

There are also ethical obligations associated with living in paradise. Paradise is not part of humanity's constitution by nature – it is an external aid – so the ethical demands that are the condition for its safeguarding are external as well. They are a law that can be 'transgressed', and not simply obligations that arise from nature. The law adds no new ethical content to humanity's obligations, but in its part in securing humanity for the good, it does add an extra, extrinsic, dynamic beyond that given by the constitution of humanity that was examined in the previous chapter. Something of

the interlinking nature of the two aspects of the one ethical obligation can be seen in *CG* 32:

> διὰ τοῦτο γοῦν καὶ νόμοι μὲν ἀνθρώποις τὰ καλὰ μὲν πράττειν, τὴν δὲ κακίαν ἀποστρέφεσθαι· τοῖς δὲ ἀλόγοις ἀλόγιστα τὰ κακὰ καὶ ἄκριτα μένει, ἅτε δὴ τῆς λογικότητος καὶ τῆς κατὰ λόγον διανοίας ἐκτὸς τυγχάνουσιν.[102]

There are laws for humans to ensure that they do good and avoid evil because of their rational nature, but there are no such laws for animals. Laws are not synonymous with nature, but neither do they impose demands independent of the inner reality of the one subjected to their requirements. Law is an external expression of a rational created nature, and given to support the ends for which humankind's nature.

This extra dynamic becomes an extra dimension to the problem once humanity has set out on its great journey away from the knowledge of God:

> τούτου δὲ γενομένου οἱ μὲν ἄνθρωποι ἀπέθνησκον, ἡ δὲ φθορὰ λοιπὸν κατ᾽ αὐτῶν ἤκμαζε, καὶ πλεῖον τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν ἰσχύουσα καθ᾽ ὅλου τοῦ γένους, ὅσῳ καὶ τὴν ἀπειλὴν τοῦ θείου διὰ τὴν παράβασιν τῆς ἐντολῆς κατ᾽ αὐτῶν προειλήφει.[103]

For our purposes, the key language in this extract is that corruption was πλεῖον τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν ἰσχύουσα and was so because τὴν ἀπειλὴν τοῦ θείου διὰ τὴν παράβασιν τῆς ἐντολῆς κατ᾽ αὐτῶν προειλήφει. With these phrases Athanasius points to an important forensic dimension to humanity's problem that has exacerbated the effects coming from nature alone. Athanasius is explicit that the power of corruption against the human race is stronger than can be accounted for simply by appeal to what should

[102] *CG* 32.26-29
[103] *DI* 5

be due to the conditions of nature. The reason he adduces for this is the way that corruption, here somewhat anthropomorphized, has actively made use of humanity's 'transgression of the commandment' to reinforce its power over humanity. The language of τὴν ἀπειλὴν τοῦ θείου suggests that the offer of life in paradise versus death and corruption outside paradise that the law circumscribed in *DI* 3 is not merely descriptive but prescriptive. The language of 'the threat of God' suggests that the law did not merely advise humanity of the necessary consequences of nature's reassertion if the commandment was transgressed, but warned that a more direct divine agency would also be wielded. Thus corruption is now in full sway over the human race: the transgression of the law intensifies the strength of corruption, because in some sense it enlists God's own agency in support of corruption's cause as he upholds the threat that he issued when he originally gave the commandment. Death and corruption are now even more inescapable than they were from humanity's constitution alone.

Thus, for Athanasius, humanity's 'origin' includes this reversal from its original condition. An originally conditionally immortal person composed of an immortal soul and a mortal body, whose end was indefinitely postponed by its participation in the knowledge of God, has become a fully mortal person for whom the body's mortality conditions all aspects of the existence of the composite entity.[104] Death has become the fundamental horizon for humanity. Human beings are now irrevocably mortal and their lives are characterised by the fear of death. Athanasius does not appear to characteristically treat death and the fear of death as the cause of still further problems as we will see that he does with humanity's turn to the love of pleasure.

[104] See Weinandy, *Athanasius*, 29-30 for a similar summary and Ng, *Spirituality*, 68-70 for a similar account of fallen anthropology as that advanced in the following pages.

Nonetheless, it is no minor aspect of his thought. As we will observe in the following chapter, Athanasius sees mortality and certain death as fundamental problems to be overcome. In the meantime, we can see some of this concern in the way he dwells upon the extinguishing of the fear of death among Christ's followers, with three chapters, 27 to 30, of *DI* given over to an argument for death's defeat from the lack of fear displayed by believers. Athanasius understands death and the fear of death as a significant problem for humanity in its own right.

Corruption

Corruption is regularly connected to death in Athanasius' thought; nonetheless, it is a topic that Athanasius expands on at length in its own right. Humanity's turn to the body and the soul's subsequent obsession with bodily pleasures are, for Athanasius, the cause of humanity's irrevocable slide towards greater and greater evil. This process begins with an incorrect assessment of the value of pleasure.

> Ἀποστᾶσα τῆς τῶν νοητῶν θεωρίας, καὶ ταῖς κατὰ μέρος τοῦ σώματος ἐνεργείαις καταχρωμένη, καὶ ἡσθεῖσα τῇ τοῦ σώματος θεωρίᾳ καὶ ἰδοῦσα καλὸν ἑαυτῇ εἶναι τὴν ἡδονήν, πλανηθεῖσα κατεχρήσατο τῷ τοῦ καλοῦ ὀνόματι, καὶ ἐνόμισεν εἶναι τὴν ἡδονὴν αὐτὸ τὸ ὄντως καλόν· ὥσπερ εἴ τις, τὴν διάνοιαν παραπληγείς, καὶ ἀπαιτῶν ξίφος κατὰ τῶν ἀπαντώντων, νομίζοι τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ σωφρονεῖν. ἐρασθεῖσα δὲ τῆς ἡδονῆς, ποικίλως αὐτὴν ἐνεργεῖν ἤρξατο. οὖσα γὰρ τὴν φύσιν εὐκίνητος, εἰ καὶ τὰ καλὰ ἀπεστράφη, ἀλλὰ τοῦ κινεῖσθαι οὐ παύεται. κινεῖται οὖν οὐκ ἔτι μὲν κατὰ ἀρετήν, οὐδὲ ὥστε τὸν Θεὸν ὁρᾷν· ἀλλὰ τὰ μὴ ὄντα λογιζομένη, τὸ ἑαυτῆς δυνατὸν μεταποιεῖ, καταχρωμένη τούτῳ εἰς ἃς ἐπενόησεν ἐπιθυμίας, ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτεξούσιος γέγονε. δύναται γὰρ ὥσπερ πρὸς τὰ καλὰ νεύειν, οὕτω καὶ τὰ καλὰ ἀποστρέφεσθαι· ἀποστρεφομένη δὲ τὸ καλόν, πάντως τὰ ἐναντία λογίζεται· παύσασθαι γὰρ καθόλου τοῦ κινεῖσθαι οὐ δύναται, τὴν φύσιν οὖσα, ὡς προεῖπον, εὐκίνητος. καὶ γινώσκουσα τὸ αὐτεξούσιον ἑαυτῆς, ὁρᾷ ἑαυτὴν δύνασθαι κατ᾽ ἀμφότερα τοῖς τοῦ σώματος μέλεσι χρᾶσθαι εἵς τε τὰ ὄντα καὶ τὰ μὴ ὄντα· ὄντα δέ ἐστι τὰ καλά, οὐκ ὄντα δὲ τὰ φαῦλα. ὄντα δέ φημι τὰ καλά, καθότι ἐκ τοῦ ὄντος

> Θεοῦ τὰ παραδείγματα ἔχει· οὐκ ὄντα δὲ τὰ κακὰ λέγω, καθότι ἐπινοίαις ἀνθρώπων οὐκ ὄντα ἀναπέπλασται.[105]

It is not simply the turn from rational realities—the use of the body against God's intended purpose—or the misguided pursuit of bodily pleasure that causes the soul's pursuit of corruption. The soul also makes an error in judgement about the nature of good and evil, regarding pleasure as good in and of itself, and so gives the name 'good' to pleasure. This naming is πλανηθεῖσα, in error, and so, by implication, is the soul's perception and belief that pleasure is a genuine good.

In this description of the soul's actions, corruption has arguably already begun. For Athanasius' strongly realist approach to epistemology, names are not nominalistic ciphers. They disclose the reality of the thing so named.[106] By declaring something to be 'really good' when it is not, is to treat something that has no reality as though it does.[107] Because, for Athanasius, existence is good and evil is non-existent, this error in naming is more than a mere mistake. It embodies the whole dynamic of corruption, whereby the soul increasingly departs from what is good and true and moves on a trajectory towards greater evil and unreality. The error in naming is analogous to the insanity of wanting a sword to use on every person encountered. It is a substantial and destructive misjudgement in its own right.

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[105] *CG* 4
[106] *CA* 2.3
[107] *C.f.* Weinandy, *Athanasius*, 15 who appears to take this idea a step further and suggests that, for Athanasius, the soul's pleasure in the body's sensations has no existence and is only a mental illusion. This seems to go further than Athanasius—the body, its senses, even the pleasures thereby derived actually exist and have some goodness about them precisely because they are created by God. The problem is that pleasure is considered to be a genuine good, something that the soul can be orientated to and embrace, not that pleasure does not exist at all.

At this point two distinct but related aspects of the soul's nature combine to ensure that the soul freely, but yet by an intrinsic necessity, pursues greater and greater corruption. First, as we have discussed, the soul possesses αὐτεξούσιον, free will, and has the capacity both to incline towards good and away from it, as well as to move the members of the body in the pursuit of good or its variegated opposites. In this choice Athanasius stresses that the soul is truly and genuinely free, and answerable to no cause outside its own desires and will.

Nonetheless, the soul is also inherently mobile. As Athanasius states in *CG* 33.16 'the movement of the soul is nothing other than its life' (ἡ γὰρ κίνησις τῆς ψυχῆς οὐδὲν ἕτερόν ἐστιν ἢ ἡ ζωὴ αὐτῆς·). The soul's life consists in its movement, its nature is to be in perpetual motion, οὖσα γὰρ τὴν φύσιν εὐκίνητος.[108] All movement must be in a concrete direction. Again the spatial dimension of ontological issues in Athanasius' thought is important, and so, once the soul freely makes the decision to turn from the good, it must necessarily, πάντως, begin to contemplate evil in its place. The only alternative would be for the soul to cease moving altogether, to be at rest, and this is not a capacity the soul possesses, παύσασθαι γὰρ καθόλου τοῦ κινεῖσθαι οὐ δύναται, because its nature is to move and be moved. The soul can freely choose whether to move towards the good or towards its opposite, but it cannot choose not to move to one of those two destinations. Because of its own nature, the soul must be progressing towards what is good and existent or what is evil and non-existent. Standing still between the two destinations is simply impossible.[109] As a

[108] Lyman, *Christology*, 63, 102 notes that this understanding is shared with Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen and Eusebius.
[109] *C.f.* Anatolios, *Coherence*, 36; Steenberg, *God*, 172-3 focuses more on the implications of this extract for the loss of the image in the human person.

consequence, the freely chosen rejection of the knowledge of God necessarily results in a move towards greater and greater corruption.

Supporting this move towards greater corruption is a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of the soul.

> ἡ ψυχὴ ἀποστᾶσα τῆς πρὸς τὰ καλὰ θεωρίας, καὶ τῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς κινήσεως, λοιπὸν πλανωμένη κινεῖται εἰς τὰ ἐναντία. εἶτα τὸ δυνατὸν ἑαυτῆς, ὡς προεῖπον, ὁρῶσα, καὶ τούτῳ καταχρωμένη, ἐνενόησεν ὅτι καὶ εἰς τὰ ἐναντία δύναται κινεῖν τὰ τοῦ σώματος μέλη· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἀντὶ τοῦ τὴν κτίσιν ὁρᾷν, εἰς ἐπιθυμίας τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν ἀποστρέφει, δεικνύουσα ὅτι καὶ τοῦτο δύναται καὶ νομίζουσα ὅτι, ἅπαξ κινουμένη, σώζει τὴν ἑαυτῆς ἀξίαν, καὶ οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει ποιοῦσα ὃ δύναται· οὐκ εἰδυῖα ὅτι οὐχ ἁπλῶς κινεῖσθαι, ἀλλ᾽ εἰς ἃ δεῖ κινεῖσθαι γέγονε·[110]

Athanasius makes explicit what is often implicit in his discussion of the soul's nature as εὐκίνητος. The soul is not made simply to move, even though οὖσα γὰρ τὴν φύσιν εὐκίνητος. There is a teleology that is inherent to the soul as well as a nature. The soul has been created εἰς ἃ δεῖ κινεῖσθαι. The soul cannot do anything other than move, for movement is its life, and its nature is to move and be moved.[111] But it is an error to imagine that movement, irrespective of direction, preserves the worth of the soul (σώζει τὴν ἑαυτῆς ἀξίαν). Not simply nature, but teleology also, is constitutive of the soul's integrity. Moving to the good is the *bene esse* of the soul, and even if

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[110] *CG* 4

[111] The soul's nature to be moved (κινεῖσθαι) as well as to move itself, and the parts of the body away from the good ends for which they were created, is an indicator of the dissimilarity between the soul and the Word. For Athanasius, the Word is only ever mover, never moved, *CG* 42 αὐτὸς μὲν ἀκίνητος μένων παρὰ τῷ Πατρί, πάντα δὲ κινῶν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ συστάσει, ὡς ἂν ἕκαστον τῷ ἑαυτοῦ Πατρὶ δοκῇ. While Athanasius does not draw attention to it, his thought is unaccommodating, on multiple levels, to the idea that the Word is the soul of creation. The parallels that exist between soul and Word that arise because the soul is a copy of the Word, are offset by the significant dissimilarities that exist between them due to the created nature of the soul.

movement is an aspect of the *esse* of the soul, the effect of moving towards good or towards corruption has an effect on the inner constitution of the soul, as we will observe when we discuss the fate of the image in the human person under the impact of Athanasius' view of human evil. The *bene esse* and the *esse* are closely related, such that sufficient loss of the *bene esse* begins to have implications for the integrity of the *esse* as well. The soul undoes itself in moving to the opposite of the good and the real.

Such a reading of the voluntary yet necessary dimension of the pursuit of corruption is supported by the following extract:[112]

> ἅπερ πάντα κακία καὶ ἁμαρτία ψυχῆς ἐστιν. αἰτία δὲ τούτων οὐδεμία, ἀλλ' ἡ τῶν κρειττόνων ἀποστροφή. ὡς γὰρ ἐὰν ἡνίοχος, ἐπιβὰς ἵπποις ἐν σταδίῳ καταφρονήσῃ μὲν τοῦ σκοποῦ, εἰς ὃν ἐλαύνειν αὐτὸν προσήκει, ἀποστραφεὶς δὲ τοῦτον, ἁπλῶς ἐλαύνῃ τὸν ἵππον ὡς ἂν δύνηται· δύναται δὲ ὡς βούλεται· καὶ πολλάκις μὲν εἰς τοὺς ἀπαντῶντας ὁρμᾷ, πολλάκις δὲ καὶ κατὰ κρημνῶν ἐλαύνει, φερόμενος ὅπου δ' ἂν ἑαυτὸν τῇ ὀξύτητι τῶν ἵππων φέροι, νομίζων ὅτι οὕτω τρέχων, οὐκ ἐσφάλη τοῦ σκοποῦ· πρὸς γὰρ μόνον τὸν δρόμον ἀποβλέπει, καὶ οὐχ ὁρᾷ ὅτι ἔξω τοῦ σκοποῦ γέγονεν· οὕτω καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ ἀποστραφεῖσα τὴν πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν ὁδόν, καὶ ἐλαύνουσα παρὰ τὸ πρέπον τὰ τοῦ σώματος μέλη, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ αὐτὴ μετ' αὐτῶν ὑφ' ἑαυτῆς ἐλαυνομένη, ἁμαρτάνει καὶ τὸ κακὸν ἑαυτῇ πλάττει, οὐχ ὁρῶσα ὅτι πεπλάνηται τῆς ὁδοῦ, καὶ ἔξω γέγονε τοῦ τῆς ἀληθείας σκοποῦ, εἰς ὃν ὁ χριστοφόρος ἀνὴρ ὁ μακάριος Παῦλος ἀποβλέπων ἔλεγε· Κατὰ σκοπὸν διώκω, εἰς τὸ βραβεῖον τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ· σκοπῶν γοῦν τὸ καλὸν ὁ ἅγιος, οὐδέποτε τὸ κακὸν ἐποίει.[113]

Athanasius introduces the illustration of the charioteer – an image that is grounded in Plato's *Phaedrus*, although used to different effect – to expound the inner rationale of the soul's incessant sinning. The example testifies to a feature of Athanasius' thought

[112] Widdicombe, *Fatherhood,* 224 notes the necessity inherent to sinning once humanity has turned from God.
[113] *CG* 5

that we have regularly noted – his willingness to utilise spatial categories in discussing ontological questions. The pursuit of good and evil (ethical qualities that have strongly ontological connections as we have observed) is here conceptualised as a charioteer in a race choosing to veer off from the finish line and move according to his own inclination, and the movement of the horses. The logic of Athanasius' account is consistent with what we have observed previously. The pursuit of evil arises as a consequence of turning aside from the proper goal of the race. Once that decision is made, all subsequent decisions regarding the direction of movement are variations in pursuit of corruption. Implicit in this position is the idea that the good is singular, whereas evil is diverse and multiform. There is only one finish line in the race, one place of truth. Everywhere outside this single location is some variation on 'not good', or evil, with the consequence that the charioteer can range widely in his movements, and yet all of his destinations are expressions of corruption.

In this variegated pursuit of corruption, the soul is both under its own control and is controlled by an 'external' dynamic. So, Athanasius may speak of the charioteer driving 'as he is able; and he is able to do whatever he wants', yet also of the horseman 'being carried wherever the speed of the horses carries him'. The soul 'drives the parts of the body against what is proper, or rather it is even driven along from its course by them'. Having freely turned aside from the goal, the soul now finds itself driven by the parts of the body and their desires as much as it drives them to its own ends. The original decision was an expression of almost unbounded freedom, and consequent to that decision, there is still some capacity to choose any destination outside of the place of truth. Yet having wedded itself to the body and its

desires, the soul now also finds that it has surrendered some of the capacity to give direction. It is moved by the body and no longer only moves it.

Finally, Athanasius implies that the soul's corruption is, at least in part, due to a misunderstanding of the nature of good. This is an important corollary of the idea that evil is the necessary consequence of rejecting the good. The charioteer does not aim to collide with pedestrians, nor seek his own destruction by deliberately racing to the edge of an abyss; these examples that Athanasius enumerates are the effects of racing without aiming for the finish line and being pulled along by unruly horses. The charioteer's actions are, at least in part, due to a misunderstanding of the matter, 'thinking that speeding this way he would not miss the finish line. For he pays attention only to the course and does not see that he has gone beyond the finish line.' The charioteer does not seek to race in a destructive way, the culpability arises from a misconception that he can ignore the finish line, focus only on the movement itself, and still arrive at the correct destination. In a similar fashion (οὕτω καὶ), the soul 'sins and forms evil for itself, not seeing that it has gone astray from the way, and has ended up outside the place of truth.' The soul does sin, and effects evil, but only as a consequence of a misperception – it does not perceive that it has left the true path, and now is on a trajectory outside of 'the place of truth'. While its choices are evil, it makes them because it evaluates them as, if not quite good and right, at least as capable of maintaining the soul's integrity. It sees the act of choosing to be 'the good' that preserves the integrity of the soul, and so at this stage of corruption's development, the content of the decision is evacuated of moral weight.[114] Choosing

[114] Similarly Frost, 'Mensch', 324

itself—not what is chosen—is the object of human misconception and erroneous ethical evaluation. First, humanity misjudges pleasure as real good, then it considers being in motion – of acting – as being the good, but in both cases evil is a by-product of aiming to be good but having turned aside from genuine goodness.

Nonetheless, there are places where it is possible that Athanasius acknowledges a more psychological dimension to the choice of evil, and so hints at a more deliberative stance towards that choice than what arises from the causal structure that normally dominates his account: ἐπιθυμοῦσα δὲ πάλιν, καὶ μὴ τυγχάνουσα τῶν ὁμοίων, ἔμαθε φονεύειν καὶ ἀδικεῖν.[115]

In this extract, Athanasius does not suggest that learning to murder and act unrighteously results from misunderstanding the nature of real goodness. While he does not explicitly state that murder and injustice arise from a conscious decision to do something known to be wrong, it would seem to be a reasonable construal to place upon his words here. Murder and injustice are actions that the soul discovers how to commit as a consequence of having its desires for its wrong concept of good thwarted and unrealised. They are not part of the soul's erroneous concept of 'the good', but are actions it takes because its desires for that new good have been thwarted. It is unlikely that Athanasius, or his readers, would perceive φονεύειν and ἀδικεῖν as, in any sense, 'good', even by misattribution. Accordingly, it is arguable that what is on view is a further stage of the declension into corruption. What begins with a rejection of real good, the knowledge of God, and continues by seizing upon the pleasures of

[115] *CG* 3

sensual reality as genuinely good, is then further developed by pursuing that pleasure and considering that activity as sufficient to ensure the soul's integrity and goodness. It finally results in actions taken that are possibly positive decisions to do evil. When the soul finds its pursuit of even its imaginary good thwarted, it turns to unambiguous evil and learns to murder and be unjust – either in order to achieve its pleasures, or as an expression of thwarted desire. The corruption of the soul develops as it leaves the pursuit of the good, even to the extent of evil possibly becoming a positive choice in its own right (and if not a deliberate choice of evil then it also is not explained as being due to a misunderstanding of good as has been the case to this point in Athanasius' narrative of moral decline). This then, is one of the key elements of what Athanasius considers humanity's origins – the ever progressing corruption of the human person as it departs from the knowledge of God and turns to the body.[116]

Idolatry

This development of growing corruption in the ethical sphere has implications for piety and religion, which brings us to the next significant effect of humanity's turn to the body, the development of idolatry.

In *CG* 8, having discussed humanity's descent into ongoing moral corruption, Athanasius turns his attention to one of the most significant expressions of that corruption – the invention of idolatry. Athanasius deduces two reasons for the beginning of idolatry. The first arises from the soul's turn to the body. The soul has

[116] Similarly, if briefly, Frost, 'Mensch', 323

hidden the mirror – the image of God – by which it was able to perceive the Image of the Father, who is the Word of God, Jesus Christ. *CG* 34.22-26 makes this connection between the knowledge of God through the rational soul with 'the Saviour' who is the Image of God explicit and this true Image is implicitly being set against the idols, or false images of God, critiqued throughout chapters eight to twenty-nine.

Robbed of this resource of the image by which it could know the true Image of the Father, the soul is confused in its intuitions and reasonings about God. Having orientated itself to the life of the body, it is left with only the body's senses for contemplation of the divine. Accordingly the soul forms a sense of God out of its sensible experiences, a shadowy creation *ex nihilo* in reverse, and so divinises visible phenomena – assigning the name 'God' to what can be seen. Visible sensations become the material for its act of creation, shaped to produce a concept of God. And this in turn elevates a subset of the visible phenomena, and applies to it the attribution 'God'. For Athanasius, idolatry is a predictable course of behaviour for souls stripped of all resources for the contemplation of God and yet still pursuing their original purpose with nothing more than bodily sensation

Further, idolatry is also predictable because of the soul's orientation to sensible pleasure. Now that the soul misassociates bodily cravings with goodness and God, it glorifies them accordingly.[117] The soul's creation of various gods is its reponse to,

[117] At this point, Athanasius' critique of idolatry would appear to have resonances with Martin Luther's later polemic against theologians of glory.

and personification of, the body's desires. Sensible, material gods are the expression of a soul that has come to value only sensible and material pleasures.[118]

Like the law and the Garden, creation was given to assist humanity in maintaining the gift of being in the image by promoting the knowledge of God.[119] However, creation has not only been ineffective, it has arguably even exacerbated humanity's alienation from the knowledge of God:

> Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἀποστραφέντες τὴν πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν θεωρίαν καὶ ὡς ἐν βυθῷ βυθισθέντες κάτω τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντες, ἐν γενέσει καὶ τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς τὸν Θεὸν ἀνεζήτουν, ἀνθρώπους θνητοὺς καὶ δαίμονας ἑαυτοῖς θεοὺς ἀνατυπούμενοι·[120]

> εἰς αἰσθητὰ πεσούσης τῆς διανοίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων[121]

Humanity has not merely drawn back from contemplating God. Having withdrawn, it has then fixated on a different object, creation and, in particular, sensible things. On view is not simply the idea that human beings see sensible things, for that was always intended to be the means whereby people would then perceive the invisible God. The real issue can be seen in the verbs Athanasius uses: human thinking 'has fallen' (πεσούσης) to sensible things, men 'have sunk' (βυθισθέντες), and their eyes 'are fixed downwards' (κάτω…ἔχοντες). Each of these descriptions suggests a transformation that has a settled, and provisionally permanent, aspect to it. The human mind is now set upon creation as an end in itself and not simply as the means

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[118] A similar observation is offered in Behr, *Nicene*, 177 although Behr goes a step further and suggests that the body itself has become an idol, not simply the source of idolatry.
[119] *CG* 35
[120] *DI* 15
[121] *DI* 16

to transcend it to the knowledge of God. As a consequence, humans now seek God *in* creation rather than beyond it. Their fixation upon creation has resulted in reframing God as something that exists within the sensible world. Accordingly, people then treat certain entities within the created order as gods, forming men and demons into their deities.

On Athanasius' argument, one could imagine that, if there were no sensible objects in existence, and people simply knew God through the spiritual vision of the soul's mind, then the process of corruption could still have developed when humanity recoiled from the knowledge of God. However, it is unlikely that that growing corruption would ever have given rise to the further problem of idolatry. The vacuum left by God would never have been filled by unreal gods shaped from materials drawn from the visible world. Idolatry is a particular expression and intensification of corruption arising from humanity's entanglement with creation and sensible objects due to its embodiment and the fixation of contemplation on the sphere of sensation.

Loss of the Image

These various aspects of corruption—the ontological, the ethical, and the religious, have an affect upon the human person. The most significant dimension of this has already been discussed; the constant move towards non-existence. However, only slightly less important in Athansius' thought is the amelioration of the image in humanity caused by the turn from God and towards evil and the gods. This problem is intertwined with the various issues we have already explored, and appears early in the description of the turn from God and the turn to the body.

> ἐνδιατρίψαντες δὲ τούτοις, καὶ τῶν ἐγγυτέρω μὴ ἀποστῆναι θέλοντες, ταῖς μὲν τοῦ σώματος ἡδοναῖς συνέκλεισαν ἑαυτῶν τὴν ψυχήν,τεταραγμένην καὶ πεφυρμένην πάσαις ἐπιθυμίαις· τέλεον δὲ ἐπελάθοντο τῆς ἐξ ἀρχῆς αὐτῶν παρὰ Θεοῦ δυνάμεως.[122]

The commitment to the body and its senses undertaken by the person is not simply an imprisonment of the soul in the body's pleasures. It also results in the person forgetting the power they had from God originally. There is a play on τέλεον and ἀρχῆς, which suggests that this is not an immediate consequence, though nonetheless significant for Athanasius' theological vision. The 'power' (δυνάμεως) on view here is most probably the power mentioned in the previous chapter, given by the Father's Word, the ability to know God through the Word. Hence, the first stage of the loss of the image is the loss of the capacity to know God through contemplation. That capacity continues to exist—the rational soul, or the image, is still in place—but it has both ceased to function the way it was intended and been forgotten: humans have lost sight of the fact that divine contemplation is possible. Thus, as we have observed, commitment to the pleasures of the body leads to sins of increasing severity which vitiate the ontological reality of the human person. They also have an effect on the image, as indicated in *CG* 5: ἅπερ πάντα κακία καὶ ἁμαρτία ψυχῆς ἐστιν.[123]

In reviewing a representative range of evils that people commit with their bodies, immediately before introducing the charioteer illustration, Athanasius describes them as all being evil, 'sins of the soul' (ἁμαρτία ψυχῆς). The variegated wickednesses that people commit are not simply sins of the body, but of the soul, which uses the body as an instrument in a fashion analogous to the Word in the incarnation. Human sins run

[122] *CG* 3.9-12
[123] *CG* 5.9

deep, and are proper to the soul itself, and this in turn has an effect on the soul's capacity to function.

> δύνανται γάρ, ὥσπερ ἀπεστράφησαν τῇ διανοίᾳ τὸν Θεὸν καὶ τὰ οὐκ ὄντα ἀνεπλάσαντο εἰς θεούς, οὕτως ἀναβῆναι τῷ νῷ τῆς ψυχῆς, καὶ πάλιν ἐπιστρέψαι πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. ἐπιστρέψαι δὲ δύνανται, ἐὰν ὃν ἐνεδύσαντο ῥύπον πάσης ἐπιθυμίας ἀπόθωνται, καὶ τοσοῦτον ἀπονίψωνται, ἕως ἂν ἀπόθωνται πᾶν τὸ συμβεβηκὸς ἀλλότριον τῇ ψυχῇ, καὶ μόνην αὐτὴν ὥσπερ γέγονεν ἀποδείξωσιν, ἵν' οὕτως ἐν αὐτῇ θεωρῆσαι τὸν τοῦ Πατρὸς Λόγον, καθ' ὃν καὶ γεγόνασιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς, δυνηθῶσι. κατ' εἰκόνα γὰρ Θεοῦ πεποίηται καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν γέγονεν, ὡς καὶ ἡ θεία σημαίνει γραφὴ ἐκ προσώπου τοῦ Θεοῦ λέγουσα· Ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν ἡμετέραν. ὅθεν καὶ ὅτε πάντα τὸν ἐπιχυθέντα ῥύπον τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἀφ' ἑαυτῆς ἀποτίθεται, καὶ μόνον τὸ κατ' εἰκόνα καθαρὸν φυλάττει, εἰκότως, διαλαμπρυνθέντος τούτου, ὡς ἐν κατόπτρῳ θεωρεῖ τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ Πατρὸς τὸν Λόγον, καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τὸν Πατέρα, οὗ καὶ ἔστιν εἰκὼν ὁ Σωτήρ, λογίζεται.[124]

The problem is not simply that people have forgotten their power to know God through contemplation of the Word, or even that the soul itself is the 'owner' of the sins committed in the body. It is that the soul itself has been affected, having had its sins poured over it (ἐπιχυθέντα). This 'covering' is described in two ways. It is ὃν ἐνεδύσαντο ῥύπον πάσης ἐπιθυμίας, and πᾶν τὸ συμβεβηκὸς ἀλλότριον τῇ ψυχῇ, with the parallel nature of these clauses indicated by the fact that both are governed by ἀπόθωνται and are in close proximity. The first of these clauses is fairly straightforward to interpret, as Athanasius has already spoken of the interaction of desires and capacity to know God in *CG* 8.

> ἐπικρύψασα γὰρ ταῖς ἐπιπλοκαῖς τῶν σωματικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν τὸ ὡς ἐν αὐτῇ κάτοπτρον, δι' οὗ μόνον ὁρᾷν ἠδύνατο τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ Πατρός, οὐκέτι μὲν ὁρᾷ ἃ δεῖ ψυχὴν νοεῖν· παντὶ δὲ περιφέρεται, καὶ μόνα ἐκεῖνα ὁρᾷ τὰ τῇ αἰσθήσει προσπίπτοντα.[125]

[124] *CG* 34.12-36
[125] *CG* 8.10-13

Here the mirror of the soul, by which people can contemplate the Word, and, by the Word, the Father, is buried in the multitude of physical desires towards which the soul is now orientated. As our extract from *CG* 34 indicates, these desires not only hide, but damage, the soul's capacity. It is no longer enough to possess this capacity, the 'dirt' of bodily desire must be removed. The parallel description is that people must wash themselves until they have removed πᾶν τὸ συμβεβηκὸς ἀλλότριον τῇ ψυχῇ. This is possibly a simple strict parallel to the earlier phrase, a possibility strengthened by the natural similarity between 'washing' and 'dirt'. It may also extend further to the effects on the soul of actual sins committed—not simply the desires that give rise to them—and possibly even to the effect of worshipping non-existent gods.

Whatever else is included, it is clear that the soul itself is harmed by the desires themselves. In staining the soul, these pollutants from the body render the soul incapable of performing its original function. The soul was made in the image of God, and so is able to contemplate God in the Father's true Image, the Word. However, in order to do this it must be pure, and not defaced by anything foreign to its pristine likeness to God. In its current condition it is not merely forgetful, but impotent.

Athanasius returns to the issue of the image of God in *DI* as he expounds how the image is restored in humanity, and his discussion there sheds further light on the nature of the loss of the image.

> Ὡς γὰρ τῆς γραφείσης ἐν ξύλῳ μορφῆς παραφανισθείσης ἐκ τῶν ἔξωθεν ῥύπων, πάλιν χρεία τοῦτον παραγενέσθαι, οὗ καὶ ἔστιν ἡ μορφή, ἵνα ἀνακαινισθῆναι ἡ εἰκὼν δυνηθῇ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ ὕλῃ—διὰ γὰρ τὴν ἐκείνου γραφὴν καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ ὕλη ἐν ᾗ καὶ γέγραπται οὐκ ἐκβάλλεται, ἀλλ' ἐν αὐτῇ ἀνατυποῦται. Κατὰ τοῦτο καὶ ὁ πανάγιος τοῦ Πατρὸς Υἱός, Εἰκὼν ὢν τοῦ Πατρός,

> παρεγένετο ἐπὶ τοὺς ἡμετέρους τόπους, ἵνα τὸν κατ᾽ αὐτὸν πεποιημένον ἄνθρωπον ἀνακαινίσῃ, καὶ ὡς ἀπολόμενον εὕρῃ διὰ τῆς τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἀφέσεως, ᾗ φησι καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τοῖς Εὐαγγελίοις• «Ἦλθον τὸ ἀπολόμενον εὑρεῖν καὶ σῶσαι.» Ὅθεν καὶ πρὸς τοὺς Ἰουδαίους ἔλεγεν• «Ἐὰν μή τις ἀναγεννηθῇ», οὐ τὴν ἐκ γυναικῶν γέννησιν σημαίνων ὥσπερ ὑπενόουν ἐκεῖνοι, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀναγεννωμένην καὶ ἀνακτιζομένην ψυχὴν ἐν τῷ κατ᾽ εἰκόνα δηλῶν. [126]

The link between the soul and the image is emphasised by the language of the soul being born again and restored to being in the image. The language of stains on the soul used in *CG* 34 is here used in the illustration of the painting that has been defaced by a foreign addition. In *DI* 14, however, it is clear that the image has in some sense been lost. In the painting illustration the portrait has been 'defaced' (παραφανισθείσης), and needs to be 'renewed' (ἀνακαινισθῆναι) and 'formed again' (ἀνατυποῦται). The dominical language of being 'born again', as it is applied to the soul, indicates the need for a similar restoration to the image. The loss of the soul's power to effect the knowledge of God through contemplation is either the same as, or closely linked to, the loss of the image itself.

Thus, the image is the likeness of the Word enscribed on the soul—a likeness obscured by the addition of things extrinsic to the soul, like bodily desires. Image is a matter of both content and form: actual knowledge of God given through contemplation of the soul due to the created similarity of the soul to the Word; and the ability to know the Father through the contemplation of the Word. Sin damages both. It defaces the image and disempowers its formal capacity. This understanding is similarly suggested by *DI* 12-13

[126] *DI* 14.1-15

> Οὐδὲ γὰρ διὰ Ἰουδαίους μόνους ὁ νόμος ἦν οὐδὲ δι᾽ αὐτοὺς μόνους οἱ προφῆται ἐπέμποντο, ἀλλὰ πρὸς Ἰουδαίους μὲν ἐπέμποντο, καὶ παρὰ Ἰουδαίων ἐδιώκοντο· πάσης δὲ τῆς οἰκουμένης ἦσαν διδασκάλιον ἱερὸν τῆς περὶ Θεοῦ γνώσεως, καὶ τῆς κατὰ ψυχὴν πολιτείας. Τοσαύτης οὖν οὔσης τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀγαθότητος καὶ φιλανθρωπίας, ὅμως οἱ ἄνθρωποι, νικώμενοι ταῖς παραυτίκα ἡδοναῖς καὶ ταῖς παρὰ δαιμόνων φαντασίαις καὶ ἀπάταις, οὐκ ἀνένευσαν πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν· ἀλλ᾽ ἑαυτοὺς πλείοσι κακοῖς καὶ ἁμαρτήμασιν ἐνεφόρησαν, ὡς μηκέτι δοκεῖν αὐτοὺς λογικούς, ἀλλὰ ἀλόγους ἐκ τῶν τρόπων νομίζεσθαι.
>
> Οὕτω τοίνυν ἀλογωθέντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ οὕτως τῆς δαιμονικῆς πλάνης ἐπισκιαζούσης τὰ πανταχοῦ καὶ κρυπτούσης τὴν περὶ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ Θεοῦ γνῶσιν, τί τὸν Θεὸν ἔδει ποιεῖν; σιωπῆσαι τὸ τηλικοῦτον, καὶ ἀφεῖναι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὑπὸ δαιμόνων πλανᾶσθαι, καὶ μὴ γινώσκειν αὐτοὺς τὸν Θεόν; Καὶ τίς ἡ χρεία τοῦ καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς κατ᾽ εἰκόνα Θεοῦ γενέσθαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον; ἔδει γὰρ αὐτὸν ἁπλῶς ὡς ἄλογον γενέσθαι, ἢ γενόμενον λογικὸν τὴν τῶν ἀλόγων ζωὴν μὴ βιοῦν. Τίς δὲ ὅλως ἦν χρεία ἐννοίας αὐτὸν λαβεῖν περὶ Θεοῦ ἐξ ἀρχῆς;[127]

This extract forms part of the preparation for the discussion of the renewal of the image in *DI* 14. It comes after Athanasius has affirmed that the grace of being in the image was sufficient to know the Word (and, hence, the Father), and that creation, the law and the prophets were given to secure that knowledge in anticipation of human negligence. The content of the law is summarized as τῆς περὶ Θεοῦ γνώσεως, καὶ τῆς κατὰ ψυχὴν πολιτείας and involved abandoning idolatry for worship of the Father, as well as desisting from wickedness to live virtuously. Given that the law is here given to maintain people in the image—and that what is given involves knowledge of ethical and religious behaviour—it suggests that this too has relevance to the image. Being in the image is not merely the ability to act ethically and to know God, but is, to actually act virtuously and to actually have the knowledge of God. Actual performance and knowledge—not simply potential—is necessary to maintain the image in the person.

[127] *DI* 12.21-13.9

This then forms the framework for the account of the loss of the image in this extract. Human beings were overwhelmed by their desires and by the demons' deceptions. As a consequence, they make no effort to consider the truth but fill themselves with wicked actions, κακοῖς and ἁμαρτήμασιν. Athanasius identifies two resulting consequences. First, people no longer act rationally. Second, the deceit of the evil spirits has hidden the knowledge of God—a reference to idolatry.[128]

Here again, ethical and religious dimensions of the image are linked in Athanasius' thought. The filling of themselves with sins is the behaviour that obscures people's rational behaviour and leads to the conclusion that they are irrational. Rational behaviour has a concrete ethical shape, immorality is effectively to live the life of an irrational animal. This too, means a loss of the image. Athanasius describes living without the knowledge of God as living 'the life of nonrational creatures', contrasting the 'need' to make humanity in the image with the alternative of making humanity 'nonrational'. Image and rationality are correlates, and, as with ethical behaviour, this loss of the image involves both material content and formal capacity. In the extract, Athanasius asks a question twice in almost exact parallel.

> τίς ἡ χρεία τοῦ καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς κατ' εἰκόνα Θεοῦ γενέσθαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον;
>
> Τίς δὲ ὅλως ἦν χρεία ἐννοίας αὐτὸν λαβεῖν περὶ Θεοῦ ἐξ ἀρχῆς;

The close similarity of the structure of the two questions suggests that there is a very close connection, arguably even an identification, between being created in the image,

[128] Behr, *Nicene*, 171 notes that idolatry is the barometer of the extent to which the image of God is obscured.

and being given a concept of God. The image is not simply the capacity to know God, but actual knowledge of God.

This interlinking of formal and material principles illuminates the perennial question asked of any iteration of Christian anthropology: Does this figure conceive of the image as continuing after the entry of sin, or as being entirely lost? Questions of this nature are similarly asked of Athanasius' thought and, given the importance of the image for his anthropology, are appropriate, even though he himself appears to have not explicitly addressed the question. The evidence for the notion that Athanasius sees the image as completely lost is clear. At the level of teleology and function there is no question that the image is presented as effectively absent—people no longer contemplate God, no longer have a true concept of God, and no longer live virtuous lives. The image no longer exists in the sense that it is there to establish a relationship with God and to enable a righteous life—it has ceased to function or to accomplish its goal. Both the material and formal dimensions of the image appear to be involved in this evaluation: the knowledge of the true God has been successfully hidden and people now live a non-rational life religiously and ethically.[129]

However, taking in all the evidence it seems clear that Athanasius does not conceive of the image as completely lost in all its dimensions. People have not actually become non-rational beings, on a level with animals, but rather, act like it. Athanasius presents

[129] Young, *Nicaea*, 54 describes it as humanity forfeiting its share in the Logos by disobedience. A similar analysis is found in Ng, *Spirituality*, 77. Although he posits a tripartite analysis of the extra grace given to humanity in creation, the view of the effects of the fall on the human situation is fundamentally the same.

this behaviour as incongruous—not as congruous with the existence of something that has now lost the image entirely, which suggests that the image continues. In the illustration, the likeness engraved on wood has not been completely removed, but has simply been effaced by the addition of something foreign—this is why in *DI* 14 Athanasius gives the portrait as the reason why the wood is not thrown away but the portrait is renewed, an argument that clearly presumes the continuity of the image.

Similarly the power to know God is not completely evacuated but rendered ineffectual—thus purifying the soul of foreign additions is the remedy, not a new act of creation. Likewise, the power has been forgotten and buried in desires, not completely lost, and in *CG* 30 the path to knowing God, which is the soul and mind, not only continues to exist but everyone has at least stepped onto it. The image of God, while non-functional, continues to exist in both its material and formal aspects in the human person just as the soul itself does. The portrait is still inscribed under the foreign additions, the power still awaits to be remembered and the soul exists before it is cleansed of its stains. The original image needs renewing, not a second act of creation to create a new image. This continuity also involves both material and formal aspects—although the latter is more pronounced than the former.[130]

Corruption and loss of image interact in several ways in Athanasius' thought. First and most obviously, the image is the pre-condition for corruption. Only humanity is given the image and so only humanity has a will able to turn towards God or towards

[130] See Anatolios, *Coherence*, 65-66 for a compatible analysis. The relation effected by the image is broken by sin but does not entirely disappear. It needs to be renewed by the incarnation, but humanity is still in the image. Similarly Roldanus, *Le Christ*, 96.

corruption. Corruption is predicated only of humanity because only humanity is in the image.

Second, corruption causes the loss of the image. As humanity invests in the desires of the bodies, and commits increasingly more ethically corrupt actions, and as it creates gods characterized by greater and greater irrationality, the image is increasingly lost—knowledge of God is hidden, behaviour becomes nonrational, the capacity to know God is forgotten. The connection between cause and effect here is so close and so intrinsic that they are effectively two sides of the same coin. Greater corruption simply is greater loss of the image. [131] Corruption simultaneously attacks human existence by severing humanity from connection to the genuinely existent One, and also dehumanises the human person—thwarting human rationality.

Third, the corruption and loss of image have a significant point of contact in their conceptualisation. As image continues though lost, so corruption also appears to be a process without final terminus. Athanasius' language suggests that corruption should lead ultimately to complete non-existence. If existence is by nature a property of God alone, and creation is only able to have its existence perpetuated by its participation in the Word and without this creation would fall back into what is its natural non-existence, then it would seem a logical corollary of Athanasius' thought that having severed its participation in the divine life humanity would eventually arrive at this

[131] Hastings Rashdall, *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology, Being the Bampton lectures for 1915*, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1919), 296 ; note Dragas, *Athanasius*, 84

destination. However, it is difficult to find him saying this explicitly.[132] Characteristic of Athanasius' language is *DI* 4 "not merely to die, but to remain in the corruption of death", where the implication would appear to be an abiding in corruption after death. As corruption is a process, and not a destination, if people are to remain in corruption this suggests they never 'arrive' at final non-existence, but instead experience a never-ending dynamic of vitiated existence. The two significant illustrations for corruption that Athanasius uses in *CG*—the charioteer to illustrate the ethical dimension, and the person sinking into an abyss to discuss idolatry—are similarly open-ended in nature. Corruption appears to be an on-going development in an effectively infinite regress. Hence, corruption is similar to the turn towards God—a creature may travel towards the *telos* of its directed motion, but never ultimately arrive. Because it is in the image humanity is able to turn either direction, towards God or non-existence, but cannot arrive at either destination, because the soul's life is to move. As with Irenaeus before him, Athanasius conceptualizes the life well lived as a life lived in dynamic progress closer and closer to God, where it will always be possible to move even closer. This suggests a similar movement on the other side—while creation as a whole would slip back into non-existence if the Word did not secure its duration, humanity does not have the capacity of complete self-uncreation at its fingertips. Humanity can move towards non-existence but never arrive. Corruption can take an increasing hold, ameliorate one's existence and reality more and more, but the process will never be complete. Both God's self-existence and complete non-existence are a form of infinity that one cannot arrive at through the addition or subtraction of the finite motion of the soul. Only God is capable of bridging the gulf between unreality and reality by means

[132] Thomson's translation of *DI* 57.17 τὸ τούτων πῦρ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς κρίσεως, "the fire which consumes them on the day of judgement" is suggestive of such an interpretation of the tenor of Athanasius' thought, but the language of 'consumes' is an interpolation of Athanasius' words. Thomson, *Athanasius*, 277

of the Word's agency. He can call things into existence by his Word, or if he (hypothetically) did not enable them to participate in the Word they would lapse again into non-existence, but the finite, albeit ever growing, turn from the Word pursued by humanity is in the final analysis a creaturely act and cannot bridge this ultimate gulf between existence and non-existence. Both loss of image and corruption have decisively occurred and yet are incomplete.

This limitation on corruption's final efficacy is due to the image, a third connection between the two ideas. The image is not completely lost, and the image is a likeness of the self-existent Word, and a shadow of the Word's power. As a shadow of divine power, a divine likeness impressed onto the 'wood' of the human person, it acts as a securing force that prevents corruption from completely effecting the transition from reality to unreality. With an image that cannot ultimately be lost, with a soul that Athanasius explicitly describes as being eternal, a person's flight to unreality is unending, even as the human creatures travelling down that dark path will become more and more attenuated in their humanity and existence. The persistence of the image in the human person even as corruption grows stronger ensures that the person himself will never finally cease to exist. It is the presence of the image that is the guarantor of the continuing of the person, and hence that fallen humanity's destiny is to die and then to abide in corruption instead of eventually arriving at corruption's goal, non-existence.

Image and corruption have an intricate relationship. It is the presence of the image that creates the conditions whereby corruption is possible for the human person by

enabling free will. For its part, corruption effaces the image in humanity by staining the soul with extrinsic additions. Corruption is further exasperated by the external aids of creation and the law, which were given to assist and stabilize the image. Yet, ultimately, the image is never entirely lost irrespective of the extent of corruption's hold and progress, and this ultimately ensures that while corruption never ceases, it never reaches its end either: the human person never lapses back into non-existence.

Conclusion

Athanasius' account of the human condition is multi-faceted and complex. In contrast to Steeberg, Anatolios and Widdicombe we have concluded that the soul turns from God prior to its turn to the body. The various elements of his doctrines of creation and anthropology interact as humanity's turn away from God and to the pleasures of the body take hold. Humanity's conditional immortality is lost, and its natural mortality reasserts its dominion, rendering people inescapably subject to death once more, and their souls troubled by fears of the body's demise. The soul, which was intended for the contemplation of God, and to govern the body towards acts of virtue, is given over to the body's pleasures. This in itself is evil, and leads in time to even greater acts of moral corruption. There are a number of reasons for this, not least of which, we found with Lyman, Anatolios and Widdicombe, is that it is the soul's nature to move. The loss of the knowledge of God, combined with the soul's orientation to bodily sensations, leads to the invention of idolatry, evidence of ever worsening corruption, as people fabricate increasingly lose themselves in the unreality and corruption of false religion. These ethical and religious dimensions of corruption have a decided ontological effect. Humanity's continuation as a creature with existence and as a

creature in the image of God is increasingly diminished and lost. Corruption intrinsically, and as a natural consequence—and not as a separate interposition—debilitates the image and existence itself. Although the image, and hence existence, is never finally lost, with Anatolios and Roldanus against Young and Ng, Athanasius conceives of no boundary to the increasing hold of corruption on the human person. Ethically and religiously the person conducts greater and greater evil and this in turn gives them an increasing air of unreality, obscures the knowledge of God, and results in their behaviour appearing increasingly non-rational.

Exacerbating this situation are two external aids originally given to help stabilize humanity's existence in the image in light of humanity's image-given ability to turn towards God or corruption. Creation and the law were given to assist humanity in case their attention moved from the contemplation of the Word. Creation was intended to act as visible aid, enabling people to 'see' the Word through the instrument of creation and so return to contemplation if they lapsed in this pursuit. The law was intended to give both the true knowledge of God and ethical guidance, addressing the religious and ethical dimensions of the life turned to God. Yet, with the soul's orientation to the body's pleasures, creation has exacerbated the loss of the knowledge of God by acting as a source of unreal gods, and creation's ability to give pleasurable sensations to the body has resulted in the soul exalting this as its true good and so engaging in ever worsening acts of moral corruption. While not explicit, it appears that creation has exacerbated the problem because humanity did not merely draw back temporarily from the knowledge of God, but then reorientated itself to the body's senses, and it is this second stage of humanity's fall that has turned an external aid into an external problem. For its part, the law came with a threat, and so when its assisting

requirements were broken, and by means of a mechanism unexplained by Athanasius, it enabled natural corruption to exercise greater potency over the human person than was explicable by reference to nature alone.[133]

The turn from the Word has had pervasive and multifaceted effects, and far from being possible solutions, those external resources of creation and the law given in the beginning have only exacerbated the situation. Humanity's need can now only be met by the Word himself, who alone can address the multiplicity of problems created by humanity's ill-fated turn from God and turn towards the body.

We are now in a position to turn to the question of Athanasius' understanding of the atonement in its own right. Through having established Athanasius' understanding of the creation of humanity and its condition once it has turned from the knowledge of God, we are now in a position to establish our three key theses as we examine four different facets of Athanasius' understanding of the atonement. First, that these two chapters are the correct framework to understand Athanasius' understanding atonement, which means that Athanasius' view is a problem-solution one. Second, that there are a wide range of problems to be solved arising out of this background, and no one model or perspective of the atonement will be broad-ranging enough to address them, and so Athanasius' vision of the atonement is polyvalent and not monistic. Finally, that the kind of concerns and principles that are at work in the

[133] Chapter five will argue that the breaking of the law also resulted in a new dimension to death. Death was no longer only a natural phenomenon for mortal creatures, but had now become a legal obligation also. Solving the problem of death would now require both the impartation of immortality (to address mortality) and the death of all (to address the legal obligation).

different strands of the atonement are the same as are evident in other topics that are recognized to be critical for Athanasius' thought, and that this suggests that the atonement is also a vital element in his theological vision.

Chapter Three

Atonement and Creation

Athanasius' account of humanity—its creation, loss of divine knowledge and increasing corruption—forms the 'baseline' understanding of the atonement in his writings. Athanasius regularly articulates the atonement in terms of corruption and mortality, and of giving life and a share in divinity. These categories include the basic and most fundamental issues that need to be addressed by Christ.

While Athanasius' discussion is broad-ranging, and he utilises different terminology in different locations in his corpus, there are three basic elements to his understanding of what Christ achieves here. First, the negative traits that now characterize humanity are taken up by the incarnate Son and expelled from his body (and then humans who are in solidarity with him). Second, the Son, through his embodied life, allows humans to participate in certain desirable traits that are proper to deity. Finally, the Son provides a more secure final condition for humanity, ensuring that there can be no repeat of the Adamic fall. Our investigation in this chapter will seek to explore these three aspects of the atonement in Athanasius' thinking.

Mortality and Corruption

In *DI* Athanasius speaks of the atonement in terms that closely recall his language in describing humanity's original condition and subsequent declension:

> ὡς δὲ εἰς φθορὰν ἀναστρέψαντας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους πάλιν εἰς τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν ἐπιστρέψῃ, καὶ ζωοποιήσῃ τούτους ἀπὸ τοῦ θανάτου, τῇ τοῦ σώματος

> ἰδιοποιήσει, καὶ τῇ τῆς ἀναστάσεως χάριτι, τὸν θάνατον ἀπ᾽ αὐτῶν ὡς καλάμην ἀπὸ πυρὸς ἐξαφανίζων.[134]

> διὰ τὸν ἐνοικήσαντα Λόγον ἄφθαρτον διαμείνῃ, καὶ λοιπὸν ἀπὸ πάντων ἡ φθορὰ παύσηται τῇ τῆς ἀναστάσεως χάριτι[135]

As already discussed, Athanasius' doctrine of the fall is shaped around a primordial participation in the knowledge of God, and an ensuing ἀναστρέψαντας or turning away. By using the term ἐπιστρέψῃ the atonement is shown also to be pre-eminently about 'turning'. Finding humanity turned to the corruption that is the natural lot of a creature, the Word turns humanity back to participation in the incorruption that is properly a characteristic of God alone. As humanity has already turned to corruption, and so already has corruption's corollary, death, existing in their bodies, this turning involves something positive: introducing a new dynamic previously absent in the human person—described in *DI* 8 as giving people life from the dead. It also involves something negative: dealing with the problem of mortality. This is described in especially strong realist terms, as though death was a 'something' able to be destroyed and which resides within human beings. The analogy of fire destroying straw is particularly important for this, suggesting that the method whereby death is expelled from people is through active destruction by the Word when it encounters it in the body, a feature to which we will return on page 150.

This restoration of people from corruption to incorruption, from death to life, is, in these two extracts, portrayed as occurring through two stages, or of being comprised of two elements. Athanasius highlights both the Word's appropriation of a body (the

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[134] *DI* 8.31-35
[135] *DI* 9.6-7

indwelling Word), and 'the grace of the resurrection' as the two-fold means whereby death is destroyed from people's bodies. This is suggestive that salvation involves both something completed in the earthly ministry of Christ, as well as something occurring in believers.

This two-fold pattern will be observed as a basic feature for Athanasius—observable under a number of different categories.[136] It is fundamental to Athanasius that mortality and corruption were removed from the body by the incarnation of the Word:

> Τὸ μὲν οὖν σῶμα, ὡς καὶ αὐτὸ κοινὴν ἔχον τοῖς πᾶσι τὴν οὐσίαν—σῶμα γὰρ ἦν ἀνθρώπινον—, εἰ καὶ καινοτέρῳ θαύματι συνέστη ἐκ παρθένου μόνης, ὅμως θνητὸν ὂν κατὰ ἀκολουθίαν τῶν ὁμοίων καὶ ἀπέθνῃσκε· τῇ δὲ τοῦ Λόγου εἰς αὐτὸ ἐπιβάσει, οὐκέτι κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν φύσιν ἐφθείρετο, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ἐνοικήσαντα τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγον, ἐκτὸς ἐγίνετο φθορᾶς. Καὶ συνέβαινεν ἀμφότερα ἐν ταὐτῷ γενέσθαι παραδόξως· ὅτι τε ὁ πάντων θάνατος ἐν τῷ κυριακῷ σώματι ἐπληροῦτο, καὶ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ἡ φθορὰ διὰ τὸν συνόντα Λόγον ἐξηφανίζετο.[137]

The body of Christ was mortal and was capable of death and died in fact. Despite its miraculous origins, it had the same nature as other human bodies. What sets the body of Christ apart is its relationship to the Word of God. This is emphasized by the two-fold repetition. The entry of the Word into the body meant that the body was no longer being corrupted, suggesting that that process ceased at that point. This is then extended in the following clause ἀλλὰ… ἐκτὸς ἐγίνετο φθορᾶς. The ἀλλὰ gives a sense of contrast with what has gone before, suggesting that ἐκτὸς ἐγίνετο φθορᾶς is more than another form of words for οὐκέτι κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν φύσιν ἐφθείρετο—

[136] Although 'the grace of the resurrection' as the way of explaining the second stage appears to have a special prominence in *DI*, possibly due to Athanasius' extended argument for Christ's resurrection there.
[137] *DI* 20.25-33

corruption as a process has not merely ceased, but the body itself now exists without any inherent corruption. This is described as the 'obliteration' (ἐξηφανίζετο) of corruption and death. In describing these permanent outcomes, corruption's obliteration and the existence of the body without corruption, Athanasius shifts from a finite verb (ἐπιβάσει) to participles (ἐνοικήσαντα and συνόντα) functioning adjectively. The Word's indwelling, and his union with the body, are described in more static (noun) than dynamic (verb) terms. By using two adjectival senses of the participle, one a substantive, Athanasius emphasises the ongoing state. This implicitly strengthens the notions of corruption being obliterated and the body existing without corruption. These effects result from the Word's indwelling and the description of the Word and the body as 'cojoined'.[138] Athanasius draws attention to the scope of the change on view. Consistent with what we observed previously in his account of humanity's fall, corruption is here described as κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν φύσιν, so that the body has come to exist without corruption, suggesting that the body's existence is no longer characterized by the things proper to its creaturely nature, but by things proper to God. The Word's indwelling in the body, and his union with it, enables the body to exist beyond and above its own nature.[139]

[138] Similarly Rashdall, *Atonement,* 297

[139] The language here reflects that used in Athanasius' letter to Epictetus 10:

> But the body itself being of mortal nature, beyond its own nature rose again by reason of the Word which was in it; and it has ceased from natural corruption, and, having put on the Word which is above man, has become incorruptible.

See also Widdicombe, *Fatherhood,* 226. The suggestion by Leithart, *Athanasius,* 115 that Athanasius is contrasting later grace with earlier grace far more than something higher and lower highlights a strand in Athanasius' thinking often overlooked, but is arguably an overstatement owing more to a reaction to later theological debates than Athanasius' own language.

The idea that the atonement will result in something that transcends nature is a significant element. In perhaps his most evocative words on the subject he writes:

> …καὶ λοιπὸν συνήφθημεν καὶ ἡμεῖς τῷ Λόγῳ. Συναφθέντες δὲ τῷ Θεῷ, οὐκέτι μὲν ἐπὶ γῆς ἀπομένομεν, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς αὐτὸς εἶπεν, ὅπου αὐτὸς, καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐσόμεθα…οὔτε δὲ γυναῖκα παραπείθουσαν φυλαξόμεθα· *Ἐν γὰρ τῇ ἀναστάσει οὔτε γαμοῦσιν, οὔτε γαμίζονται, ἀλλ᾽ εἰσὶν ὡς ἄγγελοι·* καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καινὴ κτίσις ἔσται·καὶ οὔτε ἄρσεν, οὔτε θῆλυ, ἀλλὰ πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν ἔσται ὁ Χριστός. Ἔνθα δὲ ὁ Χριστὸς, ποῖος φόβος ἢ ποῖος κίνδυνος ἔτι γενήσεται;[140]

As we observed with *DI* 20, Athanasius highlights how the atonement involves unification with the Word; although here—possibly due to the anti-Arian polemical nature of the work—this is then explicitly glossed as being united to God, presumably because unity with God occurs in, and simultaneously with, unity to the Word. Unlike *DI* 20, however, where Athanasius described the transformation to the human body, Athanasius here describes the changes in terms of factors external to the human person. He makes special mention of the fact that people will cease living on the earth but will live where Christ is; that there will be neither male nor female and, in material not quoted, that Satan will be rendered inactive. Athanasius concludes this argument by noting, via rhetorical question, that there can be no danger where Christ exists.

This trio is no coincidence, for Athanasius is here apparently reflecting upon the narratives in Genesis 1-3. Living on the earth is, for Athanasius, not dangerous *per se*—in fact as we observed in *DI*, Athanasius mentions that Eden was, along with the law, intended to secure the grace given in being made after the Image, and the material creation was intended to function to redirect humanity's gaze back to the

[140] *CA* 2 69.4.2-5.7

Creator should they become distracted. Yet, as it transpired, the material creation instead acted as means for humanity's creative idolatry. Consequently, the indication that humanity will cease to live on the earth and instead will live with Christ suggests that some limitations inherent to humanity's natural existence, which exacerbated the problem of humanity's fall, will be transcended.

A similar note is struck with the discussion of the cessation of gender in its current form. This probably addresses the problem of Eve's role in Genesis 3, and particularly her offering of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to Adam, here summarized as γυναῖκα παραπείθουσαν (womanly beguilements). This is resolved by the termination of gender in its current form: in the resurrection there will be neither male nor female, but humans will be like the angels, an interpretation of Matthew 22:30 in light of Galatians 3:28. The transformation of gender will also remove the possibility of peculiarly womanly beguilements and so this weakness inherent to creation will be overcome.[141]

As with *DI* 20, Athanasius underlines how different this existence will be, in this case by joining 2 Corinthians 5:17 and 1 Corinthians 15:28 to his citations from Matthew and Galatians. The end, or transformation, of gender involves a new creation where Christ is 'all in all'. The unification with the Word effects the unification with God and ensures the new creation: unity with one automatically results in unity with the other. It also rests upon the Word's divinity because of his relationship with the

[141] A similar point is made by the material on Satan's defeat, who is identified with the serpent in the garden.

Father; something implicitly indicated when Athanasius changes θεος in 1 Corinthians 15:28 for Χριστός, thus making Paul's final eschatological vision, of God being all in all, more Christocentric. This shift is suggestive of the Word's deity, an integral element in Athanasius' Pauline-inspired vision of a new creation with neither male nor female, and hence no external threats. Not only the human person, but the structures of human existence will be transformed by the atonement in order to remove weaknesses inherent in the beginning.[142]

This inclusion of factors external to the human person in Athanasius' vision of the atonement is consistent with his engagement in externalizing some elements of the human person that need to be addressed. When the situation suits his argument, he is prepared to use analogies that externalize a bodily dynamic such as corruption:

> καὶ ὡς συνὼν δὲ διὰ τοῦ ὁμοίου τοῖς πᾶσιν ὁ ἄφθαρτος τοῦ Θεοῦ Υἱὸς εἰκότως τοὺς πάντας ἐνέδυσεν ἀφθαρσίαν ἐν τῇ περὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως ἐπαγγελίᾳ. Καὶ αὐτὴ γὰρ ἡ ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ φθορὰ κατὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων οὐκέτι χώραν ἔχει διὰ τὸν ἐνοικήσαντα Λόγον ἐν τούτοις διὰ τοῦ ἑνὸς σώματος. Καὶ ὥσπερ μεγάλου βασιλέως εἰσελθόντος εἴς τινα πόλιν μεγάλην καὶ οἰκήσαντος εἰς μίαν τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ οἰκιῶν, πάντως ἡ τοιαύτη πόλις τιμῆς πολλῆς καταξιοῦται, καὶ οὐκέτι τις ἐχθρὸς αὐτὴν οὔτε λῃστὴς ἐπιβαίνων καταστρέφει, πάσης δὲ μᾶλλον ἐπιμελείας ἀξιοῦται διὰ τὸν εἰς μίαν αὐτῆς οἰκίαν οἰκήσαντα βασιλέα· οὕτως καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ πάντων βασιλέως γέγονεν. Ἐλθόντος γὰρ αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν ἡμετέραν χώραν, καὶ οἰκήσαντος εἰς ἓν τῶν ὁμοίων σῶμα, λοιπὸν πᾶσα ἡ κατὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων παρὰ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἐπιβουλὴ πέπαυται, καὶ ἡ τοῦ θανάτου ἠφάνισται φθορὰ ἡ πάλαι κατ' αὐτῶν ἰσχύουσα. Παραπωλώλει γὰρ ἂν τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος, εἰ μὴ ὁ πάντων Δεσπότης καὶ Σωτὴρ τοῦ Θεοῦ Υἱὸς παρεγεγόνει πρὸς τὸ τοῦ θανάτου τέλος.[143]

[142] Anatolios, *Coherence,* 132 notes that the incarnation and the divinization it effects is a stage beyond what existed in the Garden. In commenting on this passage Pettersen draws attention primarily to the way in which the atonement reverses the consequences of the fall, but does note that prelapsarian man was correct to fear death whereas redeemed man no longer does, which is indicative that he also sees this extract as indicating a transition to a post-redemptive situation different from the prelapsarian one, and not simply an undoing of the fall. Alvyn Pettersen, *Athanasius* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995), 95 *C.f.* page 104 where this aspect of Athanasius' thought is explained more fully.

[143] *DI* 9.13-26

The analogy is of a city under threat from enemies, λῃστὴς ἐπιβαίνων καταστρέφει. Athanasius distinguishes ἡ κατὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων παρὰ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἐπιβουλὴ from ἡ τοῦ θανάτου ἠφάνισται φθορὰ and this distinction is reinforced by his use of two different verbs to describe how these two different 'entities' are overturned. This could be indicative that Athanasius' analogy of the enemies is not concerned with death and corruption, but dangers less intrinsic to the body's nature. Nonetheless, the context suggests otherwise. Athanasius begins this section by introducing the claim that the Son of God imbued incorruption (in this case "in the promise of the resurrection"), and follows it with the statement that 'even the corruption in death itself' (Καὶ αὐτὴ γὰρ ἡ ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ φθορὰ) has no place among human beings. The analogy then immediately follows this, and the extract concludes with humanity's certain death if the Son had not 'come for the end of death'. Taking this 'framing' into account, the more probable explanation is that the analogy of the king inhabiting the city and the enemies of the city ceasing their opposition is primarily intended to explain how the Son's incarnation addresses death and corruption, and that the singular mention of ἡ κατὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων παρὰ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἐπιβουλὴ is due to the serendipitous appearance of the term 'enemies' in the analogy combined with Athanasius' apparent tendency to make brief mentions of other aspects of the atonement when discussing a particular major theme. Death and corruption in death is therefore characterized here as an enemy that destructively occupies human beings, and not simply an inherent aspect of creaturely nature that asserts itself when humanity turns away from participation in the knowledge of God.[144]

[144] Pettersen, *Athanasius*, 104 includes a section from this extract as evidence that the atonement improves humanity's state, which is suggestive of a different reading of this part of *DI*. However, he is not forthcoming as to his reasons for this interpretive step.

This is not the only unusual note struck in this extract. Athanasius' argument in the analogy revolves around the king's status. The king inhabits a house within a city, and enemies of the city cease their attacks due to the regard in which the king is held—in Athanasius' words, πάσης δὲ μᾶλλον ἐπιμελείας ἀξιοῦται. The argument here depends upon issues of how things are regarded (ἐπιμελείας), rather than their inherent nature. The king is held in honour, which transfers to the city within which he occupies a single dwelling. While this reflects Athanasius' concern with transfer as a fundamental category for how the atonement functions, it is not a transfer of properties proper to a nature, but more extrinsic, how people are regarded. While this external focus is not a dominant feature of how Athanasius treats 'ontological' categories such as corruption and mortality, it is worth noting here for its contribution to the question of how Athanasius intends more 'forensic' language regarding the atonement, yet to be discussed here. Athanasius is capable of describing even the obliteration of corruption and death in terms of the honour in which parties are regarded, an honour capable of transferrence.

Nonetheless, while the analogy invites such an observation, Athanasius begins this extract by making it clear that this aspect of the atonement functions on more ontological grounds: ὁ ἄφθαρτος τοῦ Θεοῦ Υἱὸς εἰκότως τοὺς πάντας ἐνέδυσεν ἀφθαρσίαν. It is the Son's quality of being incorruptible that enables him to grant, 'reasonably' or 'naturally', incorruptibility to others, and so end death and corruption.[145] The analogy of honour being transferred notwithstanding, the

[145] See also the brief discussion by Laurence William Grensted, *A Short History of the Doctrine of the Atonement,* (Manchester: University Press, 1920), 76-77.

atonement here is still grounded in a quality being shared with human beings that the Son has by virtue of his deity.

The other distinctive feature of this extract is the manner of the interaction of the one and the many. In his analogy Athanasius seems to portray the atonement's effects as occurring simultaneously between Christ and believers. This is because, in the analogy, the king and the inhabitants are both members of a greater entity, the city. The king entering and dwelling in a house would appear to be analogous to the Word appropriating a human body, and hence the status of the Word is applied to people dwelling in similar 'houses' nearby. But this transfer takes place through the mediation of another element, the city. It is the city which is treated differently because the king inhabits one building within it and this different treatment encompasses the inhabitants within it. What the city is intended to symbolise in the analogy is not explicitly stated, and it could be argued that it is not intended to refer to anything. However, Athanasius' analogy appears to function almost as an allegory, with equivalents for most of the items in the narrative. Hence, it seems probable that the city in the analogy represents τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος, which would in turn suggest that his statement that the race of humankind would have perished reflected his characteristically strongly realist view of abstract concepts. In some sense for Athanasius τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος has an existence in its own right, and not simply through the existence of the individual humans that comprise it. As it is possible for the race to perish, it is also possible for the race to be saved from death and—at least in this extract—it would appear that individual humans are saved through the salvation of the race. What takes place for the body of Christ, as one part of the race

(or one household in the city) automatically applies to the race (or city), and from there it affects the individuals included within that greater entity's compass.[146]

This implies an almost instantaneous salvation of people when Christ takes on a human body.[147] The effect of the presence of the king in the household, at least in the analogy, would almost immediately apply to the city and thus the city's inhabitants. Christ's incarnation similarly could be conceived as effecting salvation for the human race and particular human beings at the incarnation. At least in this case, there is a hint in the extract that Athanasius conceives of the atonement's effects in a more chronologically complex form than this, with his reference to the bestowal of incorruption occurring 'in the promise of the resurrection'. While this is not discussed again, it raises the possibility that, for all the analogy's implicit suggestion of the contemporaneous effect of the incarnation, the atonement effected there only bestows incorruption when someone partakes of the promise of resurrection. It is, however, not until we turn to *CA* 2 that a more expansive treatment of the chronological sequence is discussed:

> Εἰ γὰρ καὶ μεθ' ἡμᾶς δι' ἡμᾶς γέγονεν ἄνθρωπος, καὶ ἀδελφὸς ἡμῶν διὰ τὴν τοῦ σώματος ὁμοίωσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τούτῳ πρωτότοκος λέγεται καὶ ἔστιν ἡμῶν, ἐπειδὴ, πάντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀπολλυμένων κατὰ τὴν παράβασιν τοῦ Ἀδὰμ, πρώτη τῶν ἄλλων ἐσώθη καὶ ἠλευθερώθη ἡ ἐκείνου σὰρξ, ὡς αὐτοῦ τοῦ Λόγου σῶμα γενομένη, καὶ λοιπὸν ἡμεῖς, ὡς σύσσωμοι τυγχάνοντες, κατ' ἐκεῖνο σωζόμεθα. Ἐν ἐκείνῳ γὰρ ἡμῶν καὶ ὁδηγὸς ὁ Κύριος εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν

[146] The reading of this passage by Anatolios similarly stresses the importance of the house in the analogy as indicating that what Christ assumes is a particular human body, and not simply human nature in the abstract. However, he passes over the role of the city in the analogy and the implications it might have for Athanasius' thought as a whole in favour of stressing the Word's taking on 'a singular instance of human reality' 'which makes him accessible to relation with other human beings' in contrast to 'the Word uniting himself with the totality of human nature'. Khaled Anatolios, "Athanasius's Christology Today: the Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ" in *On the Incarnation"* in *The Shadow of the Incarnation. Essays on Jesus Christ in the Early Church in Honor of Brian E. Daley, SJ ed. P. Martens* (University of Notre Dame: Notre Dame, 2008), 29-49, page 34.

[147] Young, *Nicaea*, 63 notes that there are many passages by Athanasius that imply that human nature as a whole is restored automatically by the incarnation.

> τῶν οὐρανῶν, καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ Πατέρα γίνεται, λέγων· *Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ θύρα, καὶ δι᾽ ἐμοῦ δεῖ πάντας εἰσελθεῖν*. Ὅθεν καὶ πρωτότοκος λέγεται πάλιν ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, οὐχ ὅτι πρῶτος ἡμῶν ἀπέθανε· προετεθνήκειμεν γὰρ ἡμεῖς· ἀλλ᾽ ὅτι τὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀναδεξάμενος θάνατον, καὶ τοῦτον καταργήσας, ἀνέστη πρῶτος, ὡς ἄνθρωπος, ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀναστήσας τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σῶμα. Λοιπὸν γὰρ ἀναστάντος ἐκείνου, καθεξῆς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀπ᾽ ἐκείνου καὶ δι᾽ ἐκεῖνον ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν ἐγειρόμεθα. [148]

As with the previous extract, Athanasius considers the atonement to hinge on the similarity between Christ's body and our bodies. It is this which constitutes Christ as a man and makes him a brother to human beings; which ensures that the atonement's effects are communicated to other humans. It is because human persons participate in Christ's body through shared humanity that salvation comes to them, σύσσωμοι τυγχάνοντες, κατ᾽ ἐκεῖνο σωζόμεθα. However, in this instance there is no mention of a mediating entity, such as the human race, which stands between what happens to Christ's body and to human beings in general, the effect transfers more directly through the similarity of the bodies alone.

This pattern also holds with regard to the resurrection. As Athanasius observes in the extract, Christ is the first to be raised:

> πρώτη τῶν ἄλλων ἐσώθη καὶ ἠλευθερώθη ἡ ἐκείνου σὰρξ, ὡς αὐτοῦ τοῦ Λόγου σῶμα γενομένη τὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀναδεξάμενος θάνατον, καὶ τοῦτον καταργήσας, ἀνέστη πρῶτος, ὡς ἄνθρωπος, ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀναστήσας τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σῶμα.

Jesus was raised first because his body was the body of the Word himself. The implication here is similar to the themes already observed: the properties of the Word

[148] *CA 2* 61.3.3-4.7

are the ground for the atonement, and hence Christ's body—as the thing in closest proximity to the Word—is raised first.

When this is compared to the second phrase above, some sense of why this is the case can be observed. Athanasius links Christ's resurrection with the abolition of death, envisaging a three-step process. First, Christ takes death to himself on behalf of 'we' who were lost by Adam's transgression. Second, he abolishes it, with the participle form indicating that ἀναδεξάμενος and καταργήσας are functioning as background for the finite verb ἀνέστη. This leads to the third step in a (probable) chronological sequence: the raising by Christ of his body, which is (like the taking of death to himself) explained as being ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν. While death has already been abolished prior to the resurrection of Christ's body, the resurrection has its own salvific effect for human beings: dealing with death and giving life to the body are being conceptualized as two different steps. This salvific effect of Christ's resurrection is then the subject of the final sentence, indicated by the use of Λοιπὸν to imply that what is being described is the state of affairs existing since Christ's resurrection, and hence by inference, because of it. This is reinforced by the two prepositional clauses ἀπ' ἐκείνου καὶ δι' ἐκεῖνον, with their statement of a two-fold causal relationship between Christ's resurrection and 'our' resurrection. The resurrection of human beings more generally comes from the resurrection of Christ and so occurs because he was raised.

Athanasius does not see the resurrection simply as a sign that the atonement has occurred—though he does speak that way elsewhere. Here Christ's resurrection causes the resurrection of believers. Christ raised his body ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν —and the resurrection of that body formed the basis for the resurrection of all other bodies. He

took death upon himself, abolished it and, having done that, then raised his body first, before that of others. Christ's resurrection comes first; its impact on others follows later—a point Athanasius makes explicit by his use of καθεξῆς.

The Gift of the Spirit

It is not until Athanasius turns his attention to the Spirit, a theme almost absent from the dual work *CG/DI* that we are given some insight into the chronological order just described.

> «ὁ γὰρ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο», ἵνα καὶ προσενέγκῃ τοῦτο ὑπὲρ πάντων καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ μεταλαβόντες θεοποιηθῆναι δυνηθῶμεν ἄλλως οὐκ ἂν τούτου τυχόντες, εἰ μὴ τὸ κτιστὸν ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἐνεδύσατο σῶμα· οὕτω γὰρ καὶ ἄνθρωποι θεοῦ λοιπὸν καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἄνθρωποι χρηματίζειν ἠρξάμεθα. ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς τὸ πνεῦμα λαμβάνοντες οὐκ ἀπόλλυμεν τὴν ἰδίαν ἑαυτῶν οὐσίαν, οὕτως ὁ κύριος γενόμενος δι' ἡμᾶς ἄνθρωπος καὶ σῶμα φορέσας οὐδὲν ἧττον ἦν θεός· οὐ γὰρ ἠλαττοῦτο τῇ περιβολῇ τοῦ σώματος, ἀλλὰ καὶ μᾶλλον ἐθεοποιεῖτο τοῦτο καὶ ἀθάνατον ἀπετέλει.[149]

Athanasius' mention of ἡμεῖς τὸ πνεῦμα λαμβάνοντες indicates that this participation is in the Spirit. The present tense participle form is most likely intended to indicate a temporal framework for the present tense finite verb ἀπόλλυμεν. The present, imperfective, tense of both words in this context suggests that the activities described are to be understood as on-going, not as completed. This in turn implies that the partaking by Christians of the Spirit, and the preservation of the creaturely nature, were not completed actions in events involving Christ's body. They occurred at a later point in time.

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[149] *De Decretis* 14.4.2-5.3

This can also be observed in Athanasius' conclusion to this extract. He notes that 'the Lord' deified the body when he became a man and wore the body, indicating that Christ's body was deified by the incarnation, while having previously linked his and his readers' deification to their participation in the Spirit. Hence, while the focus of Athanasius' language is on the change that has occurred as a consequence of of the incarnation (the use of λοιπὸν indicating that Christians only have the identity of being 'people of God' and 'people in Christ' with the incarnation of 'the Lord'), he also indicates that this is appropriated by people at a later stage, with the Spirit as the mediating step.[150]

While participation in the Spirit is a subsequent stage in the atonement's outworking, it is not simply a mechanism distinct from the atonement itself. Athanasius argues that when people receive the incarnation-elucidating Spirit, they are deified but remain fundamentally human, οὐκ ἀπόλλυμεν τὴν ἰδίαν ἑαυτῶν οὐσίαν. He then claims that the Son was not lessened by inhabiting a body is similar to this. The atoning act of the Son becoming man which brings immortality, is explained in terms of participation in the Spirit. In both cases deification is effected, in one case in Christ's body and the other people in general. The participation of the Spirit and incarnation are mirror images of one another on at least one axis.

Yet the deification of Christ's body and the deification of people raise different problems. In the case of the Son's incarnation, the question is how he becomes a man

[150] Noted by Young, *Nicaea*, 63, who mentions this alongside the various passages in Athanasius which suggest that the incarnation is automatically efficacious on humanity as a whole.

and yet remains no less God. In the case of the participation of the Spirit the issue is how people become gods and yet remain human. The incarnation is not merely a precondition for the atonement, nor is it simply the way in which the atonement is effected, it is the paradigm for how the atonement works. Inherent in Athanasius' response to these questions is something akin to what would later be described in the Western tradition as the *communicatio idiomatum*. Here it indicates that this aspect of the atonement means participating in the deity that the Son has *as* Son.[151]

There are more connections between the Spirit and the atonement than this, however. In various ways, Athanasius ties the Spirit to what Christ has done in becoming a man, and argues that this is an outworking of the Son's particular position:

> ὁ δὲ Σωτὴρ τὸ ἔμπαλιν Θεὸς ὢν καὶ τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Πατρὸς ἀεὶ βασιλεύων, τοῦ τε Πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου χορηγὸς ὢν αὐτὸς, ὅμως δὲ λέγεται νῦν χρίεσθαι, ἵνα πάλιν, ὡς ἄνθρωπος λεγόμενος τῷ Πνεύματι χρίεσθαι, ἡμῖν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, καθάπερ τὸ ὑψωθῆναι καὶ τὸ ἀναστῆναι, οὕτως καὶ τὴν τοῦ Πνεύματος ἐνοίκησιν καὶ οἰκειότητα κατασκευάσῃ.[152]

Athanasius draws attention to Christ's two-fold relationship with the Spirit. He is the giver of the Spirit and was anointed 'as a man' with the Spirit. The idea of being the Spirit's giver is probably linked to being the one who exalts and raises, for the two arguments appear to run in parallel. In the first, Christ is the giver of the Spirit and this is the reason (ὅμως) why he is said to be anointed. In the second Christ is the one who exalts and raises—and this is the reason (οὕτως) why he is the one who establishes a new relationship between humanity and the Spirit. Here again,

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[151] See also Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 172-74
[152] *CA 1* 46.5.3-7

participation in the Spirit is the way humanity is deified, which would certainly have conceptual overlap with human exaltation. Thus it would appear that Athanasius is here speaking of similar aspect of the atonement under two different categories: giving of the Spirit and exaltation/raising. This in turn implies that Christ's being anointed 'for us humans' (ἡμῖν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις) is connected to his work of effecting 'the indwelling and affinity of the Spirit', and most likely, that it is the way in which that was accomplished—similar to the gift of incorruption, Christ effected the indwelling and affinity of the Spirit in his own humanity first by being anointed with the Spirit as a man: only then does it become a possibility for others.[153] Implicitly in this extract, Christ's identity as God and the eternal ruler of the Father's kingdom stands behind his ability to give the Spirit, and that in turn is the reason why it is he who establishes affinity between the Spirit and humanity.

This link is made explicit in *CA* 1.49:

> Ἐπειδὴ Θεὸς εἶ καὶ βασιλεὺς, *διὰ τοῦτο* καὶ ἐχρίσθης· ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ ἄλλου ἦν συνάψαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον τῷ Πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ, ἢ σοῦ τῆς εἰκόνος τοῦ Πατρὸς, καθ' ἣν καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς γεγόναμεν· σοῦ γάρ ἐστι καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα. Τῶν μὲν γὰρ γενητῶν ἡ φύσις οὐκ ἦν ἀξιόπιστος εἰς τοῦτο, ἀγγέλων μὲν παραβάντων, ἀνθρώπων δὲ παρακουσάντων. Διὰ τοῦτο Θεοῦ χρεία ἦν, (Θεὸς δέ ἐστιν ὁ Λόγος·) ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ κατάραν γενομένους αὐτὸς ἐλευθερώσῃ.[154]

By using both Ἐπειδὴ and διὰ τοῦτο Athanasius almost redundantly indicates that the Word was anointed because of his identity as God and King. However, this is not the only reason he offers here. Athanasius also notes as justification that the Spirit is the Word's, and that the Image by which humanity was originally made is also the Word's. This double use of σοῦ in stating the grounds for the unique ability of the Word to undertake this is significant as it adds a relational or possessive aspect to the

[153] So also Greensted, *Atonement,* 77 footnote 2, Dragas, *Athanasius,* 51; Widdicombe, *Fatherhood,* 226-7; Leithart, *Athanasius,* 157; Anatolios, *Coherence,* 159
[154] *CA 1* 49.2.3-4.2

Word's qualifications. It is not simply the Word's position as king, but the nature of the relationship between him and the Spirit whereby the Spirit can be spoken of as belonging to him that uniquely qualifies the Word to be anointed by the Spirit. Similarly, it is his relationship with the Image, where the Image can be described as belonging to him, which qualifies the Word alone to be anointed by Spirit.[155]

This relationship between the Word, Spirit and the Image reflects what the Word does in this extract particularly, συνάψαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον τῷ Πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ. The idea that atonement involves a unification between humanity and the Holy Spirit effected by the Word: anointing with the Spirit is synonymous with the indwelling and affinity of the Holy Spirit from the previous extract. This Irenaean idea that the incarnation establishes a fundamental alignment between the Holy Spirit and humanity within Christ is linked to this highlighting of the Word's 'possession' of the Spirit and the Image. As both the Spirit and the Image are identified as 'belonging' to the Word, a unity between the two would most naturally—indeed from Athanasius' language, *can only*—be established by the Word.

Meanwhile, in the immediate context, Athanasius offers an insight on why it is the Word in particular who is able to effect this dimension of the atonement. The link just described between the Word and the Spirit also exists in his theology between the Father and the Spirit; but the same interchangeablility is not true of Image. This raises

[155] This incidentally indicates Athanasius' flexibility in how he describes aspects of his theology. It is more characteristic of Athanasius' approach to describe the Word as being the Image, as though 'Image' names the Word. Nonetheless here Athanasius can speak as though 'Image' is something the Word has, in which the relationship between it and the Word can be sufficiently expressed by the use of the genitive case. At least in this instance the Word 'has' the Image rather than 'is' Image.

the question of whether the Father, or even the Spirit, would have been able to do what the Word does. 'Image', for Athanasius, is especially related to the Word; indeed for Athanasius' 'Image' is often an alternative name for the Word, similar to that of 'Son'. While the relationship between 'Image' and the Father could be described with the term σοῦ by Athanasius, it is arguable that this would be expressed differently by Athanasius. In this extract the Image is proper to the Father, while the property 'Image' belongs particularly to the Son. Thus, Athanasius' appeal to the relationship between the Image and the Word in this section implicitly suggests that it was the properties unique to the Son— being the Image according to whom humankind was originally created—that were required to establish unity between the Spirit and humanity.[156] The unification between the Spirit and humanity required him to be God and King so as to be able to exalt and raise people. It also required him to be closely identified with both the Spirit and the Image.

It also suggests another significant implication. If the gift of the Spirit is part of the theme of divinization as we have observed, and yet is only made possible because the Image in which humanity was created belongs to the Word, this suggests that the theme of the restoration of the Image is also connected to the concept of divinization. While the issue of the restoration of the Image will be treated in the following chapter, its appearance in this context requires some comments.

In Athanasius' anthropology, the distinctive feature of humanity is that it has been granted 'further grace' and has received an element of the Word's power. Such language suggests that conceptually—even though Athanasius does not use this form

[156] Similarly Dragas, *Athanasius,* 45 although he does not address the question of whether this applies to the Word in comparison to the Father and the Spirit or only in relation to creatures.

of words—humanity was significantly 'divinized' in its creation. In some sense humanity was created with an ability to participate in realities that transcended creaturely nature.

The appearance of 'Image' here supports this pattern. God does not 'merely' abolish corruption and death, or replacing humanity's creaturely mortality with incorruptibility and immortality. He divinises humanity by reforming the image in the human person through unification with the Spirit. While the image in humanity is an essentially Christological activity, it also has significant, if relatively unexplored in Athanasius' writings, pneumatological dimensions.

There is also a pneumatological dimension to another aspect of Athanasius' discussion of divinization, that of adoption:

> Εἰκότως ἄρα, δούλων ἡμῶν ὄντων, ὅτε γέγονεν ὡς ἡμεῖς, Κύριοι τὸν Πατέρα καλεῖ καὶ αὐτὸς, ὡς ἡμεῖς· καὶ τοῦτο δὲ φιλανθρωπευόμενος οὕτω πεποίηκεν, ἵνα καὶ ἡμεῖς, δοῦλοι κατὰ φύσιν ὄντες, καὶ δεξάμενοι τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ Υἱοῦ, θαῤῥήσωμεν τὸν φύσει Κύριον ἑαυτῶν, τοῦτον τῇ χάριτι Πατέρα καλεῖν.[157]

On view here are the limits of human divinization. While God is 'Lord' and we are 'slaves' by virtue of nature, the atonement makes God our Father. Yet for Athanasius 'Father' is pre-eminently about God's relationship to his Word. The idea is linked to the fact that the Father is eternally the origin and source of the Son—the reason why the Son has the same qualities as the Father (except 'fatherhood' itself).

[157] *CA 2* 51.1.2-6

Because of this primary association, Athanasius is concerned to carefully qualify the sense in which God becomes the Father of human beings, so as to remove from it these more ontological implications.

One way he does this in this extract is to contrast God being humanity's Lord 'by nature' and Father 'by grace'.[158] In becoming a man, Christ takes on a human relationship with his Father, and so calls him 'Lord'. This occurred, argues Athanasius, because it enabled (ἵνα) human beings to then call God 'Father'. Significantly for our purpose, Athanasius notes that it is the reception of the Spirit that enables humans to call God 'Father'. It is when human beings receive the Spirit that they enter into a relationship with God that is analogous to that of the Son—and this is only made possible because the Son has already taken on a human relationship with the Father.

In the passage just mentioned, Athanasius draws an especially close relationship between the Spirit and the Son, identifying the Spirit as the 'Spirit of the Son' rather than simply 'the Spirit', or even 'the Spirit of God'. This interconnection between the Spirit and the Son, and its significance for divinization, is developed further in *CA* 2.59:

> Αὕτη δὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ φιλανθρωπία ἐστὶν, ὅτι ὧν ἐστι ποιητὴς, τούτων καὶ πατὴρ κατὰ χάριν ὕστερον γίνεται· γίνεται δὲ, ὅταν οἱ κτισθέντες ἄνθρωποι, ὡς εἶπεν ὁ Ἀπόστολος, λάβωσιν εἰς τὰς καρδίας ἑαυτῶν τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῦ Υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ κρᾶζον, *Ἀββᾶ, ὁ Πατήρ*. Οὗτοι δέ εἰσιν ὅσοι, δεξάμενοι τὸν Λόγον, ἔλαβον ἐξουσίαν παρ' αὐτοῦ τέκνα Θεοῦ γενέσθαι· ἄλλως γὰρ οὐκ ἂν γένοιντο υἱοὶ, ὄντες φύσει κτίσματα, εἰ μὴ τοῦ ὄντος φύσει καὶ ἀληθινοῦ Υἱοῦ τὸ

[158] Anatolios, *Coherence,* 134-38 has a noteworthy discussion of this aspect of Athanasius' thought, although in his treatment here he does not focus attention on the links with the pneumatological dimension of his thought to the same degree as this study. See also Pettersen, *Athanasius*, 105-106.

> Πνεῦμα ὑποδέξονται. Διὸ, ἵνα τοῦτο γένηται, ὁ Λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, ἵνα τὸν ἄνθρωπον δεκτικὸν θεότητος ποιήσῃ.[159]

Here we see the same concerns that we have already observed: God 'is' Creator and becomes Father by grace. This occurs, not when the Son becomes man, but when people receive the Spirit, who is again identified by his relationship with the Son, τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῦ Υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ.

This later point is made even more explicitly than earlier sections with Athanasius' Διὸ, ἵνα τοῦτο γένηται, ὁ Λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο. Here, Athanasius explains that the Word became flesh in order to enable people to receive him/receive the Spirit. The subjunctive case for γένηται indicates that what is on view is a possibility that will exist as a consequence of the Word becoming flesh, and this is most naturally understood as referring to something that occurs posterior in time to the Word's enfleshment, and hence is not contemporaneous with it. Such an understanding would be better represented in this situation by a verb in a perfective aspect. Nonetheless, as we have observed to date, the Son makes this reception possible by his becoming flesh: ἵνα τοῦτο γένηται, ὁ Λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, where τοῦτο refers to people becoming sons through the reception of the Spirit.

The new feature involves Athanasius' intertextual interpretation of Galatians 4:6 and John 1:12. Athanasius reads these two Scriptures in light of each other, probably because both pertain to how people become sons (υἱοὶ) of God (in the language of Galatians) or children (τέκνα) of God (in Johannine parlance).

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[159] *CA 2* 59.3.1-4.3

Interestingly, Athanasius appears to disregard some of the immediate context of the Galatians passage. Paul makes it clear at the beginning of verse six that believers are already sons, and that this is the reason why God sends the Spirit into their hearts, ὀτι δε έστε ὐιοι. Nonetheless, in John 1:12, 'receiving' the Son appears to be the precondition for acquiring the authority or power to become children of God—and this informs how Athanasius reads both the sequence and vocabulary of the Galatians passage. Galatians 4:12's reference to God 'pouring' (έξαπεστειλεν) is exchanged for John 1:12's 'receiving' (λάβωσιν). On the other side, Galatians terminology of 'Son' to describe Christ is used when Athanasius alludes to John 1:12, even though 'Word' is preferred there.

Throughout, it seems that Athanasius sees the reception of the Spirit of the Son, and the reception of the Son/Word as two aspects of the same event, either occurring symmetrically in the one act, or the reception of the Word occuring through the reception of the Spirit. Athanasius explains what this entails in the Johannine categories, suggestive that this theme is an aspect of Athanasius' doctrine of divinization. Athanasius argues that people are given authority, or power (ἐξουσίαν), and that they would not become children of God without this, as they are creatures 'by nature'. This argument that a creaturely nature forms a barrier to being a child of God is reinforced by Athanasius' statement that it is only by receiving the Son that the problem is resolved especially with his descriptor τοῦ ὄντος φύσει καὶ ἀληθινοῦ for the Son.

This emphasis on the Son's genuine sonship by nature—and that as the reason why reception of him authorises people to become God's children—underlines the idea that becoming God's children is not merely a change in relationship, or status, externally considered. Given Athanasius' view on the Word's sonship, such language must have ontological considerations. Hence, the language of becoming children of God indicates that people transcend their nature.

This is further confirmed by Athanasius' final clause in this extract: ἵνα τὸν ἄνθρωπον δεκτικὸν θεότητος ποιήσῃ. Coming as it does after Διὸ, ἵνα at the beginning of the sentence which indicates that the Son became flesh so that 'this' may come to pass, and 'this' would appear to be a reference to people becoming sons/children through the reception of the Spirit/Son, this statement implies that the Son's enfleshment to enable human beings to become capable of divinity is best understand as a recapitulation of the argument to this point. One can say that the Son took on flesh in order that people might receive the Spirit and so become sons of God. Or one can say that he did it in order that people might become capable of divinity. Both statements have such a large semantic overlap that they are able to function as synonyms.[160] From this it should be clear that becoming sons is, for Athanasius, a way of speaking of divinization and so transcending humanity's natural mortality. It occurs when the Spirit is received, but that reception was only made possible when the Son was humanly anointed and so established unification between the Spirit and the human race.[161]

[160] Russell, *Deification,* 175, "Adoption is synonymous with deification."
[161] Similarly Dragas, *Athanasius,* 45 who notes that people are the offspring of God due to their association with the Son by the Spirit and Widdicombe, *Fatherhood,* 236-7 which is embedded in an extended discussion on adoption and on the Spirit.

Further support for this can be observed in that this language of unification between the Spirit and humanity parallels Athanasius' language of unification between humanity and God:

> Πάλιν τε εἰ κτίσμα ἦν ὁ Υἱὸς, ἔμενεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος οὐδὲν ἧττον θνητὸς, μὴ συναπτόμενος τῷΘεῷ· οὐ γὰρ κτίσμα συνῆπτε τὰ κτίσματα τῷΘεῷ, ζητοῦν καὶ αὐτὸ τὸν συνάπτοντα.[162]

> οὕτως οὐκ ἂν ἐθεοποιήθη ὁ ἄνθρωπος, εἰ μὴ φύσει ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ ἀληθινὸς καὶ ἴδιος αὐτοῦ ἦν ὁ Λόγος, ὁ γενόμενος σάρξ. Διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ τοιαύτη γέγονεν ἡ συναφὴ, ἵνα τῷ κατὰ φύσιν τῆς θεότητος συνάψῃ τὸν φύσει ἄνθρωπον, καὶ βεβαία γένηται ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ θεοποίησις αὐτοῦ.[163]

In these two closely located extracts from *CA* 2 Athanasius makes the link from people's unity with the Son or Word to their unity with God: to be united to the Word is to be united to God.[164] As with the unification between the Spirit and humanity, this unification occurs in the incarnation, the point at which the Word unites what is human by nature to what accords to the nature of deity. This is required for humanity to transcend its mortality as shown by Athanasius' hypothetical 'humanity remained no less mortal' as the alternative to being 'united to God', and is completely dependent upon the Son's own standing as a member of the Godhead.

The divinization that Athanasius has in mind thus follows the incarnation of the Word: the union that exists between the Word and his flesh is of the same basic kind

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[162] *CA 2* 69.1.1-3

[163] *CA 2* 70.2.3-6; see also the commentary by Russell, *Deification*, 172

[164] This is a particularly significant aspect of Athanasius' thought. Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, 226 lists communion with God along with the gift of incorruption as the two constitutive elements of divinization in Athanasius. Anatolios, *Coherence*, 126, 129, 130-31 notes that for Athanasius salvation is fundamentally participation in the Father, a new degree of internality of relationship with God, rather than the gift of a status or a thing.

as the union that exists between human beings and God.[165] This is made explicit in his statement Διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ τοιαύτη γέγονεν ἡ συναφὴ, ἵνα τῷ κατὰ φύσιν τῆς θεότητος συνάψῃ τὸν φύσει ἄνθρωπον, where 'the union' in the first clause is a reference to Christ's incarnation (and the unification of the Son with humanity effected thereby), and the ἵνα points shows that that union was designed to accomplish a similar union between human realities and those which are according to the nature of the Godhead. This reflects concerns previously discussed in this aspect of the atonement, that the Word's nature due to his relationship with the Father is the ground for the atonement, and that the atonement is effected by the Word's taking on of humanity.

Securing the Gift

The new feature is Athanasius' claim at the end of the second extract, that the union between God and humanity that occurred in the incarnation not only effected a more general union between the things proper to human nature and those proper to God's nature, but also βεβαία γένηται ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ θεοποίησις αὐτοῦ. Here Athanasius' concern shifts from the method of divinization to its security, with the claim that the union occurring in the incarnation makes people's salvation and divinization certain.

This concern with the way in which divinization ensures the permanence and security of salvation is a feature of Athanasius' writings, and is one of the issues that he expounds at some length in various locations:

> Οὐ γὰρ χρείαν ἔχων, ὅμως αὐτὸς ὡς εἰληφὼς λέγεται ἅπερ ἐλάμβανεν ἀνθρωπίνως· ἵνα πάλιν, ὡς τοῦ Κυρίου λαβόντος, καὶ ὡς εἰς αὐτὸν ἀναπαυομένης τῆς δόσεως, βεβαία ἡ χάρις διαμείνῃ. Ἄνθρωπος μὲν γὰρ μόνος

[165] See also Russell, *Deification,* 174

> λαμβάνων δυνατὸν ἔχει καὶ τὸ ἀφαιρεθῆναι· καὶ τοῦτο ἐπὶ τοῦ Ἀδὰμ ἐδείχθη· λαβὼν γὰρ ἀπώλεσεν. Ἵνα δὲ ἀναφαίρετος ἡ χάρις γένηται, καὶ βεβαία φυλαχθῇ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, διὰ τοῦτο αὐτὸς ἰδιοποιεῖται τὴν δόσιν, καὶ λέγει ἐξουσίαν εἰληφέναι, ὡς ἄνθρωπος, ἣν ἀεὶ ἔχει ὡς Θεός· καὶ λέγει, *Δόξασόν με,* ὁ ἄλλους δοξάζων, ἵνα δείξῃ, ὅτι σάρκα χρῄζουσαν ἔχει τούτων. Διὸ κἀκείνης λαβούσης, ἐπειδὴ ἡ λαβοῦσα ἐν αὐτῷ ἐστι, καὶ προσλαβὼν αὐτὴν ἄνθρωπος γέγονεν, ὡς αὐτὸς εἰληφὼς λέγεται.[166]

Athanasius introduces an idea implicit in earlier extracts: that Jesus receives humanly the things of which he had no need because they were what 'he has eternally as God'. The reason for this arrangement is to make the gift of grace secure. Athanasius observes that when a 'mere human' (Ἄνθρωπος…μόνος) is given grace there remains the possibility that the gift will be lost. He then appeals to the example of Adam to demonstrate this. His implicit conclusion is that there could only ever be a contingent and potentially temporary salvation if salvation came simply through a direct gift to human beings as occurred originally with creation. This is similar to the argument that he offers in *DI* 14 regarding how the loss of the image has demonstrated creation's insufficiency for converting people to the knowledge of God. Athanasius appeals to what has occurred in the overarching biblical narrative to derive conclusions about what must necessarily occur. The narratives for him are heuristic and paradigmatic, not simply individual contingent events which disclose nothing about the fundamental nature of things. From this Athanasius derives his rationale for the need of the incarnation. By the Word becoming a man, and as a man receiving what he already had and always will have, the gift becomes secure. The gift is now lodged in Christ (εἰς αὐτὸν ἀναπαυομένης τῆς δόσεως), an idea that Athanasius contrasts elsewhere as the gift from without, which was how Adam received the gift of the image. The Word cannot lose what he eternally has, and it would appear that Athanasius holds that this then means that the Word cannot lose such things humanly either, because the gift has

[166] *CA 3* 38.3.4-4.7

been given and received internally and not externally.[167] Thus, by virtue of the Word receiving humanly what is already his, grace is made secure, and will never be removed.[168] Like the idea of humanity sharing in the Word's incorruptibility and immortality through the incarnation, this emphasis on the security of grace presents an 'advance' on the situation that existed in creation. So the atonement not only restores the grace lost, but results in a situation that transcends the original creation of humanity.[169]

Athanasius offers another argument when he turns from the issue of securing grace, to the issue of preventing change through sin and so ensuring the unchangeability of righteousness:

> διὰ τοῦτο πάλιν ἀτρέπτου χρεία ἦν, ἵνα τὸ ἀμετάβλητον τῆς τοῦ Λόγου δικαιοσύνης ἔχωσιν εἰκόνα καὶ τύπον πρὸς ἀρετὴν οἱ ἄνθρωποι. Ἡ δὲ τοιαύτη διάνοια ἔχει καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν τοῖς εὐφρονοῦσιν εὔλογον. Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδὰμ ἐτράπη, καὶ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον, διὰ τοῦτο τὸν δεύτερον Ἀδὰμ ἔπρεπεν ἄτρεπτον εἶναι· ἵνα, κἂν πάλιν ὁ ὄφις ἐπιχειρήσῃ, αὐτοῦ μὲν τοῦ ὄφεως ἡ ἀπάτη ἐξασθενήσῃ, τοῦ δὲ Κυρίου ἀτρέπτου καὶ ἀναλλοιώτου ὄντος, πρὸς πάντας ὁ ὄφις ἀσθενὴς τοῖς ἐπιχειρήμασι γένηται. Ὥσπερ γὰρ, τοῦ Ἀδὰμ παραβάντος, εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἔφθασεν ἡ ἁμαρτία, οὕτως, τοῦ Κυρίου γενομένου ἀνθρώπου, καὶ τὸν ὄφιν ἀνατρέψαντος, εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἡ τοιαύτη ἰσχὺς διαβήσεται, ὥστε λέγειν ἕκαστον ἡμῶν· *Οὐ γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὰ νοήματα ἀγνοοῦμεν*. Οὐκοῦν εἰκότως ὁ Κύριος ὁ ἀεὶ καὶ φύσει ἄτρεπτος, ἀγαπῶν δικαιοσύνην, καὶ μισῶν ἀδικίαν, χρίεται, καὶ αὐτὸς ἀποστέλλεται, ἵνα ὁ αὐτός τε ὢν καὶ αὐτὸς διαμένων, τὴν τρεπτὴν σάρκα λαβὼν, τὴν μὲν ἁμαρτίαν ἐν αὐτῇ κατακρίνῃ, ἐλευθέραν δὲ αὐτὴν κατασκευάσῃ εἰς τὸ δύνασθαι λοιπὸν τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου πληροῦν ἐν αὐτῇ, ὥστε καὶ λέγειν δύνασθαι· Ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ ἐσμὲν ἐν σαρκὶ, ἀλλ' ἐν Πνεύματι, εἴπερ Πνεῦμα Θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ἡμῖν.[170]

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[167] See also Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, 225; Leithart, *Athanasius*, 111-12, 130; Anatolios, *Coherence*, 131-32

[168] Similarly Dragas, *Athanasius*, 73

[169] *C.f.* the observation by Anatolios, *Coherence*,158 that Christ's human receptivity of grace, and particularly the Spirit, is what secures our receptivity of grace.

[170] *CA 1* 51.2.5-5.7

His argument here complements his concern in the previous extract. As we observed in Athanasius' treatment of anthropology, Athanasius understands humanity to be given an 'extra grace', which was to be created according to the Image. This gives humanity the capacity to choose and to incline towards and away from what is good. The gift was, at least to some degree, lost when that capacity was expressed in the fall. There, humanity's rational soul drew back from the knowledge of God, choosing something else that it considered good. To establish the permanence of salvation for people, therefore, there is a need for more than merely securing grace. Humanity's capacity to alter also needs to also be resolved.

This extract addresses that problem. It rehearses the issues to do with the fall that we covered by examining primarily *CG* and *DI* but does so in a distinct way: with more focus on Adam and the role of the devil; with a preference for the terminology of 'sin' over the language of 'corruption'. This appears to be partly a consequence of Athanasius' relatively cursory interest in the problem here in comparison to *CG* and *DI*, and because his language and concepts for addressing this question are being strongly conditioned by the three passages of Scriptures shaping his understanding: Romans 5:12-21, Romans 8:1-11, and 2 Corinthians 2:11 (each of which is either quoted or alluded to in the extract).

Athanasius' argument focuses on the Word's immutability. The Word, because of his unchanging nature, does not alter in virtue, or in his love for righteousness, or in his hatred of unrighteousness. Thus, when he acquires 'the changeable flesh' he—in

language recalling Romans 8—'condemns sin in it' and establishes 'its freedom henceforth to be able to fulfil the requirement of the law in it'.

Athanasius' understanding of the meaning of 'condemn' (κατακρίνῃ) in this context seems to be conditioned by his reading of Romans 5 and 2 Corinthians 2:11 (and the account in Genesis 3). Athanasius retells the story of the fall through the lens of Genesis 3, emphasising the serpent's deceit. This role for the serpent is then interwoven into his reading of Romans 5:

> Ὥσπερ γὰρ, τοῦ Ἀδὰμ παραβάντος, εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἔφθασεν ἡ ἁμαρτία, οὕτως, τοῦ Κυρίου γενομένου ἀνθρώπου, καὶ τὸν ὄφιν ἀνατρέψαντος, εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἡ τοιαύτη ἰσχὺς διαβήσεται, ὥστε λέγειν ἕκαστον ἡμῶν· *Οὐ γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὰ νοήματα ἀγνοοῦμεν*.

The destruction of the serpent, and the weakening of his deceit as mentioned is part of the sequence articulated in Romans 5. Athanasius alters Paul's language from 5:12 of δι' ἑνος ἀωθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τον κόσμον εἰσηλθεν to identify 'Adam' with the 'one man' slightly earlier than Paul makes the connection. He also turns Paul's 'entered the world' into 'reached to all people', which seems to be conflating Paul's description of the entry of sin with the spread of death. For Athanasius, sin reaches all people in the sense that its power or dynamic is now present in all people due to their solidarity with Adam. Athanasius perceives a strong link between the power of sin and the serpent's ability to deceive people. Accordingly, the weakening or abolishing of that ability is necessary to overcome the power of sin.

Athanasius associates the incarnation of the unchanging Word with the abolition of the serpent, εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἡ τοιαύτη ἰσχὺς διαβήσεται.[171] The Word's δικαιοσύνης provides an image of virtue; unchangeable love for good and hatred of evil, (ἡ τοιαύτη ἰσχὺς). As a consequence of this power spreading to all humanity, each person can now say that she is not ignorant of the devil's devices, and so presumably can have power over it.

With the focus on the ability of humans to resist deception and to continue unchangingly in mind, it is probable that when Athanasius speaks of sin's 'condemnation' (κατακρίνῃ) in his reflection on Romans 8:1-11, he is not using legal categories either predominantly, or possibly at all. He has in mind, instead, something analogous to τὸν ὄφιν ἀνατρέψαντος and τοῦ ὄφεως ἡ ἀπάτη ἐξασθενήσῃ, that is, its elimination as a dynamic that determines human life and behaviour. This would appear consistent with his ensuing statement, ἐλευθέραν δὲ αὐτὴν κατασκευάσῃ εἰς τὸ δύνασθαι λοιπὸν τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου πληροῦν ἐν αὐτῇ, ὥστε καὶ λέγειν δύνασθαι: after sin has been 'condemned' (ἐλευθέραν) then the freedom to fulfil the law in the flesh is established. His slight modification to Romans 8:9, with its contrast between being 'in the flesh' and 'in the Spirit', indicates that it is Christians he has in mind. Hence, what we have in this extract from Athanasius is an important extra dimension to his understanding of the concept of divinization. By virtue of the Word taking on flesh, the flesh's inherent capacity to change, and hence sin, is 'condemned', while a new power—grounded in (but possibly even the same as) the Word's own unchanging

[171] So, albeit briefly, Pettersen, *Athanasius*, 95

nature—is transmitted to all people.[172] Now people can fulfil the law, because their freedom to do so was established by the immutable Word taking changeable flesh and making it immutable.

The Mechanism of Divinization—Transfer and Exchange

The way this occurs is through an exchange: human passions are transferred to the Word, and the Word's immutability and immortality is extended in return so that humans participate in them:

> καὶ οὕτως ἔμενον οὐδὲν ἧττον οἱ ἄνθρωποι θνητοὶ καὶ φθαρτοὶ, δεκτικοὶ τῶν ἰδίων τῆς φύσεως παθῶν. Νῦν δὲ τοῦ Λόγου γενομένου ἀνθρώπου, καὶ ἰδιοποιουμένου τὰ τῆς σαρκὸς, οὐκέτι ταῦτα τοῦ σώματος ἅπτεται διὰ τὸν ἐν αὐτῷ γενόμενον Λόγον· ἀλλ' ὑπ' αὐτοῦ μὲν ἀνήλωται, λοιπὸν δὲ οἱ ἄνθρωποι οὐκέτι κατὰ τὰ ἴδια πάθη μένουσιν ἁμαρτωλοὶ καὶ νεκροὶ, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν τοῦ Λόγου δύναμιν ἀναστάντες, ἀθάνατοι καὶ ἄφθαρτοι ἀεὶ διαμένουσιν. Ὅθεν καὶ γεννωμένης τῆς σαρκὸς ἐκ τῆς Θεοτόκου Μαρίας, αὐτὸς λέγεται γεγεννῆσθαι, ὁ τοῖς ἄλλοις γένεσιν εἰς τὸ εἶναι παρέχων· ἵνα τὴν ἡμῶν εἰς ἑαυτὸν μεταθῇ γένεσιν, καὶ μηκέτι ὡς γῆ μόνη ὄντες εἰς γῆν ἀπέλθωμεν, ἀλλ' ὡς τῷ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ Λόγῳ συναφθέντες, εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἀναχθῶμεν παρ' αὐτοῦ. Οὐκοῦν οὕτω καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάθη τοῦ σώματος οὐκ ἀπεικότως εἰς ἑαυτὸν μετέθηκεν· ἵνα μηκέτι ὡς ἄνθρωποι, ἀλλ' ὡς ἴδιοι τοῦ Λόγου, τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς μετάσχωμεν. Οὐκέτι γὰρ κατὰ τὴν προτέραν γένεσιν ἐν τῷ Ἀδὰμ ἀποθνήσκομεν· ἀλλὰ λοιπὸν τῆς γενέσεως ἡμῶν καὶ πάσης τῆς σαρκικῆς ἀσθενείας μετατεθέντων εἰς τὸν Λόγον, ἐγειρόμεθα ἀπὸ γῆς, λυθείσης τῆς δι' ἁμαρτίαν κατάρας διὰ τὸν ἐν ἡμῖν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν γενόμενον κατάραν· καὶ εἰκότως γε. Ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐκ γῆς ὄντες πάντες ἐν τῷ Ἀδὰμ ἀποθνήσκομεν, οὕτως ἄνωθεν ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος ἀναγεννηθέντες, ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ πάντες ζωοποιούμεθα, οὐκέτι ὡς γηΐνης, ἀλλὰ λοιπὸν λογωθείσης τῆς σαρκὸς διὰ τὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγον, ὃς δι' ἡμᾶς ἐγένετο σάρξ.[173]

There are a number of issues here that deserve comment. We see once again that mortality and corruption are naturally paired. Both are aspect of the passions that are

[172] See Leithart, *Athanasius,* 119 who notes that 'divine life might be infused into human experience' so that 'the instable creation [can] become permanent'; Pettersen, *Athanasius,* 91-92.
[173] *CA 3* 33.2.5-5.10

'proper to nature'. Athanasius holds that sin is, in some sense, proper to human nature when it is left to its own resources:

> ἔμενον οὐδὲν ἧττον οἱ ἄνθρωποι θνητοὶ καὶ φθαρτοὶ, δεκτικοὶ τῶν ἰδίων τῆς φύσεως παθῶν
>
> κατὰ τὰ ἴδια πάθη μένουσιν ἁμαρτωλοὶ καὶ νεκροὶ

Being corruptible and mortal is to still have the same capacity for the passions that are proper to human nature. Similarly, remaining a sinner and remaining dead is also in accordance with one's own passions as a human being. Due to Athanasius' reliance on the vocabulary of 'corruption' in *CG/DI* this is not as clear in that double work. But in *CA* Athanasius places 'corruption' and 'sin' sufficiently in parallel to demonstrate that for him they are, at least in corruption's moral dimension, able to function as synonyms. For Athanasius, sin is natural for human beings, and is only avoided through participation in divine realities through the knowledge of God.[174]

We also see that the key mechanism at work in this divinization is transference. Things that are proper to people (primarily corruption and death) are transferred to the Word and hence abolished. Things that are proper to the Word (immortality and immutability) are extended to human beings so that they can participate in them.[175]

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[174] This is arguably a tension point in his thought because, as we have seen, he also affirms the unconditional goodness of creation as made. Arguably it arises from the matrix of ideas whereby it is possible for him to speak of creation as theoretically at least being able to have been brought into existence without an abiding relation with the Word to secure its ongoing existence (and hence its goodness, due to the link between existence and goodness), and then even more to speak of humanity as being intrinsically related to God by having a share in the Image. Yet that this brings with it the capacity to turn away from God as much as towards God and then to treat the fall as occurring almost necessarily given the starting conditions of creation. Creation is good, yet this goodness involves a natural corruptibility towards non-existence that has moral overtones (due to the link between evil and non-existence). Humanity is in the image and yet this is precisely the condition that makes the fall possible, and Athanasius' treatment of the fall seems to imbue it with inescapable necessity due to the structures of creation and anthropology.

[175] See Gwynn, *Athanasius*, 74 for a summary discussion of this issue.

Divinization is fundamentally about an exchange.[176] While the underlying human nature remains (human beings do not exchange creatureliness for divinity), qualities that are proper to those natures are exchanged, and, in that exchange, human passions are extinguished entirely.[177]

Finally, in this extract, there are two main features of the Word that are significant for enabling this transference and exchange to function in this fashion—his qualities (immortality and incorruption) and his origin.

First, the Word's qualities—his immortality and incorruptibility—deal with our mortality and corruption. While this is implicit in Athanasius' argument here, it is clearer still in the following extract from the subsequent chapter of *CA* 3:

> Καὶ αὐτὸς μὲν ἀπαθὴς τὴν φύσιν, ὡς ἔστι, διαμένει, μὴ βλαπτόμενος ἀπὸ τούτων, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἐξαφανίζων καὶ ἀπολλύων αὐτά· οἱ δὲ ἄνθρωποι, ὡς εἰς τὸν ἀπαθῆ μεταβάντων αὐτῶν τῶν παθῶν καὶ ἀπηλειμμένων, ἀπαθεῖς καὶ ἐλεύθεροι τούτων λοιπὸν καὶ αὐτοὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας γίγνονται[178]

Athanasius argues that the Word is unaffected by the human passions he has taken on, because he is 'impassible by nature'. Furthermore, the Word's impassibility results in

[176] While, in light of the variation in how Athanasius explains this strand of the atonement, there can be sympathy for the claim by Rashdall, *Atonement,* 297 that the mechanism whereby the incorruption enjoyed by the Word's body comes to be extended to humanity is left unexplained, it is arguably an overly pessimistic evaluation. From our investigation the mechanism would appear to be established by the likeness of the body of Christ to that of other humans—our shared common humanity—and by the gift of the Spirit. Athanasius may not seek to explain all the details of how this transfer is then effected beyond what we have discussed but this is not an uncommon feature of much theological writing, where the mechanism of God's acts are explained without great detail or precision.
[177] See Leithart, *Athanasius,*162-164 for a good discussion of these themes; note also Russell, *Deification,* 171-72
[178] *CA 3* 34.4.1-5

the passions being ‘obliterated’ and ‘destroyed’. This in turn has the effect of rendering people eternally impassible and so free from all passions.[179]

This same understanding, with the links less closely made, appears to also be at work in the extract from *CA* 3.33 under consideration. Athanasius states that ‘all weakness of fleshliness was transferred into the Word’. From context, both immediate and the extract quoted in the subsequent chapter, this πάσης τῆς σαρκικῆς ἀσθενείας is referring to what Athanasius means when he speaks of τὰ ἄλλα πάθη τοῦ σώματος, which the Word has transferred to himself. These passions are ‘destroyed’ (ἀνήλωται) by the Word, and while Athanasius does not explicitly indicate at length that this involves an exchange of the Word’s impassibility for the passions, whereby his immutability encounters them and abolishes them and then people participate in his immutability, that would appear to be the mechanism at work here, in light of subsequent observations of this extract. Notably, here again Athanasius demonstrates his concern with the permanence of salvation that is an integral aspect of this aspect of the atonement, with his statement, that as a result of this exchange of passions for incorruptibility people ἀθάνατοι καὶ ἄφθαρτοι ἀεὶ διαμένουσιν. Here the exchange is both the mechanism and the guarantor of its permanence.

Second, Athanasius looks to the Word’s origin. In the second half of our extract, Athanasius—probably influenced by Johannine language but perhaps even more strongly, given the contrast with Adam, by 1 Corinthians 15:42-49—draws heavily upon the fact that the Word ‘is from heaven’ (τῷ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ Λόγῳ). Athanasius

[179] See also Anatolios, *Coherence,* 154; Robertson, *Mediator,* 207.

argues that part of the exchange involves an exchange of origins. When the Word is born of Mary, he refounds humanity, transferring our origin from Adam to himself. Consequently, instead of dying in accordance with Adam and his origin from the earth, humans are made alive in Christ and led into heaven. Athanasius invokes Paul's reference to the man from heaven, (1 Corinthians 15:42-49) to explain the point. Salvation involves an exchange between the image of the man from the earth and his mortal destiny, and the image of the man from heaven and his immortality.

It is also possible that the background of 1 Corinthians 15:42-49 illuminates Athanasius' enigmatic phrase λογωθείσης τῆς σαρκὸς in the concluding sentence. In order to solve the problem that 'flesh and blood cannot enter inherit the kingdom of God nor can what is perishable inherit the imperishable' Paul posits four contrasts between the image and body of Adam and that of 'the man from heaven' in verses 42-44: perishable/imperishable, dishonour/glory, weakness/power, and natural/spiritual. This last contrast is not developed at length, but Paul does continue in verse 45 to contrast Genesis 2:7's description of Adam with Christ becoming a life-giving spirit. Given Athanasius' tendency to link the Spirit and the Word closely together, and his predilection for the term 'Word', it is arguable that for Athanasius this is a way of alluding to the concept that in taking on the body of the Word, people's bodies are changed and are (or will be) no longer natural but spiritual.[180] At that rate, 'made Word' is Athanasius' form of words for the Pauline 'became a life-giving spirit'.

[180] Pettersen, *Athanasius*, 101 in commenting on this series of chapters in *CA* 3 notes that 'only in the general resurrection will this salvation to impassibility find its completion, when each, ethically and physically, will know wholly the grace of being freed from passions for ever'.

The Necessity of Divinization

There is one final task to undertake before the shape of Athanasius' understanding of these issues becomes sufficiently clear. That is to discuss *DI* 44, a text too lengthy to reproduce here. Athanasius proposes a hostile question from 'the Greeks' which he then attempts to answer throughout this chapter:

> …ἔδει τὸν Θεόν, παιδεῦσαι καὶ σῶσαι θέλοντα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, νεύματι μόνον ποιῆσαι, καὶ μὴ σώματος ἅψασθαι τὸν τούτου Λόγον, ὥσπερ οὖν καὶ πάλαι πεποίηκεν, ὅτε ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος αὐτὰ συνίστη.[181]

The question is one that has occurred regularly in the Christian tradition. In its most benign form it is to speculate whether the events concerning the incarnation and the cross were strictly necessary to save humanity. In its more aggressive form, as Athanasius presents it here, it is to challenge the appropriateness of the Word's incarnation and crucifixion on the grounds that a better means was available for God to obtain his soteriological ends.

The form Athanasius offers is not uncommon, that God 'should' (ἔδει) have used the same method that was used in creating everything; not touching a body, but 'with only a nod'. On view here is the concept that God's omnipotence, as demonstrated in creation, enables God to save humanity without the need for the incarnation. Athanasius' response advances two separate, but closely related, arguments, occurring in lines 5-18 and 18ff respectively. In the first of these, Athanasius argues that the situation into which the atonement occurs is of such a difference than that in which creation occurs that it requires a radically different method:

[181] *DI* 44.2-5

> …πάλαι μὲν οὐδενὸς οὐδαμῆ ὑπάρχοντος, νεύματος γέγονε χρεία καὶ βουλήσεως μόνης εἰς τὴν τοῦ παντὸς δημιουργίαν. Ὅτε δὲ γέγονεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, καὶ χρεία ἀπήτησεν οὐ τὰ μὴ ὄντα ἀλλὰ τὰ γενόμενα θεραπεῦσαι, ἀκόλουθον ἦν ἐν τοῖς ἤδη γενομένοις τὸν Ἰατρὸν καὶ Σωτῆρα παραγενέσθαι, ἵνα καὶ τὰ ὄντα θεραπεύσῃ.[182]

> οὐδὲ γὰρ τὰ οὐκ ὄντα ἔχρῃζε σωτηρίας, ἵνα καὶ προστάξει μόνον ἀρκεσθῇ, ἀλλ᾽ ὁ ἤδη γενόμενος ἄνθρωπος ἐφθείρετο καὶ παραπώλλυτο. Ὅθεν εἰκότως ἀνθρωπίνῳ κέχρηται καλῶς ὀργάνῳ, καὶ εἰς πάντα ἑαυτὸν ἥπλωσεν ὁ Λόγος.[183]

There can be no *salus ex nihilo* in the way that there was a *creatio ex nihilo*. When there was nothing, then a nod and an exercise of the will was sufficient to bring everything into existence; but healing existent things requires the healer to come among those requiring healing.

On the surface this appears to be simply an assertion without any supporting argumentation. However, while the rationale is implicit, it can nonetheless be observed, especially in his language in the second of the two extracts above. Athanasius states that it is not non-existent things that needed to be saved, and asserts that if that was the case, if it were non existing things that required salvation, then his imaginary Greek interlocutors would be correct and a command on its own would be sufficient. He then contrasts this with the situation that actually pertains and notes that it is humanity that needs saving and describes humanity as ἤδη γενόμενος.

This contrast brings the logic of the claim into focus. It appears probable that Athanasius' argument is that non-existent things only require an act of omnipotence, a

[182] *DI* 44.6-10
[183] *DI* 44.15-18

προστάξει μόνον, irrespective of whether the need is to create or to save them. By contrast, existent things require something different if they are to be acted upon, requiring an instrument be used.[184] More than that, Athanasius' stresses that humanity in particular (ὁ ἄνθρωπος) that needed saving—and thus a human (ἀνθρωπίνῳ) instrument was appropriate. The idea that the Word extended himself into everything through this action is suggestive of an atoning mechanism that we have observed repeatedly in this section: the Word uses a human body to extend himself into the human race, or alternatively, enables the human race to participate in him.

This argument, while unlikely to convince all his readers, seems to reflect his views on the nature of existence and non-existence observed in Athanasius' understanding of creation and the demonic. For Athanasius, things that do not exist can be spoken of in realist terms as though they can be acted upon, in a way that would appear to be analogous to the power of the devil which is 'nothing' and yet would appear to be able to act—most especially in its capacity to deceive.

Similarly, Athanasius' emphasis that existing humanity needs a human instrument is a strikingly Irenaean note with its implicit conviction that God's actions are orientated to the conditions of the actually existent creature with which he interacts. This also reflects Athanasius' stance towards humanity that we observed; God's foreknowledge of humanity, and hence humanity's fate, leads God to take provisions for humanity's welfare in providing external helps to secure the grace given in creation. For Athanasius, God deals with human beings as human beings —not as non-existent

[184] See also Anatolios, *Coherence*, 130-31.

things. The fact that salvation required atonement through the Word is a consequence of the object of the atonement—actually existing human beings. For non-existent things a simple command suffices, but existent (or creaturely) things need an existent (or creaturely) instrument of salvation and human ones need a human instrument. Salvation cannot simply be referred back to God and his creative power, the nature of the thing being saved places important conditions upon the kind of atonement that God undertakes. The fact that creation only required a command suggests to Athanasius, not merely insight into God's power, but also to the nature of non-existence—that only a command is necessary to affect such a 'state'. Similarly the fact that the atonement occurred suggests to Athanasius that that also illuminates the nature of existent things—that a command on its own is insufficient to affect them, but they must be acted upon by an instrument of a similar kind. Once again, Athanasius' theological method is strongly *a posteriori*—what has occurred discloses the underlying nature of the things involved, and is not simply one actualized option within a broader cloud of potentiality.

Athanasius' second argument seeks to develop and strengthen this claim. He writes:

> …ὅτι ἡ γενομένη φθορὰ οὐκ ἔξωθεν ἦν τοῦ σώματος, ἀλλ' αὐτῷ προσεγεγόνει, καὶ ἀνάγκη ἦν ἀντὶ τῆς φθορᾶς ζωὴν αὐτῷ προσπλακῆναι, ἵνα ὥσπερ ἐν τῷ σώματι γέγονεν ὁ θάνατος, οὕτως ἐν αὐτῷ γένηται καὶ ἡ ζωή. Εἰ μὲν οὖν ἔξωθεν ἦν ὁ θάνατος τοῦ σώματος, ἔξωθεν ἔδει καὶ τὴν ζωὴν αὐτοῦ γεγονέναι. Εἰ δὲ ἐν τῷ σώματι συνεπλάκη ὁ θάνατος, καὶ ὡς συνὼν αὐτῷ κατεκράτει τούτου, ἀνάγκη καὶ τὴν ζωὴν συμπλακῆναι τῷ σώματι, ἵνα ἀντενδυθὲν τὸ σῶμα τὴν ζωήν, ἀποβάλῃ τὴν φθοράν. Ἄλλως τε εἰ καὶ ἐγεγόνει ἔξω τοῦ σώματος ὁ Λόγος, καὶ μὴ ἐν αὐτῷ, ὁ μὲν θάνατος ἡττᾶτο ὑπ' αὐτοῦ φυσικώτατα, ἅτε δὴ μὴ ἰσχύοντος τοῦ θανάτου κατὰ τῆς ζωῆς, οὐδὲν ἧττον δὲ ἔμενεν ἐν τῷ σώματι ἡ προσγενομένη φθορά. Διὰ τοῦτο εἰκότως ἐνεδύσατο σῶμα ὁ Σωτήρ, ἵνα συμπλακέντος τοῦ σώματος τῇ ζωῇ, μηκέτι ὡς θνητὸν ἀπομείνῃ ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ· ἀλλ' ὡς ἐνδυσάμενον τὴν ἀθανασίαν, λοιπὸν

> ἀναστὰν ἀθάνατον διαμείνῃ. Ἅπαξ γὰρ ἐνδυσάμενον φθορὰν οὐκ ἂν ἀνέστη, εἰ μὴ ἐνεδύσατο τὴν ζωήν· [185]

Athanasius here expands what it means that the nature of what is being saved conditions the salvation that must be effected. His argument again draws upon his strongly realist approach to abstracts, whereby death, corruption and life can be conceived of as having an existence in their own right and hence a possible existence outside a mortal body. He poses a hypothetical, whereby death and corruption could be addressed 'in the wild' and states that if this was the situation we faced then they could indeed be eliminated simply by encountering the Word outside the body—most probably an allusion to a divine command.

Inherent to this argument is the principle at the heart of his previous one, that existent things cannot be altered by merely a divine command; for death to be addressed needs a similar occurrence to the Word's use of a human instrument to extend himself to all. It must encounter life directly and be overcome thereby.

The other aspect of Athanasius' argument derives from this. As corruption and death is now in the body, having been combined with it, life needs to encounter them where they are. A less particularised response might address them (death and corruption) in the abstract, but leave the body unchanged. Now that the principle of death and its partner corruption have been added to the body, life must also be infused to solve the problem.[186] Without this, death could be potentially defeated and yet the body now conditioned by corruption and mortality would nonetheless die.

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[185] *DI* 44.19-34
[186] See also Leithart, *Athanasius*, 119.

Once again, in this argument we observe Athanasius' linking the effectiveness of the atonement to a particular aspect of the Word. Athanasius draws upon Johannine language to implicitly equate 'encountering the Word' with 'encountering life', and so his argument hinges on a relationship between 'life' and 'Word'. Since the two are either identical (the Word is life) or closely related (for example, the Johannine language of 'having life in himself'), the only way for death and life to come face to face is through the Word entering the sphere of creation. "Life" cannot be extracted from the Word, the Word must go personally and encounter death.

In Athanasius' concluding argument of *DI* 44 we glimpse a final reason why an atonement that was effected through the incarnation of the Word was not only 'fitting' and 'reasonable' but also, in some sense, 'necessary':

> εἰ προστάξει μόνον κωλυθεὶς ἦν ὁ θάνατος ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ, οὐδὲν ἧττον πάλιν ἦν θνητὸν καὶ φθαρτὸν κατὰ τὸν τῶν σωμάτων λόγον. Ἀλλ᾽ ἵνα μὴ τοῦτο γένηται, ἐνεδύσατο τὸν ἀσώματον τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγον· καὶ οὕτως οὐκ ἔτι τὸν θάνατον οὐδὲ τὴν φθορὰν φοβεῖται, ἔχον ἔνδυμα τὴν ζωήν, καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀφανιζομένης τῆς φθορᾶς.[187]

Athanasius here undertakes a hypothetical situation, in light of a previously developed analogy from fireproofing straw, where the body has not yet put on corruption and death. In this situation, Athanasius argues, a simple command might keep death from the body, but it would leave the body unchanged. The body would still be mortal and corruptible and so would always remain in danger of death and corruption.[188] Once again, behind this stands Athanasius' view of creation, where a tendency to non-existence is natural for creatures, and can only be forestalled by participation in divine

[187] *DI* 44.45-49
[188] Similarly Frost, 'Mensch', 327

realities through the mediation of the Word. It also reflects, albeit less closely, Athanasius' position on the place of the law in the garden. In the law, humanity was given a command intended to secure grace and so keep corruption and death at bay. It did not accomplish that end and has even exacerbated the problem of corruption. A command—even one given to death itself—can only provisionally hold back death. Athanasius does not understand divine commands to be salvific either before or after the entrance of sin. [189]

Conclusion

As we have observed in this chapter, Athanasius' understanding of this dimension of the atonement is carefully integrated into broader concerns in his theology.[190] At multiple points, and sometimes in surprising ways, he applies his understanding of creation to the problem of death and corruption—sometimes expanding on the former in the process. Throughout it all, Athanasius' understanding of the atonement's efficacy depends on what is proper to the Word: his creation of the world, his impassibility, his immortality, his relationship with the Father, his relationship with the Spirit, his Sonship. All are brought forward to elucidate different dimensions of the atonement's mechanism, nature or effects. Athanasius' views regarding how the atonement addresses the issues of corruption and death are consistent with his theological vision overall, and reflect his concerns in the Christological debates. His

[189] *Contra* Leithart, who sees it as possible for God to reverse the effects of sin by fiat but that doing so would not be expedient. *Athanasius,* 148.
[190] Young describes recreation as Athanasius' main understanding of salvation in Christ. Young, *Nicaea,* 55.

understanding of the atonement requires the Word—and specifically, the Word in precisely the filial relationship that Athanasius championed.

This is unlikely to be a coincidence, nor is it likely to be a case that Athanasius structured his understanding of the atonement on these issues for rhetorical purposes to defeat "Arianism".[191] Too many links connect with his views on creation and anthropology. For Athanasius, *only* the Word could save us from our inherent mortality and corruption, and he could save us *only* by taking on our humanity. The reasons for this stretch back to the beginning of humanity; they encompass the distinctive properties of creaturely and human nature; they arise out of role of the Word in creation—especially in the creation of human beings.

Accordingly, divinization is, at heart, a solution to a human-shaped problem. While it requires the Word and the incarnation for it to be effected, Athanasius does not characteristically argue to this aspect of the atonement by reflecting the nature of the Word or the Father-Son relationship or the attributes of God. In fact, Athanasius completely rejects the suitability of arguing from the atonement by way of only considering what God's power is capable of accomplishing (against Leithart). In making that argument, Athanasius articulates the principle that God's actions must be conditioned by the nature and needs of the object he is acting upon, rather than simply referred to his own omnipotence. This broad ranging principle suggests that the

[191] There has been an increasing consensus within scholarship on fourth century patristic thought that 'Arianism' is a polemical and rhetorical construct by Athanasius that has had the effect of distorting later understand of the theological positions of the period. See David Gwynn for a discussion of the issues at stake: *The Eusebians: The Polemic of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the "Arian Controversy".* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 76-85.

framework for understanding how the atonement addresses the issues arising out of creation themes—particularly mortality and corruption—is Athanasius' views on creation and how sin reverses it. This is the approach that we find Athanasius himself undertaking, most notably in the whole structure of *CG-DI*, where he explains at length humanity's origin in order to explain the need for the incarnation, but it is present often throughout his corpus whenever he expands on this theme at any length, such as in *CA.* To understand divinization, one has to understand the nature of the problem of natural death, mortality, and corruption, as this aspect of the atonement is fundamentally a solution to that cluster of problems.[192]

In this understanding of the atonement there is no place for the cross. At least inasmuch as the problems of natural death and corruption are concerned, the atonement is effected by the incarnation, and it is difficult to discover a clear example of Athanasius linking the solution to the problem of mortality and corruption to the crucifixion. This concentration upon the incarnation is qualified slightly by Athanasius' approach to the issue of the one and the many, and that he considers the promise of the resurrection and the gift of the Spirit in his discussion of the means by which the gift of incorruptibility, immortality and Sonship are received by believers. Nonetheless, even here, the centre of Athanasius' thought is on what occurs 'in' the Word, through the dynamics of the Word's appropriating a body, such that even human ability to receive the Word's atonement is itself a product of that atonement as the Spirit and the human are united in the Word's body (with Grensted, Dragas, Widdicombe, Leithart and Anatolios).

[192] For a good if brief discussion of this aspect of the atonement: Ng, *Spirituality,* 82, 90-91.

The basic mechanism whereby this atonement is effected is that of transference and exchange. Athanasius is concerned to argue that the natures remain unchanged. Deity remains deity and humanity remains fully human. Nonetheless the things proper to those natures are transferred through the union established between the Word and his body. Those things that properly belong to the body, such as the passions, death and corruption, and humanity's origin from the earth, are transferred by the Word to himself when he takes the body to himself. In being transferred they encounter the Word's impassibility and immortality and are abolished. In their place the Word communicates things that are proper to himself as the Word, such as Sonship, and the things proper to him as a member of the Godhead, such as the Word's heavenly origin as well as his impassibility and immortality and his quality of being Life, (with Gwyn, Leithart, Russell, Anatolios and Robertson). This is communicated to the Word's own body first and then is extended into the human race through the similarity that exists between the Word's fully human and mortal body and that of the race as a whole. On offer is not just the gift of things, but union with God, (with Widdicombe and Anatolios).

In this aspect of the atonement two related concerns or interests would appear to be of particular importance for Athanasius. On the one hand, Athanasius clearly regards the atonement as being effective *because* it brings believers into a participation in the things proper to deity (far beyond what Adam experienced). Athanasius' discussion of the non-existence of 'the woman' and humanity's abode being transferred from earth to heaven clearly indicate that for him, the fact that the atonement ushers believers

into an existence above anything that was possible through humanity's creation and gift of being in accordance with the Image, (with Anatolios and Pettersen and possibly against Leithart). On the other, Athanasius sees the atonement as significant in its ability to provide a permanent salvation. In both cases, it was not sufficient simply for God to give grace. Humanity's existence *qua* humanity was owed to the gift of grace, a gift that was essentially, "lost". Salvation would require grace—not only to be given, but also received; not merely communicated, but also anchored—to be made secure and permanent.

While this next point will become clearer over the next chapters, it should be evident already that, as significant as divinization is, it cannot address all the issues facing humanity. Divinization correlates to those aspects of the human situation arising from its creaturely nature, most notably mortality and corruption. It does not solve all of humanity's problems however, and so there are other facets of the atonement that relate to other issues, such as the image and the law.

Athanasius' understanding of the atonement as it addresses the problem of death and corruption reflects the convictions that prompted him to write *the Incarnation of the Word.* Humanity required permanent change to a life higher than was possible by nature while simultaneously remaining human. Achieving this depended entirely on uniting the Word to humanity and Athanasius nowhere suggests that any other method was even theoretically possible.

Chapter Four

Atonement and Image

A case could be made for treating the theme of renewal of the image as an aspect of the theme of divinization. We have already seen that being made according to the Image of God is associated with Athanasius' understanding of human nature as it was created and renewed.[193] Nonetheless, restoring image is better discussed with some distance between it and the twin themes of death and corruption. For while both the Word's atonement of death and corruption and loss of image give a critical place to the incarnation, the structure and mechanism whereby they are addressed is significantly different. With the restoration of the image, Athanasius' interest is broader and, as we will observe, his understanding extends to include the works and teaching of Jesus, his death and resurrection, and even his post-ascension activity. It is also significantly different in that the restoration of the image occurs through the Word revealing the Father once again to the human race, and this involves a more external mechanism—one which Athanasius explicitly rejects as useless when corruption and death are considered.

Athanasius' stance on this can be observed below:

> Δι' ἡμᾶς δὲ μὴ κτισθέντος αὐτοῦ, οὐκ ἐκτίσθημεν ἐν αὐτῷ· μὴ κτισθέντες δὲ ἐν αὐτῷ, οὐκ εἴχομεν αὐτὸν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, ἀλλ' ἔξωθεν εἴχομεν, εἰ ἄρα παρ' αὐτοῦ τὴν μάθησιν ὡς παρὰ διδασκάλου ἐδεξάμεθα. Οὕτω δὲ ἡμῶν ὄντων, οὐδὲν ἧττον πάλιν ἡ ἁμαρτία τῆς σαρκὸς ἐβασίλευσεν ἐμμένουσα, καὶ μὴ ἐκβληθεῖσα ἐξ αὐτῆς.[194]

[193] Weinandy, *Athanasius*, 34-5 suggests that the filial image is renewed *both* by divinization and by refurnishing the knowledge of God

[194] *CA* 2.56.1.2-6. See Anatolios, *Coherence*, 131-2, although he does not appear to explicitly discuss whether this same principle applies to renewal of the image.

Athanasius rejects the idea that the Word has his existence granted to him in creation. Rather, his creation *as a man* occurs 'for us'. Otherwise, Athanasius' observes, human persons would not have him 'in ourselves' (ἐν ἑαυτοῖς) but 'externally' (ἔξωθεν).

Athanasius offers an example of this: receiving instruction from Jesus in a manner similar to that of a teacher. Teaching, which establishes only an 'external' relationship, would leave the indwelling problems of human corruption and mortality unresolved. A mortal and corrupting humanity requires the Word to reside 'in us'.

In light of this unequivocal rejection of the effectiveness of merely external measures (such as teaching) to deal with the dynamic of sin, it is then perhaps surprising that Athanasius talks a lot about the role of teaching in the atonement in *DI*. This emphasis on the importance of a merely external relationship begins as early as *DI* 10:

> …ὁ τοῦ παναγάθου Θεὸς Λόγος Πατρὸς εἰς φθορὰν κατερχόμενον τὸ δι' αὐτοῦ γενόμενον τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος οὐ παρεῖδεν· ἀλλὰ τὸν μὲν συμβεβηκότα θάνατον ἀπήλειψε διὰ τῆς προσφορᾶς τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος, τὴν δὲ ἀμέλειαν αὐτῶν διωρθώσατο τῇ ἑαυτοῦ διδασκαλίᾳ, πάντα τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων διὰ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ δυνάμεως κατορθώσας.[195]

Athanasius links (i) the abolition of death through the offering of Christ's own body; (ii) the renewal of humanity's estate though his own power, with; (iii) the correction of people's ignorance by his teaching. In light of Athanasius' views on corruption and death it can be tempting to read these as three (slightly clumsy) variant explanations

[195] *DI* 10.6-10

of how the Word divinized people. On this reading, the mention of teaching is little more than rhetoric, having such a minor role in Athanasius' understanding of the atonement; the atonement did not only require the incarnation of the Word, it was effected by it.[196]

But this is to misunderstand Athanasius' views. Athanasius offers three items in this extract, and these refer to different components or dimensions of the atonement—not to different ways of speaking of the *one dimension* of the atonement. The renewal of people's estates is, most probably, a reference to divinization. The abolition of death through the Word offering his own body is, *prima facie*, not the same—for Athanasius does not see the cross as a solution to death and mortality. As our prior investigation highlighted, it is difficult to find any passage where Athanasius explains how mortality is resolved other than the joining of the Word to a human body. Thus, these words most probably refer to what we shall term, for want of a better phrase, Athanasius' "forensic" dimension to the atonement which we shall consider in the next chapter. There, we will see, Athanasius does have a critical place for the cross in the atonement: it is an offering made by the Word to deal with humanity's obligation to die (arising from humanity's transgression of God's command).

Consequently, the Word's teaching has been associated with two elements important to Athanasius' understanding of the atonement, which suggests that, despite how

[196] While Leithart, *Athanasius*, 164 extends the atonement to the cross and the resurrection as well as the incarnation, his description of the renewal on the image would appear to be an example of this line of thought as he does not seem to link renewal of image to revelation but speaks of the image being re-impressed 'from the inside' which is suggestive that he understands image renewal to occur through divinization.

ineffective Athanasius considers the Word's teaching in light of corruption, he nonetheless values it as a significant aspect of the atonement.[197]

To understand the atoning nature of the Word's 'teaching', we need to begin by considering the restoration of the image in humanity, the subject of *DI* 13ff. Athanasius begins by grounding the reason for the atonement in the image.

> Οὕτω τοίνυν ἀλογωθέντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ οὕτως τῆς δαιμονικῆς πλάνης ἐπισκιαζούσης τὰ πανταχοῦ καὶ κρυπτούσης τὴν περὶ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ Θεοῦ γνῶσιν, τί τὸν Θεὸν ἔδει ποιεῖν; σιωπῆσαι τὸ τηλικοῦτον, καὶ ἀφεῖναι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὑπὸ δαιμόνων πλανᾶσθαι, καὶ μὴ γινώσκειν αὐτοὺς τὸν Θεόν; Καὶ τίς ἡ χρεία τοῦ καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς κατ' εἰκόνα Θεοῦ γενέσθαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον; ἔδει γὰρ αὐτὸν ἁπλῶς ὡς ἄλογον γενέσθαι, ἢ γενόμενον λογικὸν τὴν τῶν ἀλόγων ζωὴν μὴ βιοῦν. Τίς δὲ ὅλως ἦν χρεία ἐννοίας αὐτὸν λαβεῖν περὶ Θεοῦ ἐξ ἀρχῆς; Εἰ γὰρ οὐδὲ νῦν ἄξιός ἐστι λαβεῖν, ἔδει μηδὲ κατὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν αὐτῷ δοθῆναι.[198]

> Οὐ πολλῷ πλέον ὁ Θεὸς τῶν ἑαυτοῦ κτισμάτων φείσεται πρὸς τὸ μὴ πλανηθῆναι ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ τοῖς οὐκ οὖσι δουλεύειν; Μάλιστα ὅτι ἡ τοιαύτη πλάνη ἀπωλείας αὐτοῖς αἰτία καὶ ἀφανισμοῦ γίνεται, οὐκ ἔδει δὲ τὰ ἅπαξ κοινωνήσαντα τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ Εἰκόνος ἀπολέσθαι.[199]

There are a number of observations to be made regarding these two extracts. First, we find here a confluence of a number of important themes. Along with the twin issues of the knowledge of God and the image, there is a concern with the permanence of God's handiwork (whether it would be right for something originally made in the image to perish), and even an interest in the issue of demonic deception and idolatry. This appearance of multiple motifs in this one section suggests that a significant

[197] Robertson, *Mediator*, 201 describes the giving of the knowledge of God as the '"second" reason for the incarnation'. Similarly Ng, *Spirituality*, 82-83, 91-92 who offers a brief but insightful summary of this aspect of the atonement, and Frost, 'Mensch', 328-29, who sees this and divinization as the totality of the atonement for Athanasius.
[198] *DI* 13.1-8
[199] *DI* 13.19-23

number of factors are involved in the question of the renewal of the image, and this in turn, suggests that 'restoration of the image' is a highly significant concern for his understanding of the atonement.

Second, these themes appear in forms that reflect Athanasius' previous discussion of them. As we have had cause to observe previously, Athanasius holds that humanity's original rationality and framing according to the Image is humanity's distinctive feature—and that it is inextricably connected to the knowledge of God.

Similarly, in Athanasius' discussion of the fall, the loss of the knowledge of God led to increasing corruption; including irrationality and an increasing tendency to live like merely sensate animals. His reference to serving the things that do not exist is consistent with the prominent place given to idolatry in his account of humanity's creation-and-fall 'origin'. These extracts are embedded in Athanasius' overall theology.

Finally, and significant for our study, humanity's original creation in the image forms the basis for God's motivation to pursue the atonement.[200] Consistent with our observations in the previous chapter, Athanasius grounds the propriety of God's salvific actions in the fact that human beings are his creatures, Οὐ πολλῷ πλέον ὁ Θεὸς τῶν ἑαυτοῦ κτισμάτων φείσεται.

[200] Leithart, *Athanasius*, 118

However, while the Creator-creature relationship is evoked as a suitable reason for God to save, Athanasius directs attention to the issue of the image as a still greater rationale.

In the first extract, the argument is one of permanence—an issue already noted as being of concern to Athanasius. There is something significantly improper about God creating human beings as human beings and then not intervening when they were being lost. Each of the phrases Athanasius uses to describe humanity's pristine state—κατ' εἰκόνα Θεοῦ γενέσθαι, γενόμενον λογικὸν, and ἐννοίας αὐτὸν λαβεῖν περὶ Θεοῦ—is offered on its own as an apparently sufficient description of humanity. Their presence in parallel is suggestive that, as we have had cause to observe, the three concepts of image, rationality, and knowledge of God, are significantly intertwined in Athanasius' understanding.

In the second extract the argument is slightly different. It is not the incongruity of God's handiwork being undone; of rational people living like animals; or people who once were considered worthy of knowing God no longer receiving that knowledge. Rather it is the fact that it is 'not right' (οὐκ ἔδει) that those who once partook of the image should die and be destroyed. In both arguments there is a strong conviction that humanity's original share in the image establishes a framework that renders non-action by God in the face of humanity's sin incongruous at best, and problematic at worst. Both too give the issue of the image's restoration a distinctive importance[201]—

[201] Pettersen, *Athanasius*, 65 draws a stronger implication from this argument, that for Athanasius, the renewal of humanity is not simply a propriety choice, but grounded in God's immutable nature,

though this reason for the atonement addresses all aspects of humanity's problem, not just the loss of the image.

Having addressed the question of the propriety of the atonement, Athanasius turns to the question of the mechanism:

> Τί οὖν ἔδει ποιεῖν τὸν Θεόν; Ἢ τί ἔδει γενέσθαι, ἀλλ' ἢ τὸ κατ' εἰκόνα πάλιν ἀνανεῶσαι, ἵνα δι' αὐτοῦ πάλιν αὐτὸν γνῶναι δυνηθῶσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι; Τοῦτο δὲ πῶς ἂν ἐγεγόνει, εἰ μὴ αὐτῆς τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ εἰκόνος παραγενομένης τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; Δι' ἀνθρώπων μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἦν δυνατόν, ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτοὶ κατ' εἰκόνα γεγόνασιν· ἀλλ' οὐδὲ δι' ἀγγέλων· οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ αὐτοί εἰσιν εἰκόνες. Ὅθεν ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγος δι' ἑαυτοῦ παρεγένετο, ἵνα ὡς Εἰκὼν ὢν τοῦ Πατρὸς τὸν κατ' εἰκόνα ἄνθρωπον ἀνακτίσαι δυνηθῇ….Οὐκοῦν ἑτέρου πρὸς ταύτην τὴν χρείαν οὐκ ἦν, εἰ μὴ τῆς Εἰκόνος τοῦ Πατρός. [202]

As we observed with the problem of corruption and death, Athanasius' language on this issue suggests that there was no possibility of another path for God to have taken than that which he took. The repeated use of ἔδει on the one hand and οὐκ ἦν δυνατόν on the other indicates that Athanasius considers this aspect of the atonement to require the Word. Mere humans and angels are explicitly considered and rejected as possibilities, and, in their place, it is claimed that αὐτῆς τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ εἰκόνος παραγενομένης is required in order to renew the image on humanity.[203] The language used at this point is suggestive that it is not only the Word in comparison with humans and angels who was the sole possible agent, but also in comparison with the Father and the Spirit.[204] 'Image' is one of Athanasius' titles for the Word; a title that—like

'People's renewal in the divine image stems therefore not from choice but from God's immutable and good nature', suggesting that it was necessary for God to renew humanity.

[202] *DI* 13.23-31; 34-35

[203] Also Roldanus, *Le Christ,* 100; Frost, 'Mensch', 333

[204] Leithart, *Athanasius,* 118, while not addressing the issue directly, appears to opt for the congruity of the Word's role rather than the necessity, speaking of it being 'fitting' for the renewal to be undertaken by the Word rather than 'necessary'. Anatolios, *Coherence,* 125 appears to recognize that Athanasius' language inclines towards necessity, "only the real Image could renew the image of God within us" although he explicitly addresses this only in relation to creaturely alternatives rather than the other

'Word', 'Son', 'Power', and 'Wisdom'—discloses something proper to the Word; and which distinguishes him uniquely from either the Father or the Spirit. Consequently, the language used at this point implies something beyond the assertions that Athanasius explicitly articulates, and infers something distinctive about this aspect of the atonement.

Unlike the issues of mortality and corruption—where the qualities the Word had that were needed were proper to him, but were also, predominantly, qualities proper to every person of the Godhead—the language of the image being renewed and requiring the Image himself to become incarnate suggests that only the Word could perform this; for only he, within the Godhead, is the true Image of God. This would appear to be a likely implication of Athanasius' final words in this extract, ἑτέρου…τὴν χρείαν οὐκ ἦν.

Nonetheless, irrespective of how this potential implication should be understood, the basic contours of Athanasius' thought are apparent. The solution required involves the renewing (ἀνανεῶσαι) of the image in humanity, with the observation that it is through the image that humanity would again come to know God (δι' αὐτοῦ πάλιν αὐτὸν γνῶναι δυνηθῶσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι); a claim that we will shortly have cause to examine more closely.

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persons of the Godhead. Similarly also Robertson, *Mediation*, 200 and possibly Weinandy, *Athanasius*, 35

Athanasius then develops at some length, by way of analogy, the mechanism for how the image would be renewed in the opening lines of *DI* 14:

> Ὡς γὰρ τῆς γραφείσης ἐν ξύλῳ μορφῆς παραφανισθείσης ἐκ τῶν ἔξωθεν ῥύπων, πάλιν χρεία τοῦτον παραγενέσθαι, οὗ καὶ ἔστιν ἡ μορφή, ἵνα ἀνακαινισθῆναι ἡ εἰκὼν δυνηθῇ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ ὕλῃ—διὰ γὰρ τὴν ἐκείνου εἰκὼν δυνηθῇ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ ὕλῃ—διὰ γὰρ τὴν ἐκείνου γραφὴν καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ ὕλη ἐν ᾗ καὶ γέγραπται οὐκ ἐκβάλλεται, ἀλλ᾽ ἐν αὐτῇ ἀνατυποῦται. Κατὰ τοῦτο καὶ ὁ πανάγιος τοῦ Πατρὸς Υἱός, Εἰκὼν ὢν τοῦ Πατρός, παρεγένετο ἐπὶ τοὺς ἡμετέρους τόπους, ἵνα τὸν κατ᾽ αὐτὸν πεποιημένον ἄνθρωπον ἀνακαινίσῃ, καὶ ὡς ἀπολόμενον εὕρῃ διὰ τῆς τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἀφέσεως, ᾗ φησι καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τοῖς Εὐαγγελίοις· «Ἦλθον τὸ ἀπολόμενον εὑρεῖν καὶ σῶσαι.» Ὅθεν καὶ πρὸς τοὺς Ἰουδαίους ἔλεγεν· «Ἐὰν μή τις ἀναγεννηθῇ», οὐ τὴν ἐκ γυναικῶν γέννησιν σημαίνων ὥσπερ ὑπενόουν ἐκεῖνοι, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀναγεννωμένην καὶ ἀνακτι ζομένην ψυχὴν ἐν τῷ κατ᾽ εἰκόνα δηλῶν.[205]

A likeness is inscribed onto wood, and then the likeness is defaced by a covering of the image such that it cannot be observed properly. This description of the problem is consistent with our examination of Athanasius' more expansive treatment of the issue in *CG* and the earlier chapters of *DI,* where his language of the loss of the image would appear to fall short of a complete elimination of the image. As observed in that chapter, being made after the Image is understood as involving the existence of a rational soul in the human person—and this soul is described as, in some sense, eternal. The image is not ultimately lost, despite becoming increasingly attenuated as humanity progresses down the path of corruption, reflected in Athanasius' language in *DI* 13.

Athanasius' description of the mechanism of the atonement in this extract is consistent with this broader framework, for the likeness of the portrait is obscured by dirt, not obliterated.[206] Further, the likeness is renewed (ἀνακαινισθῆναι) rather than

[205] *DI* 14.1-13
[206] Similarly Robertson, *Mediation,* 201

created again. There is no suggestion of the 'added grace' having been lost so that it needs to be bestowed again as though a new act of creation is required. This is also consistent with our observations of Athanasius' overarching concerns from the previous chapter—where he clearly distinguishes between creation and redemption; arguing that redemption (even when it deals with issues such as corruption and mortality, connected to nature) cannot proceed simply on the basis of divine commands as did creation. Both with that issue, and now with image, the atonement addresses what is there and not what is non-existent. Hence, this illustration's portrayal of a renewal of something increasingly obscured, and not a recreation of something that has ceased to exist, is reflective of this broader concern.

This extract also forges connections with the focus of the next chapter. The reference to Luke 19:10 (coming to seek and to save what was lost) glosses this as occurring through the forgiveness of sins. This implies that there is sufficient common ground between the issue of restoration of the image and the forgiveness of sins for Athanasius to discuss the renewal of the image at some length from the beginning of *DI* 13; connect it to the issue of forgiveness and; ground that issue with a reference to Scripture, before returning, by use of a Ὅθεν, to a primary focus on the restoration of the image that, we will argue, continues through to the end of *DI* 19.

This sidewise glance at other aspects of the atonement, while in the midst of developing an argument relating to a different strand, is characteristically Athanasian. But it is not random**.** The shift from renewal of image to forgiveness of sins and then back to renewal of image is because both of these aspects of the atonement are

effected, for Athanasius', 'externally' (ἔξωθεν).[207] Luke 19:10 can be understood as a reference to the forgiveness of sins in *DI* 14, and then as a reference to the Word revealing the Father to humanity, and so restoring the image, in *DI* 15: because both forgiveness and restoration of the image do not occur 'inside us'(ἐν ἑαυτοῖς). Unlike the issue of mortality and corruption which are properties of humanity's creaturely nature and so require an atonement that occurs within humanity (effected in the Word's body); renewal of the image and forgiveness involve relationships that are more external to humanity, and so require an atonement that is similarly more external. This is an issue to which we will return at greater length in the concluding chapters, but its appearance here warrants a brief foreshadowing of the argument to come.

The precise nature of how the likeness is to be re-inscribed is not explicitly explained, yet the question seems significant for this aspect of the atonement. Athanasius' language in *DI* 13, δι' αὐτοῦ πάλιν αὐτὸν γνῶναι δυνηθῶσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι,[208] prepares the reader to anticipate a renewal of the image that would precede the Word's revelation of the Father and renew the knowledge of God. Humanity is able to know God 'through the image'—so it is not unreasonable to expect that the image will be renewed as a precondition to humanity then being given this knowledge. The formal dimension of the image must precede the material. In light of this, Athanasius' actual next step is arguably as surprising as it is understated. His argument in *DI* 14 continues:

[207] Weinandy, *Athanasius*, 35 notes the confluence of aspects of the atonement but does not propose this rationale for their existence together here.
[208] *DI* 13.24.25

> Ὅθεν καὶ πρὸς τοὺς Ἰουδαίους ἔλεγεν· «Ἐὰν μή τις ἀναγεννηθῇ», οὐ τὴν ἐκ γυναικῶν γέννησιν σημαίνων ὥσπερ ὑπενόουν ἐκεῖνοι, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀναγεννωμένην καὶ ἀνακτιζομένην ψυχὴν ἐν τῷ κατ᾽ εἰκόνα δηλῶν. Ἐπειδὴ δὲ καὶ εἰδωλομανία καὶ ἀθεότης κατεῖχε τὴν οἰκουμένην καὶ ἡ περὶ Θεοῦ γνῶσις ἐκέκρυπτο, τίνος ἦν διδάξαι τὴν οἰκουμένην περὶ Πατρός;[209]

The first sentence indicates that Athanasius' attention remains firmly fixed on the renewal of the image in humanity. John 3:5 is quoted and is glossed as a reference to the soul being born again, which then appears to be placed in an epexegetical construction with ἀνακτιζομένην…ἐν τῷ κατ᾽ εἰκόνα. This mention of the soul's recreation in the things that are in accordance with the Image continues Athanasius' interest in the renewal of the image. Hence, his ensuing sentence is unexpected. Athanasius raises the question of whose task it is to διδάξαι τὴν οἰκουμένην περὶ Πατρός. This appears to be a shift of topic away from restoration of the image to the next step in the sequence; revealing the Father to humanity—now that humanity is again able (with the image restored) to know God.

As this new topic continues through the rest of *DI* 14, Athanasius proposes, then rejects, both human beings, and creation as suitable teachers of the knowledge of God before asserting the need for the Word to communicate this knowledge.[210] He then entertains the possibility of the Word discharging this activity through the mediation of creation as originally intended, before concluding, *a posteriori*, that creation's previous failure when humanity's eyes were directed heavenward indicates its incapacity to help a downward looking race.

[209] *DI* 14.10-15
[210] So Robertson, *Mediation,* 201

From this he next deduces the appropriateness of the Word revealing himself (and hence the Father) through the works done in a human body, ἐκ τῶν δι᾽ αὐτοῦ τοῦ σώματος ἔργων γνώσωνται τὸν ἐν τῷ σώματι τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγον, καὶ δι᾽ αὐτοῦ τὸν Πατέρα.[211] This interest in the revealing Word's activity dominates *DI* 15-19. In *DI* 15 and 16 Athanasius argues that it is apt for humans receive teaching concerning the Father through the human body. As *DI* 15 begins:

> Ὡς γὰρ ἀγαθὸς διδάσκαλος κηδόμενος τῶν ἑαυτοῦ μαθητῶν, τοὺς μὴ δυναμένους ἐκ τῶν μειζόνων ὠφεληθῆναι, πάντως διὰ τῶν εὐτελεστέρων συγκαταβαίνων αὐτοὺς παιδεύει· οὕτως καὶ ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγος, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Παῦλός φησιν· «Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἐν τῇ σοφίᾳ τοῦ Θεοῦ οὐκ ἔγνω ὁ κόσμος διὰ τῆς σοφίας τὸν Θεόν, εὐδόκησεν ὁ Θεὸς διὰ τῆς μωρίας τοῦ κηρύγματος σῶσαι τοὺς πιστεύοντας». Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἀποστραφέντες τὴν πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν θεωρίαν καὶ ὡς ἐν βυθῷ βυθισθέντες κάτω τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντες, ἐν γενέσει καὶ τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς τὸν Θεὸν ἀνεζήτουν, ἀνθρώπους θνητοὺς καὶ δαίμονας ἑαυτοῖς θεοὺς ἀνατυπούμενοι· τούτου ἕνεκα ὁ φιλάνθρωπος καὶ κοινὸς πάντων Σωτήρ, ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγος, λαμβάνει ἑαυτῷ σῶμα, καὶ ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἀναστρέφεται, καὶ τὰς αἰσθήσεις πάντων ἀνθρώπων προσλαμβάνει, ἵνα οἱ ἐν σωματικοῖς νοοῦντες εἶναι τὸν Θεόν, ἀφ᾽ ὧν ὁ Κύριος ἐργάζεται διὰ τῶν τοῦ σώματος ἔργων, ἀπ᾽ αὐτῶν νοήσωσι τὴν ἀλήθειαν, καὶ δι᾽ αὐτοῦ τὸν Πατέρα λογίσωνται.[212]

The revelation that occurs through the Word's action in a human body is compared to a teacher choosing a strategy suitable for a pupil—a very close analogy given the relationship between revelation and teaching with which Athanasius appears to operate.[213]

Athanasius recaps humanity's failure to know God: its turning away from the contemplation of God; its sunken abysmal state; its fixating on sensible things—

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[211] *DI* 14.38-40. See Robertson, *Mediation,* 202 for the importance of works done in the body.
[212] *DI* 15.1-16
[213] Behr, *Nicene,* 198-9; Young, *Nicaea,* 54, in what is probably an allusion to this extract, notes that the image is renewed by the Logos dwelling in a human being and teaching humanity at their own level and so reveals God through direct contact.

seeking God in idolatry, and the worship of demons. The list makes it clear that Athanasius sees the incarnation as the solution to humanity's turn from the knowledge of God—as well as its increasingly irrational and sensible trajectory resulting from that turning.[214]

This knowledge of God is vouchsafed to humanity the Word. As people come to know the Word *as the Word* they come to know the Father, δι' αὐτοῦ τὸν Πατέρα λογίσωνται.[215] However, unlike the issues of corruption and mortality, the incarnation itself is not the solution—simply the condition under which the problem can be addressed. It is not simply that the Word of God 'took to himself a body' (uniting Deity and humanity) but that he redirected our downcast senses as he '*lived* among humanity as a man'. This focus on the Word's 'works' (τῶν ἔργων) continues throughout *DI* 15, with attention given first to creation's confession of Christ as Lord, then to the works of the Word compared to mere human beings, then to his exorcisms of the demons, and finally to the resurrection.[216]

In *DI* 16, Athanasius offers this revelatory dimension of the atonement as the rationale for the life of Jesus before proceeding to explain the two-fold saving effect of the incarnation:

> Διὰ δὲ τοῦτο, οὐδὲ παρ' αὐτὰ παραγενόμενος τὴν θυσίαν τὴν ὑπὲρ πάντων ἐπετέλει, παραδιδοὺς τὸ σῶμα τῷ θανάτῳ, καὶ ἀνιστῶν αὐτό, ἀφανῆ ἑαυτὸν διὰ τούτου ποιῶν. Ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐμφανῆ ἑαυτὸν διὰ τούτου καθίστη διαμένων ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ τοιαῦτα τελῶν ἔργα καὶ σημεῖα διδούς, ἃ μηκέτι ἄνθρωπον ἀλλὰ Θεὸν Λόγον αὐτὸν ἐγνώριζον. Ἀμφότερα γὰρ ἐφιλανθρωπεύετο ὁ Σωτὴρ διὰ τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως, ὅτι καὶ τὸν θάνατον ἐξ ἡμῶν ἠφάνιζε, καὶ ἀνεκαίνιζεν

[214] Similarly Leithart, *Athanasius,* 131; Frost, 'Mensch', 332.
[215] Similarly Weinandy, *Athanasius,* 36
[216] Similarly Leithart, *Athanasius,* 131-132; also Weinandy, *Athanasius,* 36.

> ἡμᾶς· καὶ ὅτι ἀφανὴς ὢν καὶ ἀόρατος, διὰ τῶν ἔργων ἐνέφαινε, καὶ ἐγνώριζεν ἑαυτὸν εἶναι τὸν Λόγον τοῦ Πατρός, τὸν τοῦ παντὸς ἡγεμόνα καὶ βασιλέα.[217]

Διὰ δὲ τοῦτο connects this extract to the previous discussion of the Word's activities to fill the cosmos with the knowledge of God. This ambition to spread the knowledge of God into every corner explains the reasonableness of a delay between the incarnation and the death of Christ.

There are three aspects to the atonement that Athanasius identifies in this extract; one connected to the death of Christ, and two to the incarnation.[218] The first of these, relating to Christ's death, is explained in characteristically Athanasian terms as the Word fulfilling the sacrifice on behalf of all (τὴν θυσίαν τὴν ὑπὲρ πάντων ἐπετέλει) and delivering up the body to death (παραδιδοὺς τὸ σῶμα τῷ θανάτῳ). This will be the subject of our next chapter.

Meanwhile, Athanasius argues that undertaking this aspect of the atonement was delayed because the invisible Word 'made himself visible through this'—where τούτου refers to the preceding τὸ σῶμα. This is then expanded with the explanation that the Word remained in the body, presumably rather than immediately dying and rising again so as to return to invisibility, in order to perform such works (ἔργα) and signs (σημεῖα) that ensured he was known as 'no longer a man but God the Word'.

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[217] *DI* 16.16-25

[218] The first is regularly overlooked by commentators. Thomson, for example, considers only the two elements linked to the incarnation as being '…the two basic ideas in Athanasius' doctrine of redemption.' *Athanasius*, 173, n.2.

The significance of this is then indicated in Athanasius' concluding sentence. There are two ways in which the Saviour 'did a kindness' (ἐφιλανθρωπεύετο) through the incarnation. First, through the incarnation "the Saviour … removed death from us and renewed us"—a standard Athanasian summary of divinization. Second, "through the works he revealed and made himself known to be the Son of God and to be the Word of the Father; ruler and king of the cosmos." The significant construction is διὰ τῶν ἔργων, inasmuch as it indicates that the revealing of the Son does not come through the incarnation alone, but through the bodily works. Again, the incarnation's redemptive significance is the enabling of the works that reveal the Son as the Son, Word, king and ruler.[219]

Two things in particular should be noted. First, this pattern of three redemptive elements: death, renewal, and communication of knowledge, mirrors exactly the structure we observed back in *DI* 10, only here it is somewhat expanded. As a consequence of that expansion, the redemptive significance of the Word's revelation of himself as the Word through the body's works is expressed even more clearly than in *DI* 10. It is not a secondary or marginal concern to the weightier matters of divinization or the death of Christ, but is placed on an equal footing—to such an extent that its accomplishment explains the death of Christ not occurring immediately upon the incarnation.

[219] Anatolios, *Coherence*, 75; See also Behr, *Nicene*, 199-200, Robertson, *Mediation*, 203 for a compatible reading.

Second, language of renewing the image would appear to be completely absent in this three-fold description of the atonement—despite the close connection that exists between renewal of the image and communication of the knowledge of God through the Word. Between chapter ten and chapter sixteen an interest in the Word's role as the instrument of revelation has appeared to entirely displace the renewal of the image motif.

This interpretation is open to contest. It could plausibly be argued that in the construction ὅτι καὶ τὸν θάνατον ἐξ ἡμῶν ἠφάνιζε, καὶ ἀνεκαίνιζεν ἡμᾶς, only the first clause refers to the topic of death and corruption; the mention of 'renewed us' (ἀνεκαίνιζεν ἡμᾶς) most naturally refers to renewal of the image in humanity—given the way that this terminology refers in *DI* 14 to the renewal (ἀνακαινισθῆναι) of the likeness of the portrait in the wood. On this view, Athanasius is saying that the first thing that the incarnation accomplished was to efface death from people and renew them in the image; then—those things being accomplished—the incarnation secondarily enabled the Word to remain in the realm of human existence and perform sufficient miraculous signs to demonstrate his divine identity.

In this light, the concept of divinization requires expansion to include renewal in the image as well as addressing mortality and corruption—and this then indicates the mechanism whereby the image is renewed despite its apparent lack of explanation in *DI* 13-14. The image is renewed in the same fashion that mortality and corruption are addressed: the image is renewed first in the Word's own body as the image is reinscribed by the joining of the original Image with his created likeness, and then

extended to the human race.[220] While this is a plausible reading, it will be argued that it is ultimately unlikely.

In *DI* 17 Athanasius moves to address misunderstandings that could arise from his claim that the Word had taken a human body to himself. Nonetheless the basic concern remains with the Word's activity in self-revelation, and hence of the Father. As he addresses the same issues across chapters 17 and 18, he increasingly draws attention to those activities that occurred in the Word's body which reveal him to be God, the Power of God, the Creator, and Lord.[221] Then in *DI* 19 Athanasius begins with the following:

> Ταῦτα δὲ πάντα ποιεῖν τῷ Σωτῆρι καλῶς ἔχειν ἐδόκει, ἵν' ἐπειδὴ τὴν ἐν τοῖς πᾶσιν αὐτοῦ πρόνοιαν ἠγνόησαν οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ οὐ κατενόησαν τὴν διὰ τῆς κτίσεως αὐτοῦ θεότητα, κἂν ἐκ τῶν διὰ τοῦ σώματος ἔργων αὐτοῦ ἀναβλέψωσι, καὶ ἔννοιαν λάβωσι δι' αὐτοῦ τῆς εἰς τὸν Πατέρα γνώσεως, ἐκ

[220] See Rashdall, *Idea*, 297 for a reading unsympathetic to this interpretation. He argues that the image is renewed by the incarnation itself and that the mechanism whereby it extends into the human race is 'never fully explained' but 'at bottom very much resembles the "sympathetic magic" of primitive man'. However, even Rashdall acknowledges that Athanasius *does* explain the process and inasmuch as he does, it is not the incarnation *per se* that effects the renewal of the image in humanity, and still less any primitive sympathetic magic, but the 'ethical and intelligible consequences of Christ's work' and in particular 'Christ's miracles' and 'the effects of His teaching and example'. The waters are somewhat muddied, however, as Rashdall appears to conflate corruption and loss of the image into the one issue and so almost reads the renewal of the image as occurring through 'sympathetic magic' while divinization occurs through instruction—essentially the opposite connection of Athanasian atonement motifs to those argued here. By not recognizing that corruption and loss of image are two different, albeit intrinsically related, problems each of which needs its own solution, he conflates the problems and the solutions together and so makes the resulting picture appear somewhat absurd and incoherent. Pettersen, *Athanasius*, 72 appears to take a fundamentally similar approach, albeit with far more sympathy to the source material, arguing that in salvation the knowledge of God is given internally rather than its originally external form because the Word reveals himself as Word to his own humanity and so secures the reception of revelation in his incarnation, a line of interpretation that models the giving of the knowledge of God upon the securing of the reception of grace that was discussed in chapter 3. It is worth noting that he offers no quotations or references to Athanasius for this part of his exposition of Athanasius' thought, and it is difficult to locate a passage where this mechanism is explicitly expressed unless one conflates reception of the knowledge of God with the reception of grace, which is by no means an indefensible position. However it is arguably an interpretive step beyond the actual words that Athanasius uses.

[221] Behr, *Nicene*, 200 notes the concern with the Word's revelation of his divinity through the works of the body in these chapters, although does not appear to link it with the issue of the renewal of the image. Weinandy *Athanasius* has a good, albeit brief, discussion on pages 39-40.

> τῶν κατὰ μέρος τὴν εἰς τὰ ὅλα αὐτοῦ πρόνοιαν, ὡς προεῖπον, ἀναλογιζόμενοι.[222]

As Athanasius closes these chapters, his concern continues to be on the "Saviour" giving knowledge of the Father through himself. Here in chapter 19, Athanasius rehearses the main points of his argument from previous chapters; beginning with the failure of people to understand either the Word's providence or divinity from creation—and thus the need for revelation to occur from the works done in the body. Athanasius then points to the Word's authority over demons and their confession that he is their Lord; next, the witness of creation to his Sonship in the hours of his death. As with the previous chapters, there is no mention of the image or its renewal.

Consequently the last mention of the term 'image' until *DI* 20 occurs in the quoted extract from *DI* 14 where Athanasius appears to change focus mid-chapter from discussing the renewal of the image to commencing a lengthy discussion of the communication of the knowledge of God within two sentences. There is also a possible mention of the renewal image in the above extract from *DI* 16 in which the idea may occur without image language.

Along with these details, there is an absence that seems significant. Athanasius does not appear to link the Word's communication of the knowledge of the Father through himself by means of the works done in the human body, to a pre-existing renewed image in humanity that enables humanity to receive this knowledge. Unlike his observations regarding mortality—where Athanasius contrasts how people died

[222] *DI* 19.1-6

'before' with how they die 'now'—there does not appear to be any equivalent here. That is, there is no contrast of 'before when the image was (almost) lost and we were unable to receive the knowledge of God' with, 'but now that the image has been renewed by the incarnation of the Word we are able to know God when he is revealed through the works done in the Word's body'. Renewal of the image and the communication of the knowledge of God are almost never explicitly related to each other in this fashion despite Athanasius' statement in *DI* 13 that we are able to know God through the image (δι' αὐτοῦ πάλιν αὐτὸν γνῶναι δυνηθῶσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι). Each theme of renewal of the image, and revelation of God, is apparently developed independently and without any clear, explicit mention that the image has already been renewed, enabling humanity's reception of the revelation.

In light of these factors, it seems probable that renewal of the image and the communication of the knowledge of God are more closely related—and related beyond what may be suggested alone by the words δι' αὐτοῦ πάλιν αὐτὸν γνῶναι δυνηθῶσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι. In *DI* 14 Athanasius is not changing from one topic (renewal of the image) to another related one (communication of the knowledge of God), or at least, that is not *all* that is occurring. It is more probable that, for Athanasius, the communication of the knowledge of God is the mechanism whereby the image of God is renewed.[223] People are not (i) made rational by the incarnation, and then (ii) given

[223] See also Young, *Nicaea*, 54, Weinandy, *Athanasius*, 35, and especially page 45 where divinization and what we have called the 'forensic' dimension are grouped together as one half of the atonement and the second half is that, 'by becoming man, the Word likewise made known the truth of the Father and so allowed humankind once more to obtain divine knowledge, thus restoring to human beings their proper divine image.' The 'thus' indicates that communication of the knowledge of God is the mechanism for the renewal of the image.

the knowledge of God through the works done in the Word's body; such that they had a phase where they were rational but ignorant of God.

Athanasius' seeming shift of topics in *DI* 14 is instead a continuation of the one thought. In the language of the analogy of the portrait that begins *DI* 14, the likeness is not renewed automatically simply by the coming of the person whose portrait it is. His coming, and his remaining while the portrait is reinscribed, is what enables the renewal of the likeness in the wood. The coming alone does not effect the renewal. This is why discussion of the renewal of the image moves to a discussion of the communication of the knowledge of God precisely at the point where the reader might anticipate an explanation of the mechanism whereby the image is renewed when the Word comes to the human realm.[224]

In this light, the extract from *DI* 16 is parallel with the one from *DI* 10: in the former the sequence consists of (i) removing the curse by dying, (ii) divinization, and (iii) teaching; in the latter the order is (i) effacing death by dying, (ii) divinization, and (iii) teaching. Both sets contain the same three items, and the theme of renewal of the image occurs as part of the concept of the Word's teaching and revelation of the Father.

[224] Rashdall, *Idea*, 297 recognizes that '...so far as the process is explained at all, the restoration would seem to be due to ethical and intellectual consequences of Christ's work...to the confidence inspired by Christ's miracles, to the effects of His teaching and example...' even though his own interpretation gives this only a small place.

Perhaps the strongest argument against this reading is *DI* 20, which begins by listing the four different dimensions of the atonement that we have discussed thus far: corruption, image, mortality, and teaching about the Father, as a summary of the discussion to that point before it turns to discussing the paying of the debt that humanity had incurred through the offering of sacrifice in death that will be the focus in the chapters immediately following *DI* 20.

> Τὴν μὲν οὖν αἰτίαν τῆς σωματικῆς ἐπιφανείας αὐτοῦ, ὡς οἷόν τε ἦν, ἐκ μέρους, καὶ ὡς ἡμεῖς ἠδυνήθημεν νοῆσαι, προείπομεν, ὅτι οὐκ ἄλλου ἦν τὸ φθαρτὸν εἰς ἀφθαρσίαν μεταβαλεῖν, εἰ μὴ αὐτοῦ τοῦ Σωτῆρος, τοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων πεποιηκότος τὰ ὅλα· καὶ οὐκ ἄλλου ἦν τὸ κατ᾽ εἰκόνα πάλιν ἀνακτίσαι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, εἰ μὴ τῆς Εἰκόνος τοῦ Πατρός· καὶ οὐκ ἄλλου ἦν τὸ θνητὸν ἀθάνατον ἀναστῆσαι, εἰ μὴ τῆς Αὐτοζωῆς οὔσης τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ· καὶ οὐκ ἄλλου ἦν περὶ Πατρὸς διδάξαι, καὶ τὴν εἰδώλων καθαιρῆσαι θρησκείαν, εἰ μὴ τοῦ τὰ πάντα διακοσμοῦντος Λόγου, καὶ μόνου τοῦ Πατρὸς ὄντος Υἱοῦ μονογενοῦς ἀληθινοῦ.[225]

Each of these four summaries of aspects of the atonement share the same characteristic already noted, in which a particular dimension of the Word's identity is mentioned as the quality required to address the problem.

- Corruption is linked with the Word's role in creating everything originally—a link that reflects the connection we have observed between corruption and non-existence.
- Mortality is connected to the quality of being life itself.
- Recreating people in accordance with the image is linked to being the Image of the Father.

[225] *DI* 20.1-10

- Teaching about the Father and overturning idolatry is linked to being the Word; to the Word's providence in the cosmos, and to his identity as the Father's Son.

It could therefore be argued that the existence of both the renewal of the image and the teaching of the Father alongside corruption and mortality clearly indicates that image and teaching are two issues, not one, and so counters the idea that the two things are addressed in the one atoning act.

However, the issues of corruption and mortality are addressed by means of the same mechanism (or mechanisms, in light of the diversity of arguments that Athanasius offers), and, as observed above, are usually discussed together. They are not resolved in two separate acts that are chronologically related as 'before' and 'after' each other. In many ways they can be considered two sides of a single problem, the solution to which can be located in the single term, "divinization".

Something similar seems to be occurring with renewal of the image and the knowledge of God. Athanasius identifies the image in humanity with a rational soul, which is distinct from knowledge of God. He also states that it is the image that enables humans to know God, and that relationship between the two themes does not have a parallel with corruption and mortality.

Nonetheless, that does not require the two themes of image and knowledge to be treated as two separate issues dealt with differently: image addressed through the

incarnation as another component of divinization; and knowledge through the works of the incarnate Word. The parallel with the relationship that exists between corruption and mortality is sufficient to suggest that renewal of the image, and the giving of the knowledge of God (the formal and material dimensions of the image) occur simultaneously, through the same activity of the Word. The image is renewed as humanity once again turns to the knowledge of God, even as the increasingly renewed image in humanity enables humanity to receive that knowledge to ever increasing degrees.

This both illuminates and coheres with theological concerns observed both in Athanasius' treatment of anthropology, and with his concern for moral incorruption as a requirement for theological understanding. Athanasius' treatment of the Image, and humanity's creation in accordance with the Image, reduces the distance between image as a formal capacity to act and knowledge as a material thing that is received by the form. The Word is the Image of God, and that Image of the Word seems not simply a power the Word has to know the Father, but the Father's likeness on display. That likeness to the Father is in turn an important element in enabling the Son to reveal the Father in his self-revelation. In knowing the Son, a person simultaneously comes to know the Father – the 'Original' of which the Son is Image.

At the level of the relationship of the Son and the Father, 'Image' is not a mere formal category, but has substantive content to it, which reflects Athanasius' highly realist approach to abstract concepts. Rationality does not exist as a contentless abstraction—it is, for Athanasius, intrinsically and necessarily connected to the knowledge of God.

When humanity was given the extra grace of being in the image originally, this entailed a primordial knowledge of God—not merely a *capacity* to know God that was then fulfilled by subsequently learning. Humanity's knowledge of God began simultaneous with humanity's existence according to the Image, at the point that humanity was created. This similarly accords with the understanding of the resolution of the apparent contradiction between *CG* 30's optimism regarding humanity's capacity to know God without further divine action and *DI*13-14's pessimism discussed in chapter one. As we observed there, Athanasius appears to hold that humanity has, not simply an abstract power to receive a knowledge given, but the actual knowledge within itself such that humanity can come to know God simply by turning inward. The element of the Word that exists within the human person gives not only the power of rationality, but also contains some substance of that rationality. Thus, in *DI* 11 Athanasius can write,

> Ἢ πῶς ἂν εἶεν λογικοὶ μὴ γινώσκοντες τὸν τοῦ Πατρὸς Λόγον, ἐν ᾧ καὶ γεγόνασιν; Οὐδὲν γὰρ οὐδὲ ἀλόγων διαφέρειν ἔμελλον, εἰ πλέον οὐδὲν τῶν περιγείων ἐπεγίνωσκον.[226]

This is a question and a statement that together indicate that rationality, and the object to which rationality is orientated, cannot exist separately. Without the knowledge of God human beings cannot be rational. While the image, and the rationality it produces, is the means whereby people receive the knowledge, it would appear to be a reinscription on the human person by the revelation of God. God's gift of knowledge (of God) somehow renews the pre-existing capacity human beings had to know God as well as providing the knowledge of God.

[226] *DI* 11.11-13

Such an understanding also reflects Athanasius' view on the place of moral purification in the activity of learning about God, as expressed in the final chapter of *DI* 57. In that chapter, Athanasius argues that people need to add to the knowledge of Scripture, βίου καλοῦ καὶ ψυχῆς καθαρᾶς καὶ τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν ἀρετῆς,[227] and argues that in order to receive the knowledge of an object there is a requirement to become like the object of which knowledge is sought:

> Ἄνευ γὰρ καθαρᾶς διανοίας καὶ τῆς πρὸς τοὺς ἁγίους τοῦ βίου μιμήσεως, οὐκ ἄν τις καταλαβεῖν δυνηθείη τοὺς τῶν ἁγίων λόγους. Ὥσπερ γὰρ εἴ τις ἐθελήσειεν ἰδεῖν τὸ τοῦ ἡλίου φῶς, πάντως τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν ἀποσμήχει καὶ λαμπρύνει, σχεδὸν ὅμοιον τῷ ποθουμένῳ ἑαυτὸν διακαθαίρων, ἵνα οὕτως φῶς γενόμενος ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς τὸ τοῦ ἡλίου φῶς ἴδῃ, ἢ ὡς εἴ τις θελήσειεν ἰδεῖν πόλιν ἢ χώραν, πάντως ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον ἀφικνεῖται τῆς θέας ἕνεκεν· οὕτως ὁ θέλων τῶν θεολόγων τὴν διάνοιαν καταλαβεῖν, προαπονίψαι καὶ φῶς ἴδῃ, ἢ ὡς εἴ τις θελήσειεν ἰδεῖν πόλιν ἢ χώραν, πάντως ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον ἀφικνεῖται τῆς θέας ἕνεκεν· οὕτως ὁ θέλων τῶν θεολόγων τὴν διάνοιαν καταλαβεῖν, προαπονίψαι καὶ προαποπλῦναι τῷ βίῳ τὴν ψυχὴν ὀφείλει, καὶ πρὸς αὐτοὺς τοὺς ἁγίους ἀφικέσθαι τῇ ὁμοιότητι τῶν πράξεων αὐτῶν, ἵνα σὺν αὐτοῖς τῇ ἀγωγῇ τῆς συζήσεως γενόμενος, τὰ καὶ αὐτοῖς ἀποκαλυφθέντα παρὰ Θεοῦ κατανοήσῃ…[228]

Athanasius draws on the analogy of looking at the sun to argue that the person who wishes to know an object must become like the object. The eye must be cleansed of anything that would darken it, and so be clear to receive light, in order to perceive an object that is nothing but light. In a similar fashion, the soul must be cleansed of moral degradation and corruption in order to understand the Scriptures.

This argument reflects the effect that moral corruption has on the image in humanity: growth in corruption is 'dirt' that effaces the likeness, and so renders humanity increasingly irrational. However, it also indicates that the image in humanity grants the power to be able to know the revelation of God because it establishes a basic

[227] *DI* 57.2
[228] *DI* 57

likeness between the knower and the knowledge. The image in humanity is not merely an abstract power, but a moral likeness to the saints who received the revelation and whose words now convey that knowledge to others. It is this similarity that enables the power to receive. In the case of the renewal of the image, this leads to an emphasis on moral progress as the handmaiden to theological capacity: people must enter into increasing moral integrity if they desire to observe progress in their participation in the knowledge of God.

It also suggests that the renewal of the image is the limiting factor in the reception of revelation. Nonetheless, the context of the extract indicates that this renewal occurs within the context of revelation, and does not precede it. Athanasius speaks of τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν ἀρετῆς and not simply virtue alone, which suggests that it is moral transformation within the context of an already existing relationship with God through Christ on view—and not a moral transformation that precedes faith in Christ. This is strengthened by the beginning of *DI* 57, where Athanasius speaks of adding moral attributes to the study and knowledge of Scripture—rather than adding the study of Scripture to moral transformation.

Athanasius' position is that the study of Scripture should result in the moral transformation of the student, and that transformation is a prerequisite for further understanding of Scripture and hence knowledge of God.[229] Thus, his practical advice for the study of Scripture reflects his understanding of how the renewal of the image

[229] Pettersen, *Athanasius*, *8*0-82 offers a compatible account that ties this theme more closely to the accommodated nature of God's revelation and to aspects of the nature of the fall and humanity's *telos*.

and the revelation of the Father by the Word interact. The revelation restores the capacity of the person to know it, and, as that capacity is progressively restored, the person is increasingly able to receive the knowledge.[230]

We are now in a position to state Athanasius' understanding of this element of the atonement in a more integrated fashion.

1. Originally humanity was created with a basic similarity to the Word that included, but was not restricted to, moral integrity. This similarity was expressed particularly in the existence of a rational soul, which enabled human beings to know God by knowing the Word. The Word was on display both within humanity—by means of that likeness—and externally, by means of the Word's presence in creation and his providence over it.

2. The knowledge of God involved participation in realities that are proper only to God, most noticeably incorruptibility and immortality. When humanity turned away from the knowledge of God, the knowledge was lost, and with it, participation in immortality and incorruptibility. Humanity's growing corruption through its increasing immorality and unreal idolatry also progressively effaced the image in humanity.

3. In restoring humanity God addresses these two dimensions separately.

    a. On the one hand, humanity is reconnected to immortality and incorruptibility—but in a more permanent and substantial way. In order for

[230] The treatment by Leithart, *Athanasius*, 165-71 of the human contribution to being remade brings out the link between moral transformation and recreation in the image in a particularly insightful fashion but does not address the relation between renewal of the image and reception of revelation in the way attempted here.

this to be accomplished, the connection is forged on the basis of an internal relationship with the Word through the Word's presence within his human body and the similarity of that body to those of human beings generally. While this does not occur without a restoration of the knowledge of God through the Word, it is no longer dependent upon that, or directly connected to it.

b. On the other hand, the renewal of the image in humanity and the revelation of God occur through the one act. By remaining in the body, the Word is able to reveal himself as the Word through the Word-like actions done in the body; as human beings come to know the Word, the knowledge of the Father is bestowed in that same knowledge. Human beings are able to receive this revelation because enough of the original likeness remains, and as the revelation is received it renews the image in humanity, which in turn enables the human person to participate in the knowledge of God to an increasingly greater degree.

This reading of the renewal of the image is by no means uncontroverted. Pettersen is representative of those who understand Athanasius as holding to a renewal of the image patterned more on the same mechanism as divinization—occurring within the person of the Word as he humanly receives his own divine revelation.

But there are substantial difficulties with this alternate reading. In his book *Athanasius,* Pettersen argues on page 72 that the knowledge of God is given internally by the Word (revealing himself to his humanity and then receiving that revelation

humanly so that its reception is secured humanly by the incarnation); before noting on the following page that revelation operates through the Word's works—which are so different from ours—occurring in a body that is similar to us.[231] The similarity of the body enables us to perceive the contrast of the works—and therefore to recognise the Word as the Lord.

Arguably there is a tension in Pettersen's account. If the revelation is given internally, within the person of the incarnate Word, then why the need for this external revelation to people? What good can it serve when an external giving like this is (on this reading) inherently impotent, and when the knowledge of God has already been given internally? And how can this mechanism work? How would the similarity between the Word's body and other bodies enable him to recognize himself as being the Word from his own works? It is possible that the Word could attain to such a self-understanding by recognizing that others' works reveal them to be mere humans—and from that difference understand himself to be more than a man, and indeed the Word and Lord. But this introduces a more active role for the Word's humanity than is characteristic of Athanasius' thought—if there was material of this kind, the debate over the existence of a human soul in the person of Christ in Athanasius would hardly have the potency it has.

It is also difficult to reconcile the Word—even in his humanity—coming to discover his true identity as the Word (in the same way as ordinary human beings, by reflecting upon the works that he does) with Athanasius' typical descriptions of the Word.

[231] Pettersen, *Athanasius*, 72-73.

Athanasius does not portray him as ignorant of his own identity in this way, even in the incarnation. Further, whereas in divinization grace was originally given externally but now is given internally, if this was the method for revelation and renewal of the message, it would result in the Word giving himself the knowledge of himself by an external means (the Word teaching himself by means of his own works), which would then, somehow, be incorporated into an internal means to be extended to us.

Whether one reads Athanasius' words at this point, as referring to revelation to us or to the Word's own humanity, it is difficult to incorporate them into a framework where the self-revelation of the Word is given internally on a mechanism modelled on divinization where the incarnate Word is both giver and receiver and so secures it in himself. On such a framework it is hard to see a place for the works of the incarnate Word to reveal him: they are ineffective for humanity, because they are an external mechanism when an internal mechanism is as essential for renewal of the image as it is for divinization—and irrelevant for the Word who knows himself to be who he is and does not need his own works for self revelation.

In the absence of something clear and explicit to indicate that knowledge is given exactly the way that divinization occurs, it is arguably better to resolve this by reference to Athanasius' confidence in the greater epistemic power of the Word's works done in the body, despite being external, than attempting to internalize this aspect of the atonement. Teaching cannot work for divinization as divinization requires security through an internal mechanism. However, Athanasius explicitly uses the analogy of a good teacher at the beginning of *DI* 15 to describe how the Word

effects his self-revelation and grounds his argument on the effectiveness of the works done through the body rather than a change of mechanism from external to internal. This data needs to shape our reading of Athanasius at this point.

The strength of Petterson's view is that it grasps how most of the additional benefits that came with the knowledge of God are now offered through a participation in the life of God. These extra benefits have been moved from an external gift to an internal one by means of the incarnation. Nonetheless, at various points in his account, Athanasius makes it clear that he does not consider the category of the knowledge of God to be compromised by this arrangement, for he can conceive of no rationality without the knowledge of God. While it no longer acts as a vehicle to participate in other things proper to God, such as immortality and incorruptibility, the knowledge of God continues as a defining quality of humanity—for the image that defines the uniqueness of humanity only endures if it is an element in a chain that successfully connects the human race to the knowledge of God.

Unlike the twin issues of corruption and mortality, revelation of God and restoration of the image is effected by means of an 'external' relationship to the Word; one that Athanasius compares several times to the activity of teaching. This is surprising, given Athanasius' concern, in the theme of divinization, that salvation needed to be secured on a more permanent footing than that afforded under the external relationship of our original state. It is difficult to locate an explanation from Athanasius as to how this revelation and the renewed image is not still vulnerable to being lost again by means of yet another turning from the knowledge of God, if it has

only been re-established by means of the same external relationship to the Word that existed primordially. This is especially the case when, as we argued, Athanasius appears to follow Romans 1 in not offering a reason for humanity's drawing back from participation in the knowledge of God. It would appear plausible that, under Athanasius' account, humanity might again turn aside from the knowledge of God.

Nonetheless, while plausible, it is ultimately unlikely within Athanasius' framework. First, turning away from God would involve a move away from reality and towards non-existence—a process that Athanasius regularly describes as 'corruption'. Humanity's new, internal, and permanent participation in incorruptibility would arguably prevent such a process from even beginning.

Second, while Athanasius does not appear to explicitly state that the new system of revelation through a human body appropriated by the Word is sufficiently potent as to prevent any future declension from the knowledge of God, this would appear to be a reasonable inference from his argument. In observing that creation cannot now teach the world concerning the Father because it failed to do this prior to the fall (and that the Word cannot reveal himself through the creation for the same reason), Athanasius is implicitly indicating that this new mechanism of revelation by embodied miracle is decisively potent. The revelation that has occurred through the Word's incarnated miracles has been able to change a human race not only turned away from God, but a species captive to *increasing* irrationality, ignorance, and immorality.

This demonstrated effectiveness in returning a corrupted humanity suggests that this incarnated revelation will also be capable of permanently maintaining humanity in the

knowledge of God. Athanasius' view that works disclose nature seems to lead to a strongly *a posteriori* approach which infers the essential natures and effectiveness of the actors in question from what has happened in salvation history. From the fact that creation failed when humanity was in pristine condition, Athanasius deduces that creation's revelatory capacity is weak and so is insufficient to turn humanity back to the knowledge of God (particularly under current dire circumstances). He does not contemplate the possibility that what occurred was contingent—that things might have turned out differently with different human choices. Rather, if creation failed, this demonstrates that it is impotent and so would always fail.[232]

Conversely, the opposite conclusion is deduced for the Word. If his revelation of himself in the body through his miracles and teaching was capable of returning a corrupted humanity then this is not merely a possibility but necessary/inevitable. The Word's revelation of the Father and renewal of the image is so potent as to be infallible. The structure of Athanasius' argument suggests that, even though the image is renewed by an external means patterned on teaching, it will nonetheless be permanent in its potency.[233]

Nonetheless, the fact that the issues of incorruptibility and immortality are dealt with through a separate and more internal mechanism, and that this new arrangement for

[232] Similarly, Pettersen, *Athanasius*, 67

[233] While not engaging in this kind of analysis, Pettersen, *Athanasius*, 65 notes:

> 'Thus God ever seeks to offer people not only the possibility of returning to know the Creator, but of returning to a secure knowledge of the Creator, whence they will not turn. God's goodness and magnanimity is reflected in his offering not simply a return to the prelapsarian state of the original creation, from which people might again fall, but an entry to a 'new creation', wherein they may remain, blessed for ever.'

incorruptibility and immortality is argued for on the basis of the need for security and permanence in their gifting, suggests that the renewal of the image is less secure than divinization—although, for the above reasons, the difference might be slight.

Another point of contrast with divinization, is in the basic mechanism whereby the atonement is effective. As we observed with the categories of corruption and mortality, divinization occurs primarily through a process of transfer and exchange—a *communicatio idiomatum* between the Word and humanity, effected through the physical solidarity of the incarnate Word with humanity. Humanity's passions are appropriated by the Word and leave him unharmed, while qualities proper to the Word are extended to humanity.

Atonement does not appear to operate in the same fashion with the categories of revelation of God and renewal of the Image in humanity: there is no exchange of ignorance and knowledge between the Word and human kind. This might be because knowledge of God and ignorance of God attach to the nature of humanity differently from corruption and mortality. It would certainly appear clear that Athanasius does not consider it natural for creatures to know God. Nonetheless knowledge does appear—if not "natural" for humans, at least reasonable and fitting, because humanity was made according to the Image. In contrast to divinization (where there is almost an opposition between the divine and human natures), there is a sense that knowledge of God is entirely fitting for humanity, because of the likeness that exists between humanity and the Word—and that ignorance of God is absurd, reducing the human race to the level of irrational animals.

Restoration of the image and the publication of the knowledge of God operate more like a virtuous circle. Enough of the image remains in humanity for humanity to receive the knowledge of God. Even though humanity's eyes have become fixated on creation, and though people have become entangled in ever more absurd idolatry, nonetheless the Word effectively reveals himself and his Father through his body. This renews the image, which in turn, enables the reception of further revelation—renewing the image still further. The pattern is one of an ever-strengthening cycle of turning to God in place of the original ever-worsening cycle of turning away from God.

While the above description does seem to capture most of Athanasius' writing on renewal of the image, there are points where its mechanism draws very close to that of divinization. There appears to be at least one location (*CA* 3.34) where Athanasius does state that ignorance is natural to human nature, and (as an affection) is appropriated to the Word and obliterated by the Word's impassibility in the manner of mortality and corruption.

Yet even here, Athanasius' focus is on knowledge of particular things and future events—how much food was available to Christ in the feeding miracle, who touched Christ when power went out from him, and the assertion that not even the Son knows the day of his return.[234] It seems likely that, in light of Athanasius' distinction

[234] *CA* 3.26

between knowledge of God and knowledge of sensate realities, that this assertion of human ignorance as natural and appropriated to the Son and so destroyed, does not necessarily apply to ignorance of God, which appears to be a significantly different kind of knowledge.

However, if it was argued that his position regarding this kind of knowledge also pertains to the question of the knowledge of God, then this would only modify our understanding of his views on this aspect of the atonement slightly, by introducing a degree of complexity—analogous to that found on the question of mortality and corruption, by means of establishing a link with that category similar to the links already observed between this category and that of forgiveness of sins. Alongside the main argument that he develops at length in *DI* would then run this secondary argument developed in these chapters of *CA* 3, where human ignorance is transferred to the Son and obliterated without the Son's knowledge being reciprocally transferred to humanity, except by means of the external mechanism of 'teaching': transfer but no exchange. Within that added complexity, the same fundamental outlines of this category of the atonement should remain reasonably unchanged from our discussion here. [235]

Behind this difference in the respective mechanisms of the atonement stands a complex interaction between the Word, the body of the Word, and the body-soul nature of the human race in both aspects of the atonement discussed to this point. In

[235] See Leithart, *Athanasius,* 132-3; and more briefly Anatolios, *Coherence,* 154-5 for a discussion of this issue.

divinization it is the way in which the body of the Word is like that of the human race that enables the different (almost opposite) properties of humanity and the Word to be transferred and exchanged. The body provides the link.

In revelation and renewal of the image it is the similarity of the image in humanity to the Image that enables there to be a connection between the Image and humanity. The similarity of the bodies remains critical, but the critical feature is the similarity of the image to the Image.

Thus, there is a reasonable degree of complexity in how Athanasius' variegated dualisms interact in different dimensions of the atonement. In both aspects of the atonement it is a fundamental likeness between the Word and humanity that enables the atonement to be effected in and for the human race. For divinization this likeness is located in the body, which connects two greatly differing natures, while for revelation and renewal of the image the likeness is primarily located in the similarity of the soul to the Image, and secondarily, but still importantly, in the likeness of the body.

Before we progress, it is worth emphasising the importance of this strand of the atonement for Athanasius—evidenced by the way it shapes many of the arguments in *DI* 21 to 32. It is significant that, immediately before Athanasius' summary statement of the various dimensions of the atonement in *DI* 20 and his shift to discussing the meaning and significance of Christ's death, he concludes *DI* 19 with the following:

> Ἀκόλουθον δ’ ἂν εἴη καὶ τὸ τέλος τῆς ἐν σώματι διαγωγῆς καὶ περιπολήσεως αὐτοῦ διηγήσασθαι, καὶ εἰπεῖν καὶ ὁποῖος γέγονεν ὁ τοῦ σώματος θάνατος· μάλιστα ὅτι τὸ κεφάλαιον τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν ἐστὶ τοῦτο, καὶ πάντες ἁπλῶς ἄνθρωποι περὶ τούτου θρυλλοῦσιν· ἵνα γνῷς ὅτι καὶ ἐκ τούτου μᾶλλον οὐδὲν ἧττον γινώσκεται Θεὸς ὁ Χριστὸς καὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ Υἱός.[236]

In this extract Athanasius articulates a strong connection between Christ’s death and his revelation of himself. For our purposes the key section is the final clause, ἵνα γνῷς ὅτι καὶ ἐκ τούτου μᾶλλον οὐδὲν ἧττον γινώσκεται Θεὸς ὁ Χριστὸς καὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ Υἱός, with its suggestion that it is especially (μᾶλλον) from Christ’s death that he may be known to be God, and the Son.[237]

This indicates that there is an important relationship between Christ’s death and his self-revelation, and the renewal of humanity according to the Image. As we will demonstrate in the next section, Athanasius associates the death of Christ particularly with issues of forgiveness and dealing with the curse, so this argument functions (like his gloss of Luke 19:10 in *DI* 14) to establish a natural link between restoration of the image and forgiveness. The various categories through which Athanasius interprets the atonement, while having their own integrity and own connections to his broader theological vision, are not hermetically sealed from each other. In various forms he gestures at the connections between them.

In the second half of *DI* 20 and into the subsequent chapters until arguably the end of 32, Athanasius’ focus is on Christ’s death. The above extract from *DI* 19 is something

[236] *DI* 19.20-25
[237] Behr, *Nicene*, 200-201 notes that the cross is especially the place where the divinity of the Word is revealed.

of a heuristic key to many of Athanasius' arguments in these chapters, often found highly questionable by commentators. Athanasius has indicated that one of the important aspects of the death of Christ is the way in which it is an especial revelation of Christ's divine identity.

This concern that Christ would be clearly revealed to be God and the Son of God provides an account of his explanations for the precise nature of Christ's death that people have found problematic. In *DI* 21, Athanasius argues that it was necessary for Christ not to die privately, out of the public eye. In such a situation, it would be thought that Christ had died like any other man, having been fatally weakened by disease, and so, ἐνομίσθη ἂν καὶ αὐτὸς κατὰ τὴν τῆς φύσεως ἀσθένειαν τοῦτο παθών, καὶ μηδὲν ἔχων πλέον τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων.[238] In the context of the overall argument, Athanasius clearly considers this misconception to be unfitting with regard to the Lord, who is not weak but "the Power of God and the Word of God and Life itself" (Ὁ δὲ Κύριος οὐκ ἀσθενής, ἀλλὰ Θεοῦ Δύναμις, καὶ Θεοῦ Λόγος ἐστί, καὶ Αὐτοζωή).[239]

In *DI* 22 Athanasius extends the argument to include an assertion that it was fitting for Christ to accept the death brought to him by "the Jews" on the grounds that this demonstrated that the Word was not weak, but life and the Saviour, Τὸ δὲ τοιοῦτον οὐκ ἀσθένειαν ἐδείκνυε τοῦ Λόγου, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον καὶ Σωτῆρα καὶ Ζωὴν αὐτὸν

[238] *DI* 21.29-31
[239] *DI* 21.26-27

ἐγνώριζεν.[240] The concern driving Athanasius' argument for the public nature of Christ's death is even more clearly expressed in *DI* 23:

> Ἢ διὰ τί τοὺς μὲν δαίμονας ἐπ᾽ ὄψει πάντων ἀπήλαυνε, τόν τε ἐκ γενετῆς τυφλὸν ἀναβλέπειν ἐποίει, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ εἰς οἶνον μετέβαλεν, ἵνα δι᾽ αὐτῶν πιστευθῇ Λόγος Θεοῦ· τὸ δὲ θνητὸν οὐκ ἐπ᾽ ὄψει πάντων ἄφθαρτον ἐδείκνυεν, ἵνα πιστευθῇ αὐτὸς ὢν ἡ Ζωή;[241]

Immediately previous to this extract, Athanasius has argued that the resurrection was unable to be more public than the death. If Christ wished to convince people that he had overturned death and rendered his body immortal, this could only occur if the death that preceded his resurrection had occurred publicly. Hence, his argument that Christ needed to display his now-incorruptible body, is an argument for the necessity of a public death. We find here Athanasius explicitly linking the things that he has called the works of the body—authority over creation, healing, and exorcisms—with Christ's death and resurrection. All of these are, Athanasius argues, opportunities for Christ to reveal himself. In the case of the works of the body, he is revealed to be the Word of God; in the case of the resurrection (and its precondition, death), Life itself.

A variation on this argument is offered in *DI* 24 when Athanasius considers whether the Word should have arranged a more noble death than the ignominy of the cross:

> Καὶ ὥσπερ γενναῖος παλαιστής, μέγας ὢν τῇ συνέσει καὶ τῇ ἀνδρίᾳ, οὐκ αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ τοὺς ἀντιπάλους ἐκλέγεται, ἵνα μὴ ὑπόνοιαν τῆς πρός τινας δειλίας παράσχῃ· ἀλλὰ τῇ τῶν θεωρούντων δίδωσιν ἐξουσίᾳ, καὶ μάλιστα κἂν ἐχθροὶ τυγχάνωσιν, ἵνα πρὸς ὃν ἐὰν συμβάλλωσιν αὐτοί, τοῦτον αὐτὸς καταρράξας, κρείττων τῶν πάντων πιστευθῇ· οὕτως καὶ ἡ τῶν πάντων Ζωὴ ὁ Κύριος καὶ Σωτὴρ ἡμῶν ὁ Χριστὸς οὐχ ἑαυτῷ θάνατον ἐπενόει τῷ σώματι, ἵνα μὴ ὡς ἕτερον δειλιῶν φανῇ· ἀλλὰ τὸν παρ᾽ ἑτέρων, καὶ μάλιστα τὸν παρὰ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ὃν ἐνόμιζον εἶναι δεινὸν ἐκεῖνοι καὶ ἄτιμον καὶ φευκτόν, τοῦτον αὐτὸς

[240] *DI* 22.8-9
[241] *DI* 23.12-14

> ἐν σταυρῷ δεχόμενος ἠνείχετο· ἵνα καὶ τούτου καταλυθέντος, αὐτὸς μὲν ὢν ἡ Ζωὴ πιστευθῇ, τοῦ δὲ θανάτου τὸ κράτος τέλεον καταργηθῇ.[242]

Athanasius again, characteristically, appeals to an analogy for his argument, arguing that a particularly capable wrestler will allow the onlookers to choose his opponent to demonstrate his capacity to defeat any foe. In a similar fashion (οὕτως καὶ) Christ did not choose his own death, but accepted the death that his enemies chose—one that they considered to be, δεινὸν…καὶ ἄτιμον καὶ φευκτόν. Like the wrestler, this was for a purpose, that Christ might be believed to be Life; and that death's power might finally be ended (ἵνα καὶ τούτου καταλυθέντος, αὐτὸς μὲν ὢν ἡ Ζωὴ πιστευθῇ, τοῦ δὲ θανάτου τὸ κράτος τέλεον καταργηθῇ). As before, the particular aspect of the Word that Athanasius seeks to highlight in regard to the issue of the manner of Christ's death is the way in which Christ is Life. What is distinctive in this extract is that this revelation occurs through the ignoble death brought to Christ by his enemies; not simply by the ensuing resurrection.

It is not unusual to find Athanasian commentators expressing some dissatisfaction with these arguments surrounding the fact and nature of Christ's death offered in *DI* 21-24. Some also seem to derive comfort from the apparent contrast in Athanasius' comments at the beginning of *DI* 25 of these arguments with the ones to follow.[243]

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[242] *DI* 24.11-22

[243] Weinandy, *Athanasius,* 38 notes that some of the reasons given 'may appear to us today as contrived or of little value'; Rashdall, *Atonement,* 297 states that 'elaborate reasons' are given, 'some of them rather childish reasons' and eventually dismisses the reasons that Athanasius himself offers in favour of what he considers to be the 'supreme purpose'—the death is a necessary precondition for the resurrection and it is 'certain that for Athanasius the resurrection is the real source of redemption'. Such an analysis suggests that the commentator has concluded that loss of the image is not a fundamental problem in itself, and is nothing more than a description of the problem of corruption and mortality. One could almost suggest that an interpreter's response to Athanasius' arguments in chapters 21-24 is a litmus test of the degree to which they have grasped the importance to Athanasius' thought

It is not the intention of this study to rehabilitate those arguments that appear decidedly weak to modern eyes. Nonetheless, it is arguable that the arguments in *DI* 21-24 appear less tendentious when we recognise that Athanasius genuinely believes that the atonement truly needs to be seen to be effected; and that the one who effects it is clearly seen for who he is through the effecting of the atonement. [244] While Athanasius' theology at this point continues to be *a posteriori*, with his desire to retrospectively justify the events of Scripture, his arguments are certainly not arbitrary.

For Athanasius, when the atonement is viewed as a whole, there is no division between the effecting of the atonement and people's knowledge that it has been effected. That the Word accomplishes the atonement in such a fashion that people are aware of it (and what it says about him), is an important component of the atonement in its own right. It is this awareness that ultimately overturns people's service of the gods and their idolatry and reunites them to the knowledge and service of God.

The giving of the knowledge of God through the revelation of the Word by means of his works done in the body—and hence, the renewal of the image—is a reason for the incarnation; for the delay between the Word's incarnation and his death; and even conditions the form of that death. This underlines the significance of this dimension of

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of the loss of the image, and the need for restoration by the Word's self-revelation through the works done in the body.

[244] Young, *Nicaea*, 54 observes that the revelation of God was a prime necessity for salvation, and on page 55 places revelation alongside recreation (what we are here describing as 'divinization') as the prime understanding of salvation in Christ that Athanasius was defending.

the atonement for Athanasius, and indicates the extent to which it is integrated into his broader theological concerns.[245]

Conclusion

As we observed in the previous chapter, one of the guiding principles for Athanasius is the way the nature and need of the creature shapes the atonement being effected. The atonement is directed towards something that exists and which, in existing, has a particular set of properties and needs. While Athanasius is adamant that only the divine nature has the properties to meet humanity's needs, the mechanism of the atonement does not derive from appeals to God's capacities to act in the abstract, nor from a consideration of his triune nature, but rather from the needs and properties of the creature being saved.[246]

We have observed something similar with the categories of revelation and renewal of the Image. In various ways, Athanasius connects the Word's submission to being revealed in a body to humanity's need. At the beginning of *DI* 14 Athanasius offers the analogy of reinscribing a defaced portrait in wood, with its implication that it is the need of the portrait—not the capabilities of the original—that requires the subject to come for another portrait sitting.

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[245] If space allowed the obvious addition to this chapter would be to include an examination of the later chapters of *DI* concerning the hope of the resurrection and how the effectiveness of the Christian faith in transforming people is adduced by Athanasius as a continuation of the Word's self-revelation. The self-revelation of the Word continues through the works he does from heaven and so his work in renewing the image in humanity continues. Behr, *Nicene,* 200 notes the importance of this material for Athanasius' thought.

[246] Pettersen, *Athanasius,* 72-75 has a very helpful sustained reflection on this point of the accommodation of God's revelation to the need and capacities of humanity.

At the end of *DI* 14 Athanasius simply explains this as right for the Word to desire to help humanity; all but collapsing the means into the desire. At the beginning of *DI* 15 the Word's incarnation is compared to a teacher simplifying the lesson for students of more mediocre capacity rather than offering teaching of no benefit—again tying the mechanism of the atonement to the recipient's capacities rather than the agent's. In the rest of *DI* 15 and in 16 Athanasius repeatedly explains the Word's appropriation of an element of creation (and a human element in particular) as resulting from the fact that humanity's gaze is fixated on creation. The argument implicitly presumes the same principle—the atonement is shaped by human need, not by the possibilities of God's omnipotence, nor by God's need to express his nature and life. Hence, the atonement's shape is fundamentally human because, while the atonement can only be effected by God, it is directed to human beings. We see here two of the overarching findings of this investigation. First, this interaction of human need with divine resource arguably coheres well with the convictions that led Athanasius to argue for the fully divine nature of the Word, and the fully human nature of the incarnation. Athanasius' thinking on the atonement and image have close connections to his concerns in his Christological ideas. Second, even though the Word is the original Image, to understand the renewal of the image in humanity, one has to begin with the way in which humanity was made in the image, and how that likeness was then lost. As with divinization, so in this aspect of the atonement the framework for understanding is Athanasius' anthropology and account of the fall because the atonement is the solution to the problem of the loss of the image.

Finally, it should be apparent that this aspect of the atonement—founded as it is upon an external relationship of teaching and using revelation as the primary agent (with

Robertson, Behr, Ng, Frost, Young and Anatolios)—addresses a completely different dimension of the human situation than that of divinization and does so in a completely different fashion (against Rashdall, Pettersen and Leithart). While both themes require the Word and require the incarnation, neither can be collapsed into the other or do the work of the other. The attempt by Pettersen and others to portray renewal of the Image as modelled on divinization produces something incoherent with Athanasius' broader theological vision and fails to account for the move to separate participation in immortality from the knowledge of God. Athanasius' view of the atonement is pluralist and not singular, because his understanding of the human condition is multifaceted and not monochrome.

Chapter Five

Atonement and Law

We turn to the third strand in our exploration of Athanasius' view of the atonement, provocatively labelled the 'forensic' dimension of his understanding of what Christ has done to save humanity. Whether such a term applies to Athanasius' thought, is a highly contested matter in current Athanasian scholarship—exceeded only by the disagreement over whether Athanasius' writings should be seen as motivated by theology, politics (or worse!)[247] Given the stakes here, it seems best to allow the debate itself to drive the structure of this chapter. Accordingly, in this chapter we will very briefly review the various ways in which scholarship has understood this material, and then note the implications these arguments have for the avenues available to falsify them. With this in mind, it will then be argued that there are several lines of evidence which are difficult to reconcile with a way of reading Athanasius' language in these controverted texts that effectively treats them as a circumlocution for divinization. With the existence of this strand of the atonement established, we will then briefly survey the range of terms and concepts that Athanasius invokes when addressing this strand of his atonement thinking, before concluding with observations on the interconnectedness and overlap between this strand of the atonement and other strands in his thought. We will then conclude with reflections upon the question of the place of this strand of his atonement thinking in his overall theological vision.

[247] T.D. Barnes *Constantine and Eusebius* (London and Cambridge, 1981), 230 describes Athanasius as a gangster. This arguably mirrors in reverse the hagiographic tendencies of nineteenth century scholarship's views of Athanasius and both act as the bookends on the range of views displayed in this debate.

There is a major school of Athanasian scholarship that wants to avoid associating Athanasius with the Western atonement tradition. For this school, when Athanasius uses language typically associated with the forensic or satisfaction theory of the atonement—for example: 'sin', 'debt', 'transgression', 'a sacrifice', 'offered to the Father', 'payment of the debt in our place'—he means something else. Good examples of this reading can be found in Steenberg and Pettersen. Both acknowledge that forensic type language is present in Athanasius, and even is widespread; nonetheless they conclude that such language is another way of discussing ideas related to divinization, corruption and mortality.[248] A different approach is found in Hanson and Leithart, who recognize that Athanasius certainly appears to not just say, but also think, that Christ's death on the cross was a sacrifice made to death and to God, but find the mechanism of the atonement where the death of Christ is concerned is ultimately unclear and cannot cohere.[249] At least in the case of Steenberg, Pettersen and Hanson, the argument appears to implicitly hinge upon an assumption that Athanasius accepts the later idea in Christian thinking of 'models' of the atonement, where a theologian embraces only one of these models. Thus, *because* divinization themes exist *therefore* forensic language cannot be expressing fundamentally forensic ideas. Similarly, if death is a natural consequence of turning from God, it cannot *also* be a legal judgement. If the 'Father is he whose goodness is jealous for even fallen man's existence' he cannot also be 'one whose wrath needs assuaging'.[250] A third approach is to acknowledge the existence of these forensic ideas but to consider them as marginal factors in Athanasius' theological outlook. Rashdall is one example of this reading, who considers forensic ideas to exist in the background of the bishop's

[248] Steenberg *Of God,* 176; Pettersen *Athanasius,* 93-94.
[249] R. P. C. Hanson *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Conroversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 450-451; Leithart *Athanasius,* 154-155.
[250] Pettersen, *Athanasius,* 94..

thought, but only as an expression of his tendency to be a biblical thinker rather than a systematic one—Athanasius has simply incorporated biblical material into his writings that is incompatible with his more fundamental divinization understanding.[251] Scott's position is similar, portraying Athanasius as beginning with a more forensic understanding and developing into a divinization view of the atonement over his career.[252] Once again, divinization and forensic views of the atonement are seen to be mutually exclusive.

The Case for a 'Forensic' Dimension to Athanasius' Understanding of the Atonement

Arguments of the kind that purport a more metaphorical use of language by the writer in question are, by their nature, difficult to evaluate against alternative readings. Unless the writer explicitly uses apparently non-metaphorical language to indicate that the terminology in question is being used more metaphorically, then almost any might, quite appropriately, be read as metaphorical. Although a specific example might suggest a more literal reading to another reader, it can also be validly argued that this is an example of a particularly vivid metaphorical use that imbues the language with a different meaning than that found in a standard lexicon—either as a deliberate pedagogical strategy, or unreflectively as a manifestation of how alien forensic categories are to that writer's thought. In debates of this nature, one cannot merely appeal to the words, because the debate is over the mode in which the words are invoked.

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[251] Rashdall, *Idea*, 294, 298.
[252] Melville Scott, *Athanasius on the Atonement* (Stafford: Mort, 1914), 105

Nonetheless, while a direct appeal to the language is inconclusive, this writer has become convinced that what we have here is Athanasius deploying an essentially prosaic and expositional mode of discourse that communicates a different dimension of his understanding of the atonement. Athanasius' references to the Word's offering of his body on behalf of all to death or to the Father, his bearing the curse on humanity's behalf, and paying the debt owed to death by his death are all being used in the same mode he uses when he speaks of the Word renewing the image in humanity by the revelation of himself as the Word and Image, and the language of lifting humanity above its natural mortality and corruption through participation in his own immortality and impassibility.[253] There are several lines of evidence that substantiate this.

The first is the argument from silence. It is reasonably improbable that Athanasius simply could not conceive of a 'forensic' dimension to the human condition or of the atonement. Origen's associations with Alexandrian theology in the previous century are well documented, and his own view of the atonement includes a more prosaic use of at least some of the language found in Athanasius. It seems plausible that Origen either had a 'forensic' dimension to his understanding of the atonement or would have been understood as such by the majority of his hearers.[254]

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[253] Behr, *Nicene,* 197 appears to read Athansius' various imagery of sacrifice, fulfilment of death, satisfaction and substitution, and conquering the tyranny of death as an essentially expositional mode of speech.

[254] So John Anthony McGuckin, *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 67-8 holds that Origen gives a systematic interpretation of Christ's death as a propitiatory sacrifice and that his treatment of the issue is determinative for later theological reflections, also Harold Smith, 'The Atonement in Patristic Writings' *Atonement in History and Life: A Volume of Essay* L. Grensted ed., (New York: Macmillan, 1929). 177-197, who lists Origen among figures Latin and Greek who hold a view along these lines on page 187, and John Kenneth Mozley, *The Doctrine of the Atonement*, (London: Duckworth, 1915), 103 who notes that Origen has penal ideas regarding Christ's death. Grensted, *Atonement,* 62-63 suggests that Origen held that the cross was a

It is also unlikely that forensic categories are so entirely alien to Athanasius' environment that a more metaphorical mode of his language would be unselfconscious. Eusebius of Caesarea—with whose work Athanasius must certainly have been familiar—also has an uncontroverted 'forensic' dimension to his understanding of the atonement.[255] Moreover, Athanasius' sojourn in Rome, and his attendant exposure to 'Western' modes of theological thought strongly suggest that Athanasius was aware of the possibility of plausibly reading this language through more forensic or legal categories even if he did not share such an approach.

Consequently, a more metaphorical mode with this vocabulary in Athanasius must be, at least to some degree, self-conscious, a choice made between alternatives. In such a situation, it is surprising that this language would be used in this fashion and with an apparent absence of any supporting commentary to justify the interpretive method. Athanasius, in his polemical works, often explicitly argues for the principles of interpretation that lie behind his interpretations of biblical texts. The absence of these

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sacrifice that propitiated God but not a vicarious punishment, although Origen's language was sufficiently unguarded so as to suggest such a meaning. Frances Young, *The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Writers From the New Testament to John Chrysostom (*Cambridge, Mass.: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), 168-186 argues that propitiation language is used in an expiatory sense in Origen although acknowledges that propitiation ideas are present especially in his commentary on Romans and that Origen's hearers would definitely have understood him as teaching such views. However note Rashdall, *Idea*, 263-266 who argues that the idea is entirely absent in Origen who explained it away in a rational and ethical manner. Nonetheless he also notes that there are abundant passages where Origen uses conventional language of Christ's death being a sacrifice or propitiation for sins. While Rashdall does not address the issue, this would arguably produce a situation where readers and hearers could have received a different understanding than what he himself held, as argued by Young.

[255] So Young, *Sacrificial,* 190-1; Timothy D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: theology and politics in the Constantinian Empire*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), *Constantine and Eusebius,* 187. Smith, 'Atonement', 187-9 lists Eusebius as an example of those Greek and Latin fathers who held to forensic view of the atonement and argues that the presence of the theme in Eusebius testifies to its existence in Origen. Rashdall, *The Idea,* 301 claims that Eusebius is the first Greek writer to strongly emphaisize the notion of the atonement as substitutionary punishment. *C.f.* Arieh Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea Against Paganism*. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 291 holds that it is not entirely clear at points whether Eusebius sees Christ's sacrifice as appeasing God the Father or addressing the demons.

features is hardly conclusive, but it is anomaly worth noting given his approach elsewhere.

First Passage – CA 2.67-68

More noteworthy, there are significant places in Athanasius' writings where a more metaphorical reading of his 'forensic' language is seriously strained, three of which we will discuss here. The first problematic passage is from *CA* 2.67-68, where we will begin with the argument towards the end of section 67:

> πῶς δέ, εἴπερ κτίσμα ἦν ὁ λόγος, τὴν ἀπόφασιν τοῦ θεοῦ λῦσαι δυνατὸς ἦν καὶ ἀφεῖναι τὴν ἁμαρτίαν γεγραμμένου παρὰ τοῖς προφήταις, ὅτι τοῦτο θεοῦ ἐστι; «τίς γὰρ θεὸς ὥσπερ σὺ ἐξαίρων ἁμαρτίας καὶ ὑπερβαίνων ἀνομίας;» ὁ μὲν γὰρ θεὸς εἶπε· «γῆ εἶ, καὶ εἰς γῆν ἀπελεύσῃ»· οἱ δὲ ἄνθρωποι γεγόνασι θνητοί. πῶς τοίνυν οἷόν τε ἦν παρὰ τῶν γενητῶν λυθῆναι τὴν ἁμαρτίαν; ἀλλ' ἔλυσέ γε αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος, ὡς εἶπεν αὐτός· «ἐὰν μὴ ὁ υἱὸς ὑμᾶς ἐλευθερώσῃ», καὶ ἔδειξεν ἀληθῶς ὁ υἱὸς ὁ ἐλευθερώσας, ὡς οὐκ ἔστι κτίσμα οὐδὲ τῶν γενητῶν, ἀλλὰ ἴδιος λόγος καὶ εἰκὼν τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς οὐσίας, τοῦ καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀποφηναμένου καὶ «ἀφιέντος μόνου τὰς ἁμαρτίας». ἐπειδὴ γὰρ εἴρηται ἐν τῷ λόγῳ, «γῆ εἶ, καὶ εἰς γῆν ἀπελεύσῃ», ἀκολούθως δι' αὐτοῦ τοῦ λόγου καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ἡ ἐλευθερία καὶ ἡ λύσις τῆς κατακρίσεως γεγένηται.[256]

At the end of section 67 Athanasius raises a further argument for the divinity of the Word beyond those canvassed earlier in the section, as indicated by πῶς δέ. The atonement requires τὴν ἀπόφασιν τοῦ θεοῦ λῦσαι δυνατὸ and involves ἡ ἐλευθερία καὶ ἡ λύσις τῆς κατακρίσεως γεγένηται, and ἀφεῖναι τὴν ἁμαρτίαν. Athanasius offers three interlocking pieces of evidence in this extract as to why these three things necessitate the Word being divine. The first is from the quote from Malachi 7:18 with its statement that the God of Israel is unique in that he 'removes sins and passes by lawlessness'. Athanasius understands this uniqueness in removing sins to exist, not

[256] *CA* 2.67.4.2-6.3

simply in comparison with rival gods, but absolutely, stating that, ὅτι τοῦτο θεοῦ ἐστι and later, ἀφιέντος μόνου τὰς ἁμαρτίας. He supports this position with the second piece of evidence, from Genesis 3:19 with its declaration of the consequences for eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Using a μὲν…δὲ construction Athanasius draws a connection between this statement by God in Genesis with humanity's subsequent mortality (οἱ δὲ ἄνθρωποι γεγόνασι θνητοί), indicating that human mortality is, in some sense, a consequence of breaking God's command, and Athanasius' use of κατακρίσεως as he concludes the section suggests that this consequence is to be understood as a legal consequence to at least some degree.

Thus, when Athanasius writes πῶς τοίνυν οἷόν τε ἦν παρὰ τῶν γενητῶν λυθῆναι τὴν ἁμαρτίαν; the τοίνυν links sins and their loosening closely with the loosening of God's sentence and, by inference, the condemnation and release from it. To loosen sins is to loosen God's sentence that humans would return to dust and so become mortal. Thus Athanasius describes God as, τοῦ καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀποφηναμένου καὶ «ἀφιέντος μόνου τὰς ἁμαρτίας», drawing the original sentence and the subsequent loosening of sins together, to bring out their intrinsic connection and hence that 'he who spoke in the beginning' is 'he alone who removes sins'. From this, Athanasius deduces both the Word's unique relationship to the Father, 'his own Word' and 'Image of the being of the Father'—and leads to his third piece of evidence. As the original sentence of Genesis 3:19 was spoken in the Word, so the liberty and release from that condemnation comes to pass in the Word. The particular nature of the Word's relationship to the Father and his operations shapes this aspect of the atonement similar to that which we have observed elsewhere.

It should be clear from his argument, that Athanasius considers 'sins', the 'sentence' and the 'condemnation' as closely related ideas within the same conceptual category, albeit not synonymous. It is also apparent from elsewhere in Athanasius' writings that he does not view 'sins' as an alternate word for the problem of corruption, nor the loosening of sins as simply another way of speaking about the solution of divinization. In his first Festal Letter, Athanasius writes:

> Therefore, in order to withdraw and turn them from vices, He commands them to be nourished with the food of virtue; namely, humbleness of mind, lowliness to endure humiliations, the acknowledgment of God. For not only does such a fast as this obtain pardon for souls, but being kept holy, it prepares the saints, and raises them above the earth.[257]

Here Athanasius states that the right kind of fast—an abstinence from sin and a giving of oneself to the knowledge of God—obtains pardon for souls. As we have observed in some detail regarding Athanasius' analysis of the problem of human corruption and the solution of the Word's impartation of his own incorruptibility, it is effectively axiomatic for Athanasius that a creature cannot solve the problem of human corruption. It can only be solved by a being both incorruptible and Creator; and different aspects of the solution are grounded in both of those aspects of the Word's nature and relationship with creation. Hence, for Athanasius, to indicate that a person is able to obtain a pardon for their soul through a spiritual fast is, implicitly, to indicate that a pardon for sins does not address the problem of corruption. If it were otherwise Athanasius' argument that only God can solve the problem of corruption and can only solve it by means of the Word's incarnation, would be meaningless. For if a person can obtain a pardon for their soul through this fast, and that is a

[257] Robertson, A., trans., *Athanasius, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,* 2nd series, 4. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1891, 508.

circumlocution for addressing natural corruption, then each person is capable of repairing their corruption through the correct spiritual discipline.

This distinction in Athanasius' thought between the loosening of sins and the annihilation of corruption is confirmed when Athanasius' argument in *DI* 7 is considered:

> Ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἔδει τοῦτο γενέσθαι, οὕτως καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων πάλιν ἀντίκειται τὸ πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν εὔλογον, ὥστε ἀληθῆ φανῆναι τὸν Θεὸν ἐν τῇ περὶ τοῦ θανάτου νομοθεσίᾳ· ἄτοπον γὰρ ἦν διὰ τὴν ἡμῶν ὠφέλειαν καὶ διαμονὴν ψεύστην φανῆναι τὸν τῆς ἀληθείας πατέρα Θεόν. Τί οὖν ἔδει καὶ περὶ τούτου γενέσθαι ἢ ποιῆσαι τὸν Θεόν; μετάνοιαν ἐπὶ τῇ παραβάσει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀπαιτῆσαι; τοῦτο γὰρ ἄν τις ἄξιον φήσειε Θεοῦ, λέγων ὅτι ὥσπερ ἐκ τῆς παραβάσεως εἰς φθορὰν γεγόνασιν, οὕτως ἐκ τῆς μετανοίας γένοιντο πάλιν ἂν εἰς ἀφθαρσίαν. Ἀλλ' ἡ μετάνοια οὔτε τὸ εὔλογον τὸ πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν ἐφύλαττεν· ἔμενε γὰρ πάλιν οὐκ ἀληθής, μὴ κρατουμένων ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων· οὔτε δὲ ἡ μετάνοια ἀπὸ τῶν κατὰ φύσιν ἀνακαλεῖται, ἀλλὰ μόνον παύει τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων. Εἰ μὲν οὖν μόνον ἦν πλημμέλημα καὶ μὴ φθορᾶς ἐπακολούθησις, καλῶς ἂν ἦν ἡ μετάνοια. Εἰ δὲ ἅπαξ προλαβούσης τῆς παραβάσεως, εἰς τὴν κατὰ φύσιν φθορὰν ἐκρατοῦντο οἱ ἄνθρωποι, καὶ τὴν τοῦ κατ' εἰκόνα χάριν ἀφαιρεθέντες ἦσαν, τί ἄλλο ἔδει γενέσθαι;[258]

Here Athanasius is continuing the issue of his version of 'the divine dilemma' (first introduced in section 6). Having explained why it was unfitting for God's creatures to perish, he concludes that section by observing that it was necessary (ἔδει) for God to not allow people to be destroyed by corruption, for to allow this would be both 'unfitting' (ἀπρεπὲς) and 'unworthy' (ἀνάξιον) of God's goodness.[259] The above extract is Athanasius' return to the other side of the 'problem': ὥστε ἀληθῆ φανῆναι τὸν Θεὸν ἐν τῇ περὶ τοῦ θανάτου νομοθεσίᾳ. Athanasius then discusses what God should have done, and proposes the requirement of repentance as a possible solution to human transgression of God's ordinance μετάνοιαν ἐπὶ τῇ παραβάσει τοὺς

[258] *DI* 7.1-16
[259] *DI* 6.30-31

ἀνθρώπους ἀπαιτῆσαι. He proposes the possibility that such a solution would fittingly mirror how the problem arose: ὥσπερ ἐκ τῆς παραβάσεως εἰς φθορὰν γεγόνασιν, οὕτως ἐκ τῆς μετανοίας γένοιντο πάλιν ἂν εἰς ἀφθαρσίαν. This possibility is, however, decisively rejected as inadequate, due to a clear distinction to be made between ἁμαρτημάτων and φθορᾶς and repentance can only cause the former to cease (παύει) and is unable to affect the latter, due to the latter's quality of being ἀπὸ τῶν κατὰ φύσιν and τὴν κατὰ φύσιν for creatures. In making this argument Athanasius clearly states the distinction between the two concepts twice: first, indicating the causal relationship between the two problems by stating that corruption is a consequence of trespass (Εἰ μὲν οὖν μόνον ἦν πλημμέλημα καὶ μὴ φθορᾶς ἐπακολούθησις); second, expanding on the temporal relationship between the problem of transgression and the problems of corruption and loss of the image (δὲ ἅπαξ προλαβούσης τῆς παραβάσεως, εἰς τὴν κατὰ φύσιν φθορὰν ἐκρατοῦντο οἱ ἄνθρωποι, καὶ τὴν τοῦ κατ' εἰκόνα χάριν ἀφαιρεθέντες). Natural corruption, and the loss of the grace of the image come after, and as a consequence of, humanity's transgression.

From this it can be observed that Athanasius' language for sin (ἁμαρτημάτων, παραβάσει, πλημμέλημα) is flexible thoughout this extract; the various terms function as complementary synonyms, each adding an important nuance. The three terms all refer to a single reality (or, given Athanasius' metaphysics, 'non-reality'). Further, this 'sin' or 'transgression' is clearly distinguished from, yet related to, natural corruption and the loss of the image, such that repentance alone is unable to address the problem of natural corruption and image loss whose original gift was an act of grace beyond what was natural.

This shows that for Athanasius the terminology of sin is not coterminous with the language for corruption, but that the two ideas of sins and corruption belong to two different categories of thought. Repentance *can* theoretically solve the problem of sin but it *cannot* solve the problem of corruption, hence sin and corruption are different things. Further, as we have already had cause to note, the idea of sin belongs to the same category of thought as that of 'God's sentence' and 'condemnation'. This logically leads to the conclusion that those concepts are also not simply metaphorical forms of speaking about corruption. Sin, law and condemnation—and the loosening and freedom from them—belong to a different and distinct category from that of natural corruption or loss of the image.

This reading is strengthened by the continuation of Athanasius' argument in *CA.* 2.67 into 68:

> Ἀλλ' ἠδύνατο, φασί, ‹καὶ κτίσματος ὄντος τοῦ σωτῆρος μόνον εἰπεῖν ὁ θεὸς καὶ λῦσαι τὴν κατάραν›. τὸ αὐτὸ δ' ἂν ἀκούσαιεν καὶ αὐτοὶ παρ' ἑτέρου λέγοντος· ἠδύνατο καὶ μηδ' ὅλως ἐπιδημήσαντος αὐτοῦ μόνον εἰπεῖν ὁ θεὸς καὶ λῦσαι τὴν κατάραν. ἀλλὰ σκοπεῖν δεῖ τὸ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις λυσιτελοῦν καὶ μὴ ἐν πᾶσι τὸ δυνατὸν τοῦ θεοῦ λογίζεσθαι….πλὴν καὶ τὸ εὔλογον τοῦ γενομένου θεωρεῖν ἔξεστιν ἐντεῦθεν· εἰ διὰ τὸ δυνατὸν εἰρήκει καὶ λέλυτο ἡ κατάρα, τοῦ μὲν κελεύσαντος ἡ δύναμις ἐδείκνυτο, ὁ μέντοι ἄνθρωπος τοιοῦτος ἐγίνετο, οἷος ἦν καὶ Ἀδὰμ πρὸ τῆς παραβάσεως ἔξωθεν λαβὼν τὴν χάριν καὶ μὴ συνηρμοσμένην ἔχων αὐτὴν τῷ σώματι· τοιοῦτος γὰρ ὢν καὶ τότε τέθειτο ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ· τάχα δὲ καὶ χείρων ἐγίνετο, ὅτε καὶ παραβαίνειν μεμάθηκεν. ὢν τοίνυν τοιοῦτος εἰ καὶ παραπέπειστο ὑπὸ τοῦ ὄφεως, ἐγίνετο πάλιν χρεία προστάξαι τὸν θεὸν καὶ λῦσαι τὴν κατάραν· καὶ οὕτως εἰς ἄπειρον ἐγίνετο ἡ χρεία, καὶ οὐδὲν ἧττον οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἔμενον ὑπεύθυνοι δουλεύοντες τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ· ἀεὶ δὲ ἁμαρτάνοντες ἀεὶ ἐδέοντο τοῦ συγχωροῦντος καὶ οὐδέποτε ἠλευθεροῦντο σάρκες ὄντες καθ' ἑαυτοὺς καὶ ἀεὶ ἡττώμενοι τῷ νόμῳ διὰ τὴν ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκός.[260]

[260] *CA* 2.67.1.1-2.2, 68.4.1-5.6.

In section 68 Athanasius purports to be responding to unidentified, but probably 'Arian', challengers. They argue that God is able to loose the condemnation with mere speech (ἠδύνατο…μόνον εἰπεῖν ὁ θεὸς καὶ λῦσαι τὴν κατάραν, repeated in the same order in the mouth of a second imagined interlocutor), without the need for God to visit, and irrespective of whether the Saviour is a creature. Athanasius implicitly concedes the point and accepts that—considered merely from the point of view of what is possible for God—the condemnation could have been loosed simply by divine command (τὸ δυνατὸν εἰρήκει καὶ λέλυτο ἡ κατάρα, τοῦ μὲν κελεύσαντος ἡ δύναμις ἐδείκνυτο). Nonetheless, he argues ἀλλὰ σκοπεῖν δεῖ τὸ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις λυσιτελοῦν καὶ μὴ ἐν πᾶσι τὸ δυνατὸν τοῦ θεοῦ λογίζεσθαι.

He then, in part of the section not quoted above, invokes a number of scriptural incidents to demonstrate his thesis that God's actions are not determined simply by reference to his power to act, but by reference to what is good for humanity. With this principle in place he returns to the question of God's ability to loose the condemnation by speaking, beginning at line 17. He observes that if God did cancel the condemnation by speaking then ὁ μέντοι ἄνθρωπος τοιοῦτος ἐγίνετο, οἷος ἦν καὶ Ἀδὰμ πρὸ τῆς παραβάσεως ἔξωθεν λαβὼν τὴν χάριν καὶ μὴ συνηρμοσμένην ἔχων αὐτὴν τῷ σώματι.[261]

In view of what we have observed in Athanasius' treatment of the fall, this is not a positive evaluation. Athanasius considers Adam's situation before the primordial

[261] Similarly Leithart, *Athanasius*, 122 although he extends this to corruption and the reign of death as well as the forgiveness of sins, a possibility that our investigation suggests Athanasius does not accept.

transgression to be inadequate as the goal of redemption, because he appears to consider that Adam's fall indicates an inevitable transgression—demonstrating that the grace given in the image could not be secured when the grace is received 'from without'. As we have observed in our examination of his thinking on divinization, it is precisely this logic that leads Athanasius to conclude that, in the atonement, the grace of divinization is detached from the renewal of the image. It no longer continues to be received 'from without', and is united with the body by means of the Word appropriating a body. It is only when the grace is joined to the body in this fashion that humanity's reception of the grace is made secure and permanent.

However, Athanasius' concern regarding the inadequacy of a merely verbal absolution goes further. Such a divine fiat would not undo the past, and so could not merely return human beings to a position similar to that of Adam before the transgression. Adam's position has deteriorated from his original position, and this occurred τάχα δὲ καὶ χείρων ἐγίνετο, ὅτε καὶ παραβαίνειν μεμάθηκεν.

In light of this, Athanasius' prognosis of the effects of a pardon by divine command on humanity is dim. He envisages that the serpent would again successfully beguile (παραπέπειστο) and there would again be need for God to command and to loose the curse (ἐγίνετο πάλιν χρεία προστάξαι τὸν θεὸν καὶ λῦσαι τὴν κατάραν). This would therefore create an eternal need (οὕτως εἰς ἄπειρον ἐγίνετο ἡ χρεία), because humanity would remain no less guilty, being enslaved to sin (οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἔμενον ὑπεύθυνοι δουλεύοντες τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ) and being eternally sinning would be eternally bound to forgiveness (ἀεὶ δὲ ἁμαρτάνοντες ἀεὶ ἐδέοντο τοῦ συγχωροῦντος) and so

would never be free (οὐδέποτε ἠλευθεροῦντο).[262] Under such a solution humanity would continue to be merely creaturely, and being flesh (καὶ σάρκες ὄντες)—the condition of being a creature—would always be overcome by the law because of the weakness of the flesh (ἀεὶ ἡττώμενοι τῷ νόμῳ διὰ τὴν ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκός).[263]

Several things are apparent from this argument. The first, and most important for our purposes here, is that the language of sinning and condemnation and curse cannot be simply collapsed into the categories of natural corruption and natural mortality, nor can the language of forgiveness or loosening be understood as synonymous with humanity's participation in the incorruption and immortality that is proper to the Word by means of the Word's incarnation. Athanasius' argument in this section would appear nonsensical under such an interpretation. He is envisaging a hypothetical situation where sins are being forgiven and the curse loosed, and yet humanity remains without freedom, still enslaved to sin (or corruption) because humanity remains flesh. [264] If the terms are all more or less synonymous, such an argument becomes incoherent. It can only function as an argument if Athanasius understands a substantial conceptual difference between 'sin' understood as natural corruption on the one hand and 'sins' or 'trespasses' or 'transgressions' and 'condemnation' and 'curse' on the other.

[262] Similarly Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, 225
[263] One suspects from this that Athanasius would be less than impressed with Luther's *simul justus et peccator*.
[264] Similarly Behr, *Nicene*, 193-194

A second key issue is that this passage is strongly reminiscent of a very similar discussion in *DI.*44, discussed chapter 3. There, Athanasius responds to a challenge from a hypothetical interlocutor that God should have saved humanity without the coming of the Word. Unlike *CA.* 2.78, in *DI.* 44 he does not entertain the possibility that this could occur, for there his focus is purely on the problem of humanity's nature—our natural corruption and mortality. Only at the end of the section does he discuss the possibility of a divine command, and even there only as preventative, to keep death from the body, rather than restorative, to heal the body once within death's grip.

What is implicit in *CA 2.*78 is explicit in *DI.* 44. Athanasius rejects, on multiple grounds, the possibility that God could have addressed human mortality and corruption through any other means than the incarnation of the Word. For that dimension of the human condition, one grounded in humanity's nature, the atonement is necessary. There is no possibility of a redemptive word from God of the same kind as God's original creative word.

However, Athanasius accepts, without hesitation or qualification, that God could forgive apart from the atonement. For this dimension of the human condition—grounded in God's speaking the law after humanity's creation—the consequences of the law's transgression can be loosed by another divine word of the same kind as that which produced the law. For this dimension, the atonement is not necessary. The necessity is located elsewhere, with the issue of natural corruption, and this leads Athanasius to argue that resolving the problem of transgression of the law by means

of the atonement is 'beneficial' to humanity instead of necessary.[265] The nature of God's freedom to address the problem other than by means of the atonement is significantly different in both instances, and this appears to be related to the nature of God's speech in creating *vis á vis* giving the law after the creation, a point to which we will return in the concluding chapter.

The third observation is the way in which this argument underlines how the Word's role in the atonement is significant for Athanasius' understanding of the nature of human salvation. Even when Athanasius considers the Word's role to be ἀκολούθως, as opposed to necessary, and so is prepared to entertain a hypothetical situation where salvation does not occur by means of an atonement effected in the Word (ἐν αὐτῷ ἡ ἐλευθερία καὶ ἡ λύσις τῆς κατακρίσεως γεγένηται), the resulting speculation results in a monstrous outcome.[266] Even when God is capable of effecting part of the solution apart from the Word's incarnation, it would appear incapable of genuinely benefitting humanity. There cannot be a salvation that is good for human beings not accomplished in the Word, even when some aspects of it are potentially capable of such a resolution from a strict consideration of God's power and freedom to act.

Second passage—DI 20

The second problematic passage is *DI.* 20. As we have had cause to notice previously, this section begins with four brief statements of the two other main atonement strands:

[265] However, once again it should be noted that Athanasius can use the terminology of 'necessity' (ἀναγκαῖον) regarding this dimension of the atonement on the lips of a hypothetical interlocutor in *DI* 21.16, without evidencing a need to correct it, so, even with Athanasius' arguments for its non-necessity, he is willing to portray others using such language neutrally, and possibly even positively.
[266] *CA* 2.67.6.3

making the corruptible incorruptible, lifting up the mortal as immortal, recreating in the image, and teaching about the Father, linking each statement to a specific aspect of the Word's nature and relationship with either the Father or creation. Athanasius then continues in line ten:

> Ἐπειδὴ δὲ καὶ τὸ ὀφειλόμενον παρὰ πάντων ἔδει λοιπὸν ἀποδοθῆναι· ὠφείλετο γὰρ πάντως, ὡς προεῖπον, ἀποθανεῖν, δι' ὃ μάλιστα καὶ ἐπεδήμησε· τούτου ἕνεκεν μετὰ τὰς περὶ θεότητος αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων ἀποδείξεις, ἤδη λοιπὸν καὶ ὑπὲρ πάντων τὴν θυσίαν ἀνέφερεν, ἀντὶ πάντων τὸν ἑαυτοῦ ναὸν εἰς θάνατον παραδιδούς, ἵνα τοὺς μὲν πάντας ἀνυπευθύνους καὶ ἐλευθέρους τῆς ἀρχαίας παραβάσεως ποιήσῃ· δείξῃ δὲ ἑαυτὸν καὶ θανάτου κρείττονα, ἀπαρχὴν τῆς τῶν ὅλων ἀναστάσεως τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα ἄφθαρτον ἐπιδεικνύμενος.[267]

There are several observations to consider. First, this would appear to be a return to the topic of Christ's death, to which Athanasius transitioned at the end of section nineteen, after a sustained discussion of renewal of the image in the previous sections. 20.1-10 would appear to provide a summary excursus of the two aspects of the atonement, divinization and renewal of the image, only tangentially related to the crucifixion. Then, at the end of line ten, Athanasius begins with 'But since' (Ἐπειδὴ δὲ), indicating the introduction of a new thought not already included in the four summary statements of the previous lines. This is confirmed by the content of this extract and the rest of this section, which focuses on the death of the Word's body—a topic that dominates the subsequent sections after *DI* 20.

Hence, it would appear that this section functions as a theological introduction to the topic of Christ's death, discussing the atoning significance of the cross before addressing various challenges to its suitability. Taken together, this would appear to

[267] *DI* 20.10-18

suggest that the topic on view after line ten is different from the themes of divinization and renewal of the image. It would be clumsy for Athanasius to very briefly reiterate four themes already discussed at some length by section 20, but then expand only one of those using merely the words Ἐπειδὴ δὲ to indicate this selection. This is all the more the case when, as we have observed in previous chapters, the death of Christ is not a constitutive element of Athanasius' account of either divinization, which focuses primarily on the incarnation, or the renewal of the image, which in previous chapters focused primarily on the Word's teaching and miraculous signs. Having reminded the reader of the other two main dimensions of the atonement in *DI,* Athanasius now begins to describe the atoning implications of the death of the Word's body, and so this material is best understood as distinct from that of either image renewal or divinization.

The second observation is that the language of the problem and solution in this section is markedly different from the other two main atonement topics. Athanasius speaks here of death as a debt that ἔδει λοιπὸν ἀποδοθῆναι. This is a different way of conceptualizing the problem of death from the characteristic way in which we have observed hitherto. Further, λοιπὸν,with the infinitive mood of ἀποδοθῆναι, suggests a problem remaining after the issues of mortality, corruption, renewal of the image, and teaching regarding the Father have been addressed. There is still an outstanding τὸ ὀφειλόμενον owed by παρὰ πάντων which still needs ἀποδοθῆναι.

The nature of this debt appears to be that 'everyone was obligated to die' (ὠφείλετο…πάντως… ἀποθανεῖν)—death is an obligation and a debt that requires

payment.[268] The solution, and the Word's relationship with humanity in his actions, is also spoken of using different terminology: with the phrases ὑπὲρ πάντων and ἀντὶ πάντων. The latter construction in particular has minimal conceptual overlap with Athanasius' characteristic language for divinization. Here, the language of 'first the Word and then those like the Word' becomes 'by the Word on behalf of and instead of those like the Word'.

This indicates a different mechanism at work. The two clauses occur within what are arguably parallel—suggesting that they are intended to reciprocally inform how each is read: the action was ὑπὲρ πάντων inasmuch as it was done in everyone's place, for that was required; and that in acting ἀντὶ πάντων the Word acted for everyone for the same reason. That this act is not simply representative—all dying in Christ—but is also substitutional—Christ dying in the place of everyone—is a natural way to read the preposition ἀντὶ.

[268] The possibility of death having a double dimension in Athanasius' thought – being due both to nature and as a judicial punishment – does not appear to be regularly entertained, and commentators often seem to argue for the existence of one theme in order to exclude the existence of others in his writing. Young, *Nicaea*, 55 avoids this on the whole but arguably still evidences it when clearing Athanasius of the charge that he is more focused on death than the guilt of sin. She argues that Athanasius focuses on death because it is the direct outcome of human disobedience to God's express command before again then stating that death is the mark of the loss of humanity's original nature before stating that recreation and revelation are Athanasius' main understandings of salvation. The real strength of this reading is that there is a genuine attempt to take seriously the way in which Athanasius can link death to the breaking of the command. The difficulty is that it appears to continue to struggle with a monistic understanding of the problem (decreation of existence and the image) and the solution (recreation) and so, the breaking of the command is presented almost as the primary reason for the existence of death – because if it exists at all it must be *the* cause - while at the same time the problem of breaking the command is interpreted in line with the more ontological dimensions of Athanasius' thought. Recognizing that Athanasius can take a multiperspective approach to the problem of death, where it is both natural and a punishment, and to its solution, where immortality is infused and the debt is paid, arguably does better justice to the variation in how Athanasius speaks of both the problem and solution than seeking to treat both kinds of language as describing the same thing.

Among those commentators who recognize a representative and substitutionary dimension to Athansius' understanding of the atoning efficacy of Christ's death, the question of whether the representative or substitutionary dimension is basic appears to be one of the key areas of debate. Lidgett expresses well the alternative interpretation that subordinates the substitutionary dimension to the representative in the thought of Athanasius,

> ...by taking the matter out of mere will into that of reason and the constitution of things the necessity of our Lord's death is made clear, in contrast to the view of most ancient writers; and, secondly, our Lord's payment of the debt must be not only substitutionary, but so strictly representative, that all may be truly said to have died in Him. What is of the divine order must be fulfilled by all, and not merely by one, even though He be the Head of the race.[269]

There is no quarrel with the logic that leads to this conclusion. The reason for this study placing substitution slightly ahead of representative is textual. First, passages like *DI* 20, which explain how the death of Christ actually atones, support this (as discussed above). Second, Athanasius clearly does not consider the death of Christ to be necessary to address this aspect of the problem of the human condition—'merely' beneficial and fitting. The logic of making representation primary does, as Lidgett correctly argues, lead to making the death of Christ necessary for the solution of the debt because it regards even this aspect of the problem as grounded in nature over divine will. But as Athanasius makes it explicit that on this axis there is a degree of

[269] J. S.Lidgett, *The Spiritual Principle of the Atonement* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1897), 450

contingency involved in problem and solution, then the same logic suggests that substitution is to be preferred over representation.[270] [271]

Similarly the description of the activity of the Word is also divergent; the Word τὴν θυσίαν ἀνέφερεν and τὸν ἑαυτοῦ ναὸν εἰς θάνατον παραδιδούς.[272] In fact, the participle form of παραδιδούς suggests a relationship to the finite verb ἀνέφερεν, most probably functioning epexegetically, to explain that the sense in which 'offered the sacrifice' is to be understood is more literal, involving the actual death of the thing sacrificed. Θυσίαν, in turn, is explained by ἑαυτοῦ ναὸν—a common Athanasian phrase to describe the Word's body— suggesting that it is his body which is the sacrifice that was offered. Finally, the goal of the Word's actions is also described in terms similar to what we observed in *CA* 2.67, ἵνα τοὺς μὲν πάντας ἀνυπευθύνους καὶ ἐλευθέρους τῆς ἀρχαίας παραβάσεως ποιήσῃ. There are some new ideas here that were not in *CA* 2.67: the language of ἀνυπευθύνους, which indicates the idea of not being liable; the linking of freedom from the transgression and the death of Christ. The restriction of the transgressions addressed to 'the first transgression' is more narrowly focussed than observed in *CA* 2.67, which appeared interested in

270 See Mozley, *Atonement*, 107 for a compatible discussion—rejecting the notion that Athansius' thought aligns exactly with later Protestant thinking, but also rejecting the idea that susbstitution can be expunged from Athanasius' thought in favour of representation. Young, *Sacrifical*, 205-207 appears to take a similar view. c.f. Grensted, *Atonement*, 80 who also collapses substitution into representation ideas, in his case seemingly in order to deny any similarity between Athanasius and penal theories of the atonement.

271 In conversation when supervising this chapter, Dr Edwards noted the discussion by Porphyry in *In Aristotle Categories* 77.13ff where Porphyry identifies eight possible senses in which one thing can be 'in' another. This study was not in a position to harnass the implications of this insight, but it would seem plausible that this range of possibilities open to native Greek speakers of the period such as Porphyry and Athanasius might help resolve the crux of representative versus substitutionary themes in Athanasius' account. The apparent tension may well be an expression of an underlying variation in how the Word and his people are conceptualized, even as the latter remain 'in' the former.

272 Such language presupposes that the Word's death is voluntary and not because the Word himself was under obligation to die and hence Athanasius' concern to stress the unstained nature of the Word's body as noted by Behr, *Nicene*, 198

transgressions and sins more generally.[273] Nonetheless, the overlap of the terms παραβάσεως and ἐλευθέρους indicate that this discussion is in the same category as the earlier extract and so, similarly involves a different set of ideas than that of divinization.

That this atonement perspective both differentiates yet is related to the others, is especially clear from the second half of *DI* 20, and reinforces the case against readings of Athanasius that collapse the themes together:

> Τὸ μὲν οὖν σῶμα, ὡς καὶ αὐτὸ κοινὴν ἔχον τοῖς πᾶσι τὴν οὐσίαν—σῶμα γὰρ ἦν ἀνθρώπινον—, εἰ καὶ καινοτέρῳ θαύματι συνέστη ἐκ παρθένου μόνης, ὅμως θνητὸν ὂν κατὰ ἀκολουθίαν τῶν ὁμοίων καὶ ἀπέθνῃσκε· τῇ δὲ τοῦ Λόγου εἰς αὐτὸ ἐπιβάσει, οὐκέτι κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν φύσιν ἐφθείρετο, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ἐνοικήσαντα τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγον, ἐκτὸς ἐγίνετο φθορᾶς. Καὶ συνέβαινεν ἀμφότερα ἐν ταὐτῷ γενέσθαι παραδόξως· ὅτι τε ὁ πάντων θάνατος ἐν τῷ κυριακῷ σώματι ἐπληροῦτο, καὶ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ἡ φθορὰ διὰ τὸν συνόντα Λόγον ἐξηφανίζετο. Θανάτου γὰρ ἦν χρεία, καὶ θάνατον ὑπὲρ πάντων ἔδει γενέσθαι, ἵνα τὸ παρὰ πάντων ὀφειλόμενον γένηται. Ὅθεν, ὡς προεῖπον, ὁ Λόγος, ἐπεὶ οὐχ οἷόν τε ἦν αὐτὸν ἀποθανεῖν—ἀθάνατος γὰρ ἦν—, ἔλαβεν ἑαυτῷ σῶμα τὸ δυνάμενον ἀποθανεῖν, ἵνα ὡς ἴδιον ἀντὶ πάντων αὐτὸ προσενέγκῃ, καὶ ὡς αὐτὸς ὑπὲρ πάντων πάσχων, διὰ τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸ ἐπίβασιν, «καταργήσῃ τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου, τουτέστιν τὸν διάβολον· καὶ ἀπαλλάξῃ τούτους, ὅσοι φόβῳ θανάτου διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ζῆν ἔνοχοι ἦσαν δουλείας».[274]

[273] However, even there Athanasius' argument for the necessity of the divinity of the Word centred on the need for the same person who gave the original command which was transgressed to loose people from sins, and their attendant sentence and condemnation, which suggests that Athanasius' understanding of this aspect of the atonement has a particular focus on the original transgression. While not exactly the same, something similar appears to be at work in the following extract from *Life of Antony* 65.8-16*:*

> εἶτα πικροὺς καὶ δεινούς τινας ἑστῶτας ἐν τῷ ἀέρι καὶ θέλοντας αὐτὸν κωλῦσαι ὥστε μὴ διαβῆναι. Τῶν δὲ ὁδηγούντων ἀντιμαχομένων, ἀπῄτουν ἐκεῖνοι λόγον, εἰ μὴ ὑπεύθυνος αὐτοῖς εἴη. 4. Θελόντων τοίνυν συνᾶραι λόγον ἀπὸ τῆς γενέσεως, ἐκώλυον οἱ τὸν Ἀντώνιον ὁδηγοῦντες, λέγοντες ἐκείνοις· Τὰ μὲν τῆς γενέσεως ὁ Κύριος ἀπήλειψεν· ἐξ οὗ δὲ γέγονε μοναχὸς καὶ ἐπηγγείλατο τῷ θεῷ, ἐξέστω λόγον ποιῆσαι.

The idea that the demons can only charge Antony with sins committed since he became a monk because "the Lord has wiped out the sins from his birth", while not instantly identical to the idea that the atonement has addressed the primordial transgression in particular, possibly reflects a similar kind of reasoning.

[274] *DI* 20.25-41

Athanasius begins, in lines twenty-five to thirty with a characteristic summary of the atonement from the perspective of divinization, touching on the likeness (τῶν ὁμοίων) of the Word's body to that of humans generally, its natural mortality, and its incorruptibility due to its union with the Word. Then he states καὶ συνέβαινεν ἀμφότερα ἐν ταὐτῷ γενέσθαι παραδόξως. The subsequent ὅτι indicates that the reference of ἀμφότερα is then clarified in the subsequent statement, τε ὁ πάντων θάνατος ἐν τῷ κυριακῷ σώματι ἐπληροῦτο, καὶ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ἡ φθορὰ διὰ τὸν συνόντα Λόγον ἐξηφανίζετο. The latter half of this declaration is a clear reference to divinization, and the use of ἀμφότερα, with the τε…καὶ construction of the two clauses suggests that the divinization and the death of all being fulfilled in the Lord's body are two separate things being compared, not the one thing being mentioned under two different descriptions. How the death of all was fulfilled in the Lord's body is then the subject of the rest of section twenty, indicated by the γὰρ in line thirty. Athanasius builds on his previous statement that humanity was obliged to die due to their outstanding debt, by stating first that there was need for death (Θανάτου γὰρ ἦν χρεία) and then specifying that it was specifically death ὑπὲρ πάντων that needed (ἔδει) to occur, in order that what was owed by all might cease (ἵνα τὸ παρὰ πάντων ὀφειλόμενον γένηται), all points that were implicit but arguably not completely transparent in the earlier extract from *DI.* 20.[275]

[275] Similarly Leithart, *Athanasius,* 155; *C.f.* Behr, *Nicene,* 202 who presents the issue as 'death is thereby completed, expended, emptied of its power'. This is suggestive that the death of Christ addresses a power inherent to death by exhausting it in his own death rather than discharging an external obligation and so fulfilling the death of all. That this is the effect of Behr's language is supported by his appeal to the opening of *DI* 21, which he presents as a contrast between people 'dying' before Christ died and now simply being 'dissolved' until the resurrection. This is noteworthy, for Athanasius actually contrasts dying 'according to the threat of the law', and not simply dying itself, and the dissolution believers experience now is 'in the mortality of the body'. Behr's reading appears to seek to collapse death as condemnation into death as the body's natural mortality. However, the opening lines of *DI* 21 are not conducive for such a reading as the parts of the extract that Behr does not quote establish a contrast between death as a condemnation according to the threat of the law that

Of especial note is the way the differences between this 'forensic' topic and divinization can then be observed in the subsequent lines, where Athanasius explains the difficulty the Word has, and the path he undertakes to solve it. As we observed in the chapter on divinization, the body's natural mortality is considered as a difficulty to which the Word's inherent immortality is the solution.

In this extract, however, the fact that the Word was not of the kind to die, for he was immortal (οὐχ οἷόν τε ἦν αὐτὸν ἀποθανεῖν—ἀθάνατος γὰρ ἦν), is the problem, not the solution, to the need for a death on behalf of all and instead of all. Conversely, the body's mortality—its ability to die (σῶμα τὸ δυνάμενον ἀποθανεῖν) arising from its nature—is now the solution to the 'problem' of a deathless Word who needs to die.[276] The same basic elements are on view, but their relationship to each other as factors in the Word's atonement for the human condition are effectively inverted from Athanasius' material on divinization. What was the solution is here the problem, what was the problem is here the solution.

It is very difficult to understand such an argument as anything other than an indicator that the problem of—and solution to—human death are here being conceptualised differently from the transcending of natural mortality.

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has now ceased due to Christ's death and death as a temporary dissolution that is still experienced due to the body's natural mortality and which will only be addressed when the promise of the resurrection is fulfilled. Two aspects of death are on view here, one due to the body's mortality and the other a legal condemnation. Christ's death resolves the latter, but the former is still experienced by believers.

[276] Anatolios, *Coherence,* 75 similarly notes that the body's capacity to die enables the immortal God to undergo death; also Lidgett, *Atonement,* 450; Smith, 'Atonement', 182;

It should be noted in passing, however, that when this section of *DI* is compared to similar ones, such as *DI* 9, the Word's role is more complex than indicated in *DI* 20, contributing an element of the solution, as well as presenting a 'problem'.

> Συνιδὼν γὰρ ὁ Λόγος ὅτι ἄλλως οὐκ ἂν λυθείη τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἡ φθορὰ εἰ μὴ διὰ τοῦ πάντως ἀποθανεῖν, οὐχ οἷόν τε δὲ ἦν τὸν Λόγον ἀποθανεῖν ἀθάνατον ὄντα καὶ τοῦ Πατρὸς Υἱόν, τούτου ἕνεκεν τὸ δυνάμενον ἀποθανεῖν ἑαυτῷ λαμβάνει σῶμα, ἵνα τοῦτο τοῦ ἐπὶ πάντων Λόγου μεταλαβὸν ἀντὶ πάντων ἱκανὸν γένηται τῷ θανάτῳ, καὶ διὰ τὸν ἐνοικήσαντα Λόγον ἄφθαρτον διαμείνῃ, καὶ λοιπὸν ἀπὸ πάντων ἡ φθορὰ παύσηται τῇ τῆς ἀναστάσεως χάριτι. Ὅθεν ὡς ἱερεῖον καὶ θῦμα παντὸς ἐλεύθερον σπίλου, ὃ αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ ἔλαβε σῶμα προσάγων εἰς θάνατον, ἀπὸ πάντων εὐθὺς τῶν ὁμοίων ἠφάνιζε τὸν θάνατον τῇ προσφορᾷ τοῦ καταλλήλου. Ὑπὲρ πάντας γὰρ ὢν ὁ Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ εἰκότως τὸν ἑαυτοῦ ναὸν καὶ τὸ σωματικὸν ὄργανον προσάγων ἀντίψυχον ὑπὲρ πάντων ἐπλήρου τὸ ὀφειλόμενον ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ· καὶ ὡς συνὼν δὲ διὰ τοῦ ὁμοίου τοῖς πᾶσιν ὁ ἄφθαρτος τοῦ Θεοῦ Υἱὸς εἰκότως τοὺς πάντας ἐνέδυσεν ἀφθαρσίαν ἐν τῇ περὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως ἐπαγγελίᾳ. [277]

As we have just observed in *DI* 20, the body's mortality is the solution to the inability of the immortal Word to die. However, in this extract there is an additional thought. While it is the body's mortality that enables the Word to die, it is the body's participation in the Word that renders the body sufficient to die in the place of everyone. It is the body's transcendence through participation in the Word that enables its death to suffice as the death of all, even as its mortality enables there to be a death in the place of everyone obligated to die.[278]

Both the body and the Word, then, contribute a necessary element to the atoning effect of the death. Yet the nature of the Word's contribution is unusual. Normally, when Athanasius speaks of created things participating in the Word, it is ontological qualities that he has in mind: life, existence, unity, goodness, immortality,

[277] *DI* 9.1-9.15
[278] Similarly Anatolios, *Coherence*, 75

incorruption and similar. Here, it seems that he is more interested in the Word's status, or his position with respect to creation, than his ontological qualities as such.

This is hinted at when, in discussing the body's participation, he describes the Word as τοῦ ἐπὶ πάντων Λόγου, and so emphasises the Word's standing in that context. It is strengthened and made explicit two sentences later, Ὑπὲρ πάντας γὰρ ὢν ὁ Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ εἰκότως τὸν ἑαυτοῦ ναὸν καὶ τὸ σωματικὸν ὄργανον προσάγων ἀντίψυχον ὑπὲρ πάντων ἐπλήρου τὸ ὀφειλόμενον ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ. Once again, the key idea is offered by the finite verb, in this case ἐπλήρου. The participle προσάγων appears to be functioning epexegetically, explaining the way in which the debt was fulfilled in the Word's death—by presenting his body as a substitute (with ἀντίψυχον in context indicating that the presentation was to death). It in turn draws on the participle ὢν, as signified by εἰκότως, such that the basis for which the Word reasonably offers his body in the place of all is that the Word is over all.

Athanasius does not develop the mechanism of this idea further, certainly nothing as intricate as the schemes of Anselm or later Protestant forensic accounts.[279] Nonetheless, the logic here appears to be 'forensic' in the sense that it demonstrates a focus on 'external' relationships, rather than (as with divinization) intrinsic ontology. It is the Word's status of being over all that means that his body can be an exchange in death for all, and so the death of one fulfils the obligation of all.[280] Athanasius'

[279] *C.f.* Grensted, *Atonement,* 77 who appears to see in such language the principle that the body of the Word 'is infinitely precious, and is thus a real "equivalent" for sin'. Such a view is certainly possible, but there is nothing explicit or implicit in the text to indicate such a logic. Its assumption here appears to be part of Grensted's tendency to assimilate Athanasius' view to later Satisfaction theories.

[280] See Dragas, *Athanasius,* 126-127 for a similar interpretation whereby it is the headship of the Word over creation that enables the Word to act as humanity's representative and enables the substitutionary

interest in the created order being ruled by the Word and unified in him is here given a soteriological effect—it is a component factor as to why the Word is able to substitute himself for all and have his death count as the death of all.

The third and final observation from *DI* 20 (and reinforced by the further extract from *DI* 9) is that the Word's taking of a body that is able to die makes it all but irrefutable that the 'sacrifice' and 'offering' and 'paying of the debt', as well as the πάσχων in line thirty-seven are all ways of speaking about the death of the body of the Word. Were this not the case, it is difficult to perceive why Athanasius would place such an onus on the Word's inability to die as the reason why he took to himself a body capable of death.

Third Set of Texts—Extracts from DI 3-8

Athanasius' discussion, in section twenty, of the problem of death as a debt or obligation which must be discharged either by everyone dying, or by the Word dying in the place of everyone, is not an interruption to his argument in *DI.* It is grounded on Athanasius' discussion of the relationship that exists between death and the law that occurs over multiple sections. These passages give the conceptual framework for Athanasius' understanding of death and its solution on view in *DI* 20, and are as difficult to comprehend through a divinization lens as the passages we have

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offering of the death of one instead of all and as the representative of all. It should be noted that in contrast to the tack taken in this investigation, Dragas is at some pains to stress the non-forensic nature of Athanasius' account of Christ's vicarious sacrifice, emphasizing that the ground for this susbstitution is not an abstract principle of forensic transaction but the Word's headship. The insight is germane and significant but it is less clear that it places Athanasius' view of Christ's death outside a category of 'forensic', broadly defined. Note Weinandy, *Athanasius,* 33 who also affirms that it is the body's participation in the Word that enables it to act as a sacrifice, but who links this to a participation in the Word's holiness rather than his being head of all things.

considered thus far. Consequently it is this material from *DI* that we will examine last in our set of three texts that are difficult to interpret otherwise than in a 'forensic' fashion, beginning with a passage from *DI* 3 already briefly discussed in a previous chapter:

> Εἰδὼς δὲ πάλιν τὴν ἀνθρώπων εἰς ἀμφότερα νεύειν δυναμένην προαίρεσιν, προλαβὼν ἠσφαλίσατο νόμῳ καὶ τόπῳ τὴν δοθεῖσαν αὐτοῖς χάριν. Εἰς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ γὰρ παράδεισον αὐτοὺς εἰσαγαγών, ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς νόμον· ἵνα εἰ μὲν φυλάξαιεν τὴν χάριν καὶ μένοιεν καλοί, ἔχωσι τὴν ἐν παραδείσῳ ἄλυπον καὶ ἀνώδυνον καὶ ἀμέριμνον ζωήν, πρὸς τῷ καὶ τῆς ἐν οὐρανοῖς ἀφθαρσίας αὐτοὺς τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν ἔχειν· εἰ δὲ παραβαῖεν καὶ στραφέντες γένοιντο φαῦλοι, γινώσκοιεν ἑαυτοὺς τὴν ἐν θανάτῳ κατὰ φύσιν φθορὰν ὑπομένειν, καὶ μηκέτι μὲν ἐν παραδείσῳ ζῆν, ἔξω δὲ τούτου λοιπὸν ἀποθνήσκοντας μένειν ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ καὶ ἐν τῇ φθορᾷ.[281]

This is the first mention of the giving of the law in *DI.* The law is stated to function in a fashion analogous to paradise—as a means to secure the grace of the image in humanity in light of humanity's ability to turn towards the good or away from it. There are consequences for keeping and for breaking the law: keeping the law would result in the man and woman remaining in paradise in their original condition with the promise of immortality in heaven; transgressing the law (παραβαῖεν) results in ejection from paradise, dying outside of it and experiencing corruption in death.

Both the allusion to the Eden account of Genesis 2 & 3, as well as the quotation of Genesis 2:16-17, towards the end of section three, suggest that it is Genesis 2:16-17 in particular that Athanasius is thinking of when he speaks of 'the law' (and also, in later sections of *DI* 'the commandment').

[281] *DI* 3.24-39

There are two things especially worth noting from this extract. First, παραβαῖεν, which would appear to correlate to the law in particular, is here linked with στραφέντες γένοιντο φαῦλοι, which, as we observed in our discussion of Athanasius' treatment of the fall, is Athanasius' characteristic language for describing humanity's decline from its original pristine moral position. The parallel in this location suggests that there is sufficient conceptual overlap for 'transgressing the law' to be synonymous with becoming evil by turning from God. While 'transgression' is not a common term in Athanasius' exposition of humanity's original fall in *CG* and *DI,* it does refer to the same reality as his more dominant language and categories.

The second observation is that the consequences for humanity's obedience to, or transgression of, the law are presented asymmetrically. The positive outcomes are presented with a straightforward 'if-then' construction, with εἰ introducing the alternative, and the subjunctive ἔχωσι and the clause πρὸς τῷ καὶ τῆς ἐν οὐρανοῖς ἀφθαρσίας αὐτοὺς τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν ἔχειν indicating the result. This side of the alternative is presented in a way that suggests that the positive outcomes are directly the result of keeping the law: that, if kept, the law is somehow instrumental in producing these effects. The negative alternative is presented differently, however. It is the same 'if-then' construction introduced with εἰ, but on this occasion, the outcome is introduced with γινώσκοιεν, and the naturalness of the first negative consequence is explicitly stated τὴν ἐν θανάτῳ κατὰ φύσιν φθορὰν.

This presentation of the outcome gives the suggestion that the law has minimal or no instrumental role in the consequences, but merely acts pedagogically to reveal them to

humanity. The corruption in death is according to nature, and the law ensures that people will know that this natural dynamic will be operative if they transgress and, by turning aside, become evil.

Such an asymmetrical presentation is consistent with Athanasius' doctrines of creation and anthropology. Corruption and death are natural for creatures, and only prevented by the continuous involvement of the Word in the cosmos. Consequently, the law does not act if humanity's creaturely nature becomes the dominant factor in humanity's existence. It is merely the reassertion of nature. On the other hand, life in paradise ἄλυπον καὶ ἀνώδυνον καὶ ἀμέριμνον—let alone the promise of immortality in heaven—is not natural for creatures whose natural mortality would appear to also encompass natural passibility and hence suffering. Immortality can only be an outcome of the added grace of being in the image, and therefore humanity having these aids can benefit humanity by maintaining its image-given goodness by retaining its grace. In the law's first appearance in the argument of *DI*, the naturalness of corruption and death are emphasised, even when understood as a consequence for transgressing the law.

The relationship between the law and death and corruption is more ambiguous in the next section of *DI*:

> ἄνθρωποι δὲ κατολιγωρήσαντες καὶ ἀποστραφέντες τὴν πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν κατανόησιν, λογισάμενοι δὲ καὶ ἐπινοήσαντες ἑαυτοῖς τὴν κακίαν,ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς πρώτοις ἐλέχθη, ἔσχον τὴν προαπειληθεῖσαν τοῦ θανάτου κατάκρισιν, καὶ λοιπὸν οὐκ ἔτι ὡς γεγόνασι διέμενον· ἀλλ' ὡς ἐλογίζοντο διεφθείροντο· καὶ ὁ θάνατος αὐτῶν ἐκράτει βασιλεύων. Ἡ γὰρ παράβασις τῆς ἐντολῆς εἰς τὸ κατὰ

> φύσιν αὐτοὺς ἐπέστρεφεν, ἵνα, ὥσπερ οὐκ ὄντες γεγόνασιν, οὕτως καὶ τὴν εἰς τὸ μὴ εἶναι φθορὰν ὑπομείνωσι τῷ χρόνῳ εἰκότως.[282]

In this extract, the legal dimension of death is emphasized at first, ἔσχον τὴν προαπειληθεῖσαν τοῦ θανάτου κατάκρισιν. Here death is seemingly presented exclusively as a judicial sentence. However, the degree to which Athanasius invokes the legal dimension of κατάκρισιν is unclear—both because of how the relationship of death and the law was presented in section three, but also because of how the relationship is explained at the end of our extract: Ἡ…παράβασις τῆς ἐντολῆς εἰς τὸ κατὰ φύσιν αὐτοὺς ἐπέστρεφεν, ἵνα, ὥσπερ οὐκ ὄντες γεγόνασιν, οὕτως καὶ τὴν εἰς τὸ μὴ εἶναι φθορὰν ὑπομείνωσι τῷ χρόνῳ εἰκότως. In this statement, corruption, the corollary of death, is presented very strongly as humanity's basic nature. However, even here there is a new insight from section three, for Athanasius explicitly states a connection that appeared to be implicitly de-emphasised in the previous extract. The law does not only ensure that people know that its transgression will lead to the reassertion of nature, but now the transgression of the commandment is identified as the means to return (ἐπέστρεφεν) people to the corruption natural to them. The law is not simply revelatory and pedagogical, but instrumental in changing humanity's situation after transgression. But does Athanasius use κατάκρισιν to infer that the turning of people to corruption and death is a form of legal condemnation? Or is κατάκρισιν being used more metaphorically, to indicate 'the law of nature' that transgression activates in human existence?

[282] *DI* 4.14-20

This confusion is only exacerbated by the other pertinent additional insight this extract offers. The statement that the transgression of the commandment turned people to what was natural is given as the reason (γὰρ) for a new description of death's relationship with humanity, καὶ ὁ θάνατος αὐτῶν ἐκράτει βασιλεύων. This linking of death's rule with humanity's return to natural corruption arising from their original non-existence underlies the intrinsic connection between the two realities of death and corruption in human existence. However the description of death's relationship with humanity as taking control and ruling introduces yet another way of conceptualizing the nature of death, one that could also be either being portrayed metaphorically as a description of death-as-nature or which could be indicating the insufficiency of that baseline concept to completely explain the relationship.

Some of the direction that Athanasius' thought on this issue takes becomes clearer in section five:

> τούτου δὲ γενομένου οἱ μὲν ἄνθρωποι ἀπέθνησκον, ἡ δὲ φθορὰ λοιπὸν κατ᾽ αὐτῶν ἤκμαζε, καὶ πλεῖον τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν ἰσχύουσα καθ᾽ ὅλου τοῦ γένους, ὅσῳ καὶ τὴν ἀπειλὴν τοῦ θείου διὰ τὴν παράβασιν τῆς ἐντολῆς κατ᾽ αὐτῶν προειλήφει.[283]

The basic relationship is stated simply; because humanity turned away from eternal things and, by the devil's counsel, turned to the things of corruption (expressed previously in lines two to four), people died—and henceforth corruption flourished against them (current extract).[284] This idea again has the reassertion of nature in the

[283] *DI* 5.11-14

[284] While not entirely clear due to its brevity, it appears that Ng understands things along these lines, listing death and corruption as both natural and as a punishment for transgressing the law in his list of consequences of the fall, with no suggestion of the natural condition being strengthened by the transgression. Ng, *Spirituality*, 76-77, 82

background, as Athanasius has once again, in the material immediately preceding our extract, canvassed humanity's original capacity to escape its nature by the indwelling of the Word by means of humanity's share in the Image. Athanasius then adds a dimension to the problem, καὶ πλεῖον τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν ἰσχύουσα καθ' ὅλου τοῦ γένους.

The nature of this greater strength over humanity is not made explicit, but an indication is given in the subsequent material of section five, where Athanasius notes that humanity did not restrain itself but continued to advance into increasing evil, culminating with 'acts against nature' and a quotation from Romans 1:26-27. This suggests that the greater efficacy of corruption is most probably its capacity to lead the human race into more aberrant behaviour than would have occurred were nature alone at work. Athanasius identifies the additional factor enabling corruption to have a greater than natural strength when he states, 'ὅσῳ καὶ τὴν ἀπειλὴν τοῦ θείου διὰ τὴν παράβασιν τῆς ἐντολῆς κατ' αὐτῶν προειλήφει.

The mechanism by which this works is manifestly unclear. Exactly how corruption had earlier taken up the threat of God against humanity or precisely how doing this increases corruption's potency is unexplained, nor are there implicit clues from which one may deduce a probable connection. Nonetheless, the causal relationship appears clear. Corruption is stronger against humanity than nature alone would account for because of corruption's capacity to enact the threat of God against humanity. 'Transgression of the commandment' would appear to refer back to the previous interest in the divine command of Genesis 2:16-17. This suggests that the evocative 'threat of God' (τὴν ἀπειλὴν τοῦ θείου) is analogous to the 'curse', 'sentence' and

'condemnation'. The consequences arising from the breaking the law strengthen humanity's natural corruption such that the transgression of the law exacerbates a dynamic that is intrinsic and natural for humanity.

The relationship between death, corruption, and the law is expressed more fully in section eight:

> Καὶ ἰδὼν τὸ λογικὸν ἀπολλύμενον γένος, καὶ τὸν θάνατον κατ' αὐτῶν βασιλεύοντα τῇ φθορᾷ· ὁρῶν δὲ καὶ τὴν ἀπειλὴν τῆς παραβάσεως διακρατοῦσαν τὴν καθ' ἡμῶν φθοράν· καὶ ὅτι ἄτοπον ἦν πρὸ τοῦ πληρωθῆναι τὸν νόμον λυθῆναι·[285]

It is again stated that τὸν θάνατον κατ' αὐτῶν βασιλεύοντα but this time the means by which this occurs is indicated, 'by corruption' (τῇ φθορᾷ). While we have not had cause to discuss this issue specifically, Athanasius' language about the relationship between death and corruption is capable of variation. Sometimes corruption is identified as imposed on people after they die, and other times, such as this extract, death's authority is said to be exercised through corruption.[286] As death's reign is mediated through corruption's sway, Athanasius' subsequent description of the relationship between corruption and the law is significant, τὴν ἀπειλὴν τῆς παραβάσεως διακρατοῦσαν τὴν καθ' ἡμῶν φθοράν. The implication here would appear to be comparable with what we observed earlier; that corruption's sway over humanity receives support from the threat of the consequences subsequent to the violation of the command, and hence is more effective. It is possible that, as that transgression has occurred, Athanasius' thought is not only that it is the threat that

[285] *DI* 8.6-9

[286] One possibility is that 'corruption after death' focuses on corruption more on the ontological dimension of corruption, possibly modelled on decomposition after death, while 'death rules through corruption' focuses more on the ethical dimension of corruption. This is an aspect of Athanasius' understanding of the nature of the human condition that could benefit from further investigation.

supports corruption, but the threat now realized and come into effect, that is, that the law has an inherent power now that it has been broken. There is one final additional aspect to the nexus between the law, corruption and death in the words, ἄτοπον ἦν πρὸ τοῦ πληρωθῆναι τὸν νόμον λυθῆναι, which alludes to a significant extended discussion that begins with section six, to which we will now turn:

> Διὰ δὴ ταῦτα πλεῖον τοῦ θανάτου κρατήσαντος, καὶ τῆς φθορᾶς παραμενούσης κατὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, τὸ μὲν τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος ἐφθείρετο, ὁ δὲ λογικὸς καὶ κατ᾽ εἰκόνα γενόμενος ἄνθρωπος ἠφανίζετο· καὶ τὸ ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ γενόμενον ἔργον παραπώλλυτο. Καὶ γὰρ καὶ ὁ θάνατος, ὡς προεῖπον, νόμῳ λοιπὸν ἴσχυε καθ᾽ ἡμῶν· καὶ οὐχ οἷόν τε ἦν τὸν νόμον ἐκφυγεῖν, διὰ τὸ ὑπὸ Θεοῦ τεθεῖσθαι τοῦτον τῆς παραβάσεως χάριν· καὶ ἦν ἄτοπον ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀπρεπὲς τὸ γινόμενον ἀληθῶς. Ἄτοπον μὲν γὰρ ἦν εἰπόντα τὸν Θεὸν ψεύσασθαι, ὥστε νομοθετήσαντος αὐτοῦ θανάτῳ ἀποθνῄσκειν τὸν ἄνθρωπον, εἰ παραβαίη τὴν ἐντολήν, μετὰ τὴν παράβασιν μὴ ἀποθνῄσκειν, ἀλλὰ λύεσθαι τὸν τούτου λόγον. Οὐκ ἀληθὴς γὰρ ἦν ὁ Θεός, εἰ εἰπόντος αὐτοῦ ἀποθνῄσκειν ἡμᾶς, μὴ ἀπέθνῃσκεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος.[287]

This passage, sometimes described as Athanasius' version of the divine dilemma, for its similarities to Anselm's argument in *Cur Deus Homo*, is where Athanasius' understanding of the nature of problem of the transgressed law is most clearly displayed. There are several things to note. First, the variation in Athanasius' understanding of the relationship between law, death and corruption is again apparent. In this extract, after the initial mention of corruption persevering (τῆς φθορᾶς παραμενούσης), Athanasius explains the connections purely in terms of death and the law alone, 'death henceforth was strong against us by the law' (ὁ θάνατος…νόμῳ λοιπὸν ἴσχυε καθ᾽ ἡμῶν). This statement, if it had occurred on its own, could be understood as an elliptical form of what we observed with section five, where corruption's role is implicit but unstated—death was strong by the law over us, in the sense that death ruled by corruption which was strengthened by the law.

[287] *DI* 6.1-12

While that understanding is not impossible, it seems more probable that Athanasius is here identifying a more direct relationship between death and the law, for he goes on to state, νομοθετήσαντος αὐτοῦ θανάτῳ ἀποθνήσκειν τὸν ἄνθρωπον, εἰ παραβαίη τὴν ἐντολήν. Once again, it seems probable that Genesis 2:16-17 is in the background, with its linking of death to transgression and hence it seems probable that, in this extract, Athanasius is indicating a direct relationship between death and the transgression of the law. Death's sway over the human race was strengthened by transgression; just as it was also strengthened by corruption (which was also strengthened by the transgression of the law).

The second observation is that the law's sway is portrayed as absolute from a human perspective, οὐχ οἷόν τε ἦν τὸν νόμον ἐκφυγεῖν. Apparently there were no exceptions to the law's scope, no-one was able to escape either its demands or the effects that existed for compliance or transgression. Everyone was under the power of the law.[288]

Complementary to the second observation is the third, that the law is not absolute from God's perspective. In line with what we have noted with *DI* 44 and *CA* 2.68 in this extract, Athanasius does not perceive the law's demands to be necessary for God. The problem is presented as a conflict between competing demands upon God, each

[288] This is hardly universal among the fathers. Eusebius of Caesarea, for example, appears to primarily link the scope of 'the law' to Israel, and not to humanity. See *Demonstration of the Gospel* chapter 3. However, it should be noted that 'the law' at this point in Athanasius seems to refer more to the paradisical prohibition so there may be a point of contact at this point between the two on this issue as Eusebius presents Christianity as a return to a pre-Mosaic religion in chapter 2. Nonetheless Athanasius' description of 'the law' in *DI* 12 as explicitly not being for the Jews alone but for the whole world to receive instruction about the knowledge of God and the conduct of the soul indicates that there is still a fundamental disagreement at this point as he sees that command as continuous with 'the law'.

of which derive from God's relationship with his own prior acts. On the one hand it would be ἄτοπον for people not to die, and on the other it would be ἀπρεπὲς for people to die. In the choice of vocabulary, it is possible that there is an indication that Athanasius considers the former possibility as less fitting for divine consideration than the latter, but if so, it appears to be only a matter of degree, not kind. The reasons for these assessments relate to God actions: it would be absurd for God to say that people would die if they transgressed his command and then they did not die when they transgressed his command. Further, it would be improper for people made rational and who partook of the Word originally to return to non-existence through ever-increasing corruption. Importantly, Athanasius does not present these pressures upon God as necessity. There is no suggestion that God simply is unable either to act against the law he gave, or to leave humanity to their self-created fate. There is, in principle, freedom for God to act in both directions—to overturn the penalties of the law, or to step back from the seemliness arising from humanity's gift of partaking in the image, because neither of the terms suggest any kind of necessity. Instead, the argument hinges on the inappropriateness of the relevant action; God may take the action, but it is unfitting for God to act in that way. In the case of the impropriety of humanity's eventual death the argument advanced is of the kind observed in the previous chapter on the image—it is humanity's formation as a creature that participates in the Word, and hence has rationality, that forms the basis for Athanasius' evaluation that it would be unworthy of God's goodness. In the case of the need for humanity to die, the view hinges on the proposition that humanity not dying would necessarily involve God in a lie, Ἄτοπον μὲν γὰρ ἦν εἰπόντα τὸν Θεὸν ψεύσασθαι, and Οὐκ ἀληθὴς γὰρ ἦν ὁ Θεός, εἰ εἰπόντος αὐτοῦ ἀποθνῄσκειν ἡμᾶς, μὴ

ἀπέθνῃσκεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος.[289] Athanasius does not accept, even hypothetically, the possibility of God annulling the law in such a fashion that preserves his truthfulness. God may preserve humanity from death, his law notwithstanding, but then his original threat would not be true.[290] Having spoken the law, God's freedom is therefore not absolute. God is free to act differently, but cannot do so without being guilty of having spoken untruthfully.[291]

This way of presenting the dilemma would appear to have far more in common with Athanasius' argument in *CA* 68 than his approach to either divinization or renewal of the image. Those instances contain nothing akin to the 'divine dilemma' but make it explicit that divinization and the Word's revelation of the Father are the only ways in which the problems of corruption, mortality, and loss of the image can be overcome. If those issues are to be resolved then Athanasius' writing tends towards the atonement being necessary. There is no suggestion that in those dimensions God is free to act in a different way that, if it is chosen, would involve him in something

[289] Similarly Weinandy, *Athanasius*, 30 although he argues that it was not possible for God to simply remove the threat that he had made, rather than arguing for the possibility of the threat being removed, albeit involving God in a falsehood. This is also the position of Leithart, *Athanasius*, 118 although he exceeds Athanasius' language of impropriety and absurdity to claim that for God to act otherwise is an impossibility, albeit an impossibility arising from God's own character. This step is undoubtedly attractive but does not reflect Athanasius' own language and instead requires an interpretive decision that it is impossible for God to act in a way unfitting for him—a conclusion that is hardly unreasonable, but also one for which there is no clear evidence. As our investigation has highlighted in different locations, Athanasius is prepared to explicitly use the terminology of necessity with regards to God's actions when he desires. Therefore caution is required before inferring such an underlying meaning to his words when he invokes the relatively weaker terminology of propriety.

[290] Young, *Sacrificial*, 205 goes so far as to say that Christ's death was a sacrifice to God to satisfy the demands of his truthfulness.

[291] This also has implications for the theme of renewal of the image in humanity by God's self-revelation. In the opening lines of section seven, Athanasius focuses on how God is 'to appear' (φανῆναι), repeating the term in relation to God appearing truthful as well as a liar. While not commented directly, in light of the attention that we have noted that Athanasius gives to the theme of God renewing the image in humanity through his self-revelation, it is likely that this interest in how God is to appear reflects this interest in God appearing as he is, rather inconsistent with who he is. This argues against a position that God would not genuinely be a liar and only appear to be one.

unbecoming for him—that he has the theoretical freedom to solve the problem without the atonement. The presence of the 'divine dilemma' in Athanasius is therefore a sign that there is a dimension to his thought that reflects a more 'forensic' approach—where God's approach to an aspect of the atonement is not the subject of necessity, but of propriety.[292]

Fourth, Athanasius' interest in the 'problem' of the dilemma in this extract is highly distinctive. On the one hand, it is one of the occasions when Athanasius focuses on what a course of action would imply for God himself—rather than simply how it helps humanity (as in *CA* 2.68). In arguing more directly to God's truthfulness, Athanasius would appear to be adopting the less common approach—comparable to his argument that humanity's fall has implications for God's honour. This interest in God's truthfulness is distinctive from other perspectives. In 'forensic' explanations of the atonement it is more common to explain the dilemma in terms of God's justice or honour requiring satisfaction, than God's truthfulness in speaking. However, Athanasius' version of the 'problem' focuses on God's relationship with a past action rather than God's relationship with an immanent characteristic[293]—it presents the issue at one level removed from God's own nature. This may account for one of the reasons why Athanasius is unequivocal that God would be free to loose people from the curse of transgressing the law without atonement. Given Athanasius' view that God acts in a fashion that is consistent with his nature, a focus on a characteristic of his nature (rather than truth) would seemingly offer little scope for God to act

[292] *C.f* Smith, 'Atonement', 182 "He died the death which God had laid down as the penalty for sin. This was necessary in order to secure God's faithfulness; mere forgiveness would not have secured this, nor restored human nature from corruption."
[293] Dragas, *Athanasius,* 129 notes that God is in no way paying the debt to his integrity, rather the ransom is required to mend the relation between Creator and creature.

otherwise. But Athanasius seems to avoid linking God's commands to either his own nature directly, or to humanity's nature; the specific things that God requires of humanity are neither a direct indicator of humanity's nature or purpose, nor are they a direct expression of God's character. In *CA* 2.51, Athanasius claims,

> Τὰ γὰρ γινόμενα καὶ κτιζόμενα προηγουμένως ἕνεκα τοῦ εἶναι καὶ τοῦ ὑπάρχειν πεποίηται, καὶ δεύτερον ἔχουσι τὸ ποιεῖν, περὶ ὧν ἂν αὐτοῖς ὁ Λόγος προστάττῃ, ὡς ἐπὶ πάντων ἔστιν ἰδεῖν τὸ τοιοῦτον.[294]

He then illustrates this assertion with examples of Adam being created first and only then given a command, and an analogous instance with Moses. This principle that God creates things simply so that they will exist, first and foremost, and only afterwards obliges them to do anything commanded by the Word—and that this obligation is secondary and is not the purpose for their existence—reflects what we have observed elsewhere in how Athanasius' view of *creation ex nihilo* interacts with his strong 'realist' approach to affirm existence itself as what is good, rather than anything that an existent thing does, and his view that God's creation of the world had no goal beyond an expression of God's own goodness and his desire to be good to (as yet non-existent) creatures. In this approach, it would appear that God's commands through his Word are not grounded directly in the nature of his creatures, such that those obligations would exist even if God never articulated them by way of command. Creatures are made to exist, and only secondarily to obey whatever God commands.

The law is also not explained by appeal to God's own character either—as we have had cause to note more than once already. When Athanasius presents the giving of the

[294] *CA* 2.51.3.4-6

law in *DI* section three, it is portrayed as an act intended purely for humanity's benefit—as a way, along with the giving of paradise, of securing the grace of being in the image in light of humanity's capacity to turn away from, God and the good. As is characteristic of Athanasius, humanity's need and what is good for humanity—not God's need to express his own character—is given as the reason for the giving of the law. While it is highly probable that Athanasius saw the specific requirements of the law as fitting for God and fitting for humanity in light of their respective natures, he does not link the law directly with either human or divine nature, and explicitly rejects the suitability of the link in the former case. The law is presented as something posterior to humanity's creation, given as something calculated to be beneficial for humanity in light of humanity's situation. The law is a word that God freely gave for humanity's good. It is contingent. Consequently, only in the outcome of the transgression of the law is there the possibility of a 'divine dilemma'—of the possibility of God freely acting differently from his previous words freely given in the law. As divinization and renewal of the image address issues of existence and nature, there are no options other than the atonement as it occurred. Yet, in the case of the curse that came from transgressing the law, the atonement is not necessary but is 'merely' good for humanity; the only non-absurd path for humanity's redemption.

As we indicated at the beginning of this chapter, it is almost impossible to prove that certain terms and categories of thought are being used in a more metaphorical fashion for a theme spoken about elsewhere in a more prosaic form. Nonetheless, a metaphorical reading of Athanasius' 'forensic' language seems extremely forced for the reasons we have offered: the lack of any explicit indication that Athansius is using the language in a non-prosaic fashion; the way the language functions within the

arguments of the extracts we have examined; its consistency with other ideas elsewhere in his writing, and the incompatibility of the logic in these texts with the logic at work in the themes of divinization and renewal of the image.

The most probable reading of Athanasius suggests that he subscribed to a 'forensic' understanding of the atonement alongside divinization and renewal of the image. This forensic dimension is not ancillary to his thought, but, as with the other two, carefully integrated into—and similarly important to—his theological vision.

Aspects of Athanasius' Concept of 'Forensic' Atonement

We have observed that the topics of divinization and renewal of the image are not hermetically sealed, but have a degree of overlap—similarly with the forensic and renewal of the image themes. There is also interaction between the forensic dimension and divinization. There are not two deaths in Athanasius, nor two corruptions; each is a singular dynamic comprised of two elements: the underlying creaturely nature, and the exacerbation of the power of nature by the transgression of the law and the resulting obligation to die and remain in corruption.

Each of these elements is addressed separately and at a different time: nature by the incarnation, through the Spirit and resurrection; law by the cross. Yet it is the single problem of death and corruption that is being addressed. This can lead to a degree of tension in Athanasius' language concerning the timing of the solution. In some places Athanasius can speak of death having been erased already in Christ's death.

Elsewhere he can mention death as only finally removed in the realised promise of the resurrection. This, at times puzzling, variation in Athanasius' language is, nonetheless, expressive of a fundamental coherence at the conceptual level. Athanasius' understanding of the natural and legal dimensions of death and corruption and their solution are not incompatible, and at times, such as *DI* 21, the synergistic effect of the two dimensions is expressed:

> Ἀμέλει, τοῦ κοινοῦ πάντων Σωτῆρος ἀποθανόντος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, οὐκέτι νῦν ὥσπερ πάλαι κατὰ τὴν τοῦ νόμου ἀπειλὴν θανάτῳ ἀποθνῄσκομεν οἱ ἐν Χριστῷ πιστοί· πέπαυται γὰρ ἡ τοιαύτη καταδίκη· ἀλλὰ τῆς φθορᾶς παυομένης καὶ ἀφανιζομένης ἐν τῇ τῆς ἀναστάσεως χάριτι, λοιπὸν κατὰ τὸ τοῦ σώματος θνητὸν διαλυόμεθα μόνον τῷ χρόνῳ ὃν ἑκάστῳ ὁ Θεὸς ὥρισεν, ἵνα «κρείττονος ἀναστάσεως» τυχεῖν δυνηθῶμεν. Δίκην γὰρ τῶν ἐν τῇ γῇ καταβαλλομένων σπερμάτων, οὐκ ἀπολλύμεθα διαλυόμενοι, ἀλλ' ὡς σπειρόμενοι ἀναστησόμεθα, καταργηθέντος τοῦ θανάτου κατὰ τὴν τοῦ Σωτῆρος χάριν.[295]

Here in his discussion of the Christian experience of death Athanasius' argument hinges on his distinction between death-as-penalty and death-as-natural. He notes that Ἀμέλει, τοῦ κοινοῦ πάντων Σωτῆρος ἀποθανόντος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, οὐκέτι νῦν ὥσπερ πάλαι κατὰ τὴν τοῦ νόμου ἀπειλὴν θανάτῳ ἀποθνῄσκομεν οἱ ἐν Χριστῷ πιστοί· πέπαυται γὰρ ἡ τοιαύτη καταδίκη. The logic here is clearly in line with observations elsewhere in this chapter – death is spoken of as a condemnation, and as occurring according to the threat of the law. It is claimed that death of this kind has ceased for believers from the point at which the Saviour died, and this is reinforced by the somewhat redundant joining of οὐκέτι with νῦν.

Similarly, in keeping with previous observations, the universal implications are held in tension with the particular: the universalistic implications of the atonement

[295] DI 21.1-9

described by the Saviour being κοινοῦ πάντων, against the particularistic. The explicit statement that it is οἱ ἐν Χριστῷ πιστοί who no longer die as before because such condemnation has ceased—with the implication that such condemnation has ceased only for οἱ ἐν Χριστῷ πιστοί and not for humanity universally or in common. Then, with the adverb ἀλλὰ, this summary of the outcome of the 'forensic' dimension to the atonement is contrasted with the ensuing material, τῆς φθορᾶς παυομένης καὶ ἀφανιζομένης ἐν τῇ τῆς ἀναστάσεως χάριτι, λοιπὸν κατὰ τὸ τοῦ σώματος θνητὸν διαλυόμεθα μόνον τῷ χρόνῳ ὃν ἑκάστῳ ὁ Θεὸς ὥρισεν, ἵνα «κρείττονος ἀναστάσεως τυχεῖν δυνηθῶμεν».

This is recognizably a succinct summary of Athanasius' understanding of divinization, with corruption being extinguished by the resurrection, and with death occuring due to the mortality of the body. The interaction between the two statements creates a single, complex portrait of death for Christians. Both the condemnation of the law and corruption have been removed, and so Christians still die, but only due to the body's mortality. This is further qualified in two ways: it is only for the length of time that God has appointed for each person (i.e. it is temporary rather than the original warning of the law that people would die and then remain in the corruption of death); and it is for a positive end of a better resurrection—rather than the negative end of legal condemnation. Christians still die, but the experience of death has been transformed as a consequence of the interaction of the forensic and divinization aspects of the atonement.[296]

[296] Similarly Smith, 'Atonement', 181-2, who also notes Riviere as recognizing this interplay of the two dimensions of death and its solution in Athanasius; Lidgett, *Atonement*, 451; Mozley, *Atonement*, 106; Grensted, *Atonement*, 75, 77, 79-80; Young, *Sacrificial*, 204-5

This extract finishes with a further thought added by way of appeal to botanical imagery—that our dissolution is not a final perishing, but a prelude to a later rising—and this is stated to occur because death has been demolished by the grace that is in accordance with the Saviour. Given the previous mention of grace in relation to the resurrection, this is almost definitely a reference to the fact that humanity's mortality and natural corruption have been addressed by the Word's incarnation, and by the subsequent promise of resurrection—although it is not impossible that Athanasius is also thinking of the elimination of death as condemnation.

Whether that later nuance is intended, the overall schema is composite, resulting from the synergistic interaction of 'forensic' and divinization themes. In the present, people die only in the body's intrinsic mortality and without any experience of legal obligation or condemnation, or the ongoing corruption in death. This natural death is temporary, but for an open-ended period of time, and will ultimately result in resurrection because death itself, in all its aspects, has been destroyed.

This interweaving of divinization and forensic themes when addressing the issue of death is not uncommon in Athanasius' corpus. Athanasius' botanical imagery in this extract is likely an allusion to 1 Corinthians 15—a passage we have already detected in *CA* 3.33. There, as we noted, Athanasius' is overwhelmingly concerned with divinization. Yet, even so, Athanasius, albeit briefly, notes the forensic dimension of the problem and its resolution in light of the atonement: λυθείσης τῆς δι' ἁμαρτίαν κατάρας διὰ τὸν ἐν ἡμῖν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν γενόμενον κατάραν· καὶ εἰκότως γε.[297]

[297] *CA* 3.33.5.6-7; language such as this counts against the contention by Leithart, *Athanasius*, 155 that Athanasius simply does not explain the cross in terms of Jesus vicariously receiving the punishment we deserve. While it is true that Athanasius does not use terminology such as 'punished vicariously', language such as Christ becoming a curse for us arguably indicates a substantially similar set of

This idea that Christ's death involves a transfer of the curse from humanity to himself would appear to be a significant element in Athanasius' 'forensic' dimension of the atonement:

> ἂν δὲ καὶ τῶν ἐξ ἡμῶν τις μὴ ὡς φιλόνεικος, ἀλλ' ὡς φιλομαθής, ζητῇ διὰ τί μὴ ἑτέρως ἀλλὰ σταυρὸν ὑπέμεινεν, ἀκουέτω καὶ οὗτος ὅτι οὐκ ἄλλως ἦ οὕτως ἡμῖν συνέφερε· καὶ τοῦτο δι' ἡμᾶς καλῶς ὑπέμεινεν ὁ Κύριος. Εἰ γὰρ τὴν καθ' ἡμῶν γενομένην κατάραν ἦλθεν αὐτὸς βαστάσαι, πῶς ἂν ἄλλως ἐγένετο κατάρα εἰ μὴ τὸν ἐπὶ κατάρᾳ γενόμενον θάνατον ἐδέξατο; ἔστι δὲ οὗτος, ὁ σταυρός. Οὕτω γὰρ καὶ γέγραπται· «Ἐπικατάρατος, ὁ κρεμάμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου.»[298]

This extract's significance is belied by its brevity. It concludes a series of arguments explaining the suitableness of the manner of Christ's death in *DI* 21-24, where Athanasius contrasts the preceding answers as being for those outside the Church, before then offering a series of answers for Christians. The above extract is given as the first of these more substantial explanations, and so has a particular prominence due to its location in the overall argument.

Athanasius presents the general principle, consistent with what we have observed elsewhere, that the manner of Christ death's—and in particular the cross—is the only form of death beneficial for people and that it was noble or excellent (καλῶς). This combines both the notions of the atonement being shaped by humanity's need, not some external consideration, with the idea that it is fitting or suitable given God's character and nature.

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concepts, especially when that curse is due to the transgression of the command of God. See Rashdall, *Atonement*, 294, 296 for a recognition that while Athanasius 'is not in the habit of speaking of Christ's death as a vicarious punishment', 'the idea is in the background to this extent—that he does represent the death of Christ as due to the necessity that the divine threat of death should somehow be fulfilled'. Both Athanasius' more characteristic language as well as the underlying logic must be considered when addressing the question of the relationship of his views to those of later theological tradition.

[298] *DI* 25.2-9

The example he offers comes in the subsequent sentence, beginning with the assumption that the Word's becoming human was for the purpose of bearing the curse which had come to pass against us. He then appeals to the language of Deuteronomy 21:23 and Galatians 3:13 about becoming a curse (ἐγένετο κατάρα) to argue that Christ could only become accursed by dying the death which occurs upon being cursed i.e. to die while hanging on wood. It is apparent here that for Athanasius the language of Christ becoming a curse does not simply relate to the incarnation, or to the Word transferring the body's natural mortality and corruption to himself. Athanasius states plainly that Christ could only become a curse 'for us' through this mode of death.[299]

What Athanasius means by Christ becoming a curse for us is the subject of discussions elsewhere, most notably *CA* 2.47 and his letter To Epictetus:

> καὶ γὰρ ὥσπερ Ἰωάννου ἀκούοντες «ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο» οὐκ αὐτὸν ὅλον σάρκα νοοῦμεν τὸν λόγον, ἀλλὰ σάρκα ἐνδυσάμενον καὶ γενόμενον ἄνθρωπον, ἀκούοντές τε ὅτι «Χριστὸς γέγονεν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κατάρα» καὶ «τὸν μὴ γνόντα ἁμαρτίαν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν» οὐκ αὐτὸ τοῦτο ὅλον κατάραν καὶ ἁμαρτίαν αὐτὸν νοοῦμεν γεγενῆσθαι, ἀλλ' ὅτι τὴν μὲν καθ' ἡμῶν κατάραν ἀνεδέξατο, ὡς εἶπεν ὁ ἀπόστολος, «ἐξηγόρασας ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς κατάρας», τὰς δὲ ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, ὡς μὲν ὁ Ἡσαίας εἶπεν, «ἐβάσταξεν», ὡς δὲ ὁ Πέτρος ἔγραψεν, «ἀνήνεγκεν αὐτὰς τῷ σώματι ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον»[300]

> For what John said, 'The Word was made flesh,' has this meaning, as we may see by a similar passage; for it is written in Paul: 'Christ has become a curse for us.' And just as He has not Himself become a curse, but is said to have done so because He took upon Him the curse on our behalf, so also He has become flesh not by being changed into flesh, but because He assumed on our behalf living flesh, and has become Man…[301]

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[299] Similarly Weinandy, *Athanasius,* 39 albeit very tersely.
[300] *CA* 2.47.2.1-8
[301] *Letter to Epictetus* in A. Robertson, *Athanasius, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,* 2nd series, 4. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1891, 573.

The two extracts are closely parallel, and so demonstrate the persistent stability of Athanasius'views over almost thirty years given that *CA* was probably composed sometime in the 340s, whereas *Epictetus* dates to the final years of his life in the early 370s. In both Athanasius is addressing the question of whether the Word is changed by the incarnation, and in particular whether the Johannine language of the Word becoming flesh indicates that the Word's nature was transformed. It is significant that in his extant writings Athanasius twice offers the same argument in response, where the meaning of 'became flesh' in John is explained by way of discussion of 'became a curse' in Paul. The fact that the issue of becoming a curse is used to illuminate the nature of the incarnation is another indication of its significance for Athanasius, and for the interaction between forensic and ontological concepts in his soteriology.

In both extracts, the same basic points are made regarding the nature of Christ becoming a curse. Such language does not signify a transformation of the Word—whereby he literally becomes a curse—but indicates a mechanism of transfer or predication, where the curse that lay upon humanity is transferred by him to himself (τὴν μὲν καθ' ἡμῶν κατάραν ἀνεδέξατο). In keeping with observations elsewhere, 'curse' and 'sin' have sufficient conceptual connection that Athanasius presents those Scriptures as speaking of Christ becoming sin and those speaking of him becoming a curse together, without making a differentiation between them, while keeping the terms sufficiently separate— κατάραν καὶ ἁμαρτίαν—to indicate that the two ideas are distinct.

Further, the end of the extract from *CA* 3.33 suggests that there, as with *DI* 25, this redemption from the curse and bearing of sins occurred specifically in dying on the cross. This appears to be present in the extract from Epictetus, for earlier in the letter Athanasius writes:

> For the Deity does not take hold of itself, so as to put on what is of its own Essence, any more than the Word sinned, in that it ransoms the sins of others, in order that changing into a body it should offer itself a sacrifice for itself, and ransom itself.[302]

The argument that the Word's death as a ransom and sacrifice for the sins of others does not indicate that the Word himself sinned, suggests that the Word taking the curse of others onto himself is a different expression for the same idea: that the Word dies because the sins and curse of others has been transferred by the Word to himself. The argument that the death of the Word to ransom the sins of others is not a ransom for the Word himself (i.e. not a sign that the Word has sinned), indicates that Athanasius closely relates 'having sinned' with the death that is a sacrifice which ransoms those sins. For Athanasius, the Word's death is, in some sense, a bearing of the legal penalty—the curse—for sin.[303]

Such language raises the question as to whether Athanasius ever explicitly speaks of the death of Christ as being directed to God, given that in most theological schemas there exists some divine agency behind a legal penalty. This Godward direction to the atonement is present in Athanasius' writings; articulated in different, but still 'forensic', terms:

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[302] *Epictetus* trans. Robertson, *Athanasius,* 572.
[303] Similarly Dragas, *Athanasius,* 128 who observes that death's dominion is due to the Father's law and so the sacrifice is offered to God's just judgement.

> τὴν δὲ χρείαν νοήσειεν, ὅτι τὸν ἡμῶν θάνατον καταργῆσαι θέλων ἔλαβεν ἑαυτῷ σῶμα ἐκ τῆς παρθένου Μαρίας, ἵνα τοῦτο προσενέγκας θυσίαν ὑπὲρ πάντων τῷ πατρὶ «ἀπαλλάξῃ πάντας ἡμᾶς, ὅσοι φόβῳ θανάτου διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ζῆν ἔνοχοι ἦμεν δουλείας».[304]

> Τούτου γὰρ ἦν ἐνδεὴς ὁ ἄνθρωπος διὰ τὸ ταπεινὸν τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ τοῦ θανάτου. ἐπεὶ οὖν εἰκὼν ὢν τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ ἀθάνατος ὢν ὁ λόγος «ἔλαβε τὴν τοῦ δούλου μορφὴν» καὶ ὑπέμεινε δι᾽ ἡμᾶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ σαρκὶ τὸν θάνατον, ἵν᾽ οὕτως ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν διὰ τοῦ θανάτου προσενέγκῃ τῷ πατρί, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ὡς ἄνθρωπος δι᾽ ἡμᾶς καὶ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν λέγεται ὑπερυψοῦσθαι, ἵν᾽ ὥσπερ τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ «πάντες ἡμεῖς ἀπεθάνομεν» ἐν Χριστῷ, οὕτως ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ Χριστῷ πάλιν ἡμεῖς ὑπερυψωθῶμεν ἔκ τε τῶν νεκρῶν ἐγειρόμενοι καὶ εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἀνερχόμενοι, «ἔνθα πρόδρομος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν εἰσῆλθεν Ἰησοῦς» οὐκ «εἰς ἀντίτυπα τῶν ἀληθινῶν, ἀλλ᾽ εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν, νῦν ἐμφανισθῆναι τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν». [305]

These extracts from the first *Oration* and *de Decretis,* likely written within a decade of each other, illustrate together one of the more common ways in which Athanasius indicates that, among the various dimensions of the atonement, God himself is also an object.

In the first extract, it is stated that the Word takes a body because he desired to efface τὸν ἡμῶν θάνατον. The taking of the body is ἵνα τοῦτο προσενέγκας θυσίαν ὑπὲρ πάντων τῷ πατρὶ—with the effect that this might achieve the goal of Hebrews 2:15: liberation from bondage through the fear of death. Athanasius here presents the solution of humanity's fear of death as the Word presenting his body as a sacrifice to the Father, suggesting both that the problem must have a vertical dimension, and that the solution only occurs with the Father being presented with the Son's sacrifice.[306]

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[304] *de Decretis* 14.8-11; For a similar but much briefer reading of this extract see Young, *Sacrificial,* 206 who also notes further passages in Athanasius he considers to express a similar understanding.
[305] *CA* 1.41.3.4-4.9
[306] Similarly Weinandy, *Athanasius,* 32

A very similar understanding is articulated in the second extract from *CA* 1.41, where we are told that the Word died in the body as a man because of humanity in order that οὕτως ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν διὰ τοῦ θανάτου προσενέγκῃ τῷ πατρί. Here the sacrificial imagery is less pronounced, but the stipulation that the Word's offering of himself to the Father occurs in and through the death of Christ is more overt. Unless Athanasius has two distinct offerings in mind that operate in the cross, it seems probable that for Athanasius the Word's offering of himself 'to death' is speaking of the same reality as the language of offering himself 'to the Father'.[307] There is one offering; effected by death; undertaken on behalf of all, and in the place of all.

Again, while Athanasius does not appear to explain the relationship between the two aspects at any length,[308] we have already observed at the beginning of this chapter in our examination of *CA* 2.67 that Athanasius speaks of the consequences for breaking the law as being τὴν ἀπόφασιν τοῦ θεοῦ—directly linking the judgement with God the judge. Nor is this redundant verbal garnishing, for Athanasius' argument in that section revolves around the principle that if God gave the law, then only God can

[307] Similarly Dragas, *Athansius*, 128, who observes that both death and the Father are explicitly said by Athanasius to be the recipient of Christ's death.

[308] Links are made in the festal letters, however. In the sixth festal letter:

> And when he was tried, by faith he offered up Isaac, and sacrificed his only-begotten son—he who had received the promises. And, in offering his son, he worshipped the Son of God. And, being restrained from sacrificing Isaac, he saw the Messiah in the ram, which was offered up instead as a sacrifice to God. The patriarch was tried, through Isaac, not however that he was sacrificed, but He who was pointed out in Isaiah; 'He shall be led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers he shall be speechless;' but He took away the sin of the world. (*Epictetus* trans. Robertson, *Athanasius*, 522).

Here the connection between offering a sacrifice to God and that this being the actual death of that which is being offered is made in a most pronounced fashion by way of reference to the averted sacrifice of Isaac. This is then referenced to Isaiah and, by way of allusion, John the Baptist's description of Jesus as a lamb to indicate that this sacrifice (death) takes away the sin of the world.

loose sins, the curse, and the condemnation. Such a principle would suggest that Athanasius views the curse, the judgement and the condemnation as belonging to God. Thus, while the phrase τὴν ἀπόφασιν τοῦ θεοῦ might be notable in its rarity for the way it makes the direct connection explicit and overt, it is entirely coherent with Athanasius' usual expression of the consequences that come from breaking the law. In some sense the judgement and the curse has its ground in God, and in places Athanasius expresses this by describing the sacrifice as being offered to the Father.[309]

The final text is from *CA* 3.31 and is potentially the most significant for comprehending the distinctive features of Athanasius' 'forensic' understanding of the atonement in interaction with divinization:

> εὖ δὲ ὁ προφήτης εἴρηκεν «ἐβάσταξε» καὶ οὐκ εἴρηκε ‹τὰς ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἐθεράπευσεν›, ἵνα μὴ ὡς ἐκτὸς ὢν τοῦ σώματος καὶ μόνον αὐτὸ ἰασάμενος, ὡς ἀεὶ πεποίηκεν, ὑπευθύνους πάλιν τοῦ θανάτου τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καταλείψῃ· «τὰς δὲ ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν βαστάζει» καὶ «τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς φέρει», ἵνα δειχθῇ ὅτι τε ἄνθρωπος δι' ἡμᾶς γέγονε καὶ σῶμα τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ φέρον αὐτὰς αὐτοῦ ἴδιόν ἐστι. καὶ αὐτὸς μὲν οὐδὲν ἐβλάπτετο «ἀναφέρων τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ», ὡς εἶπεν ὁ Πέτρος. ἡμεῖς δὲ οἱ ἄνθρωποι, ἀπὸ μὲν τῶν ἰδίων παθῶν ἐλυτρούμεθα, τῆς δὲ τοῦ λόγου δικαιοσύνης ἐπληρούμεθα.[310]

This extract is overwhelming focused on themes and motifs that we have noted are particularly associated with divinization: the emphasis on the infirmities of the body and their being carried by the Word; the Word being unharmed by their transfer; the Word's properties—here righteousness, most likely understood as the capacity to pursue virtue and what is good—being transferred to human beings in union with him. However, there are also elements which are shared between divinization and a

[309] Dragas, *Athanasius*, 128 observes that the sacrifice is ultimately paid to God. Similarly Ng, *Spirituality*, 90.
[310] *CA* 3.31.3.3-4.3

'forensic' understanding: an interest in sins and the emphasis on the atonement occurring 'within' the Word—and not simply outside of him such as a healing miracle.

That these elements have a forensic dimension in this extract is made probable by the context, for earlier in this section, Athanasius has mentioned the Word becoming incarnate for the abolition of sin; his suffering for us; and a quotation of Galatians 4:7 in which there is inclusion of that part of the text which mentions the law: τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός, γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον,[311] This suggests that Athanasius' attention has turned from the atonement accomplished on the cross, to the questions this generates for the passiblity or otherwise of the Word. In this discussion, he makes the characteristic shift to considering matters in the ontological categories also used by divinization. Nonetheless the death of Christ, under the law to abolish sin, remains present in the background. Consequently, it seems likely that his discussion of the atonement's effect on sins in the quoted section will have a 'forensic' dimension in view as well—notwithstanding the overarching paradigm of 'sins as infirmaties'.

Thus, just as Athanasius does not conceive of two deaths but one with two aspects, so also Athanasius envisages sin as that which *both* damages humanity (staining the soul and so effacing the image), *and* as that which transgresses the law and brings the curse. In this extract, Athansius clearly, and at some length, argues that the Word atones for humanity's sins by taking them into himself—just as he takes all other

[311] *CA.* 3.31.1.5-6

infirmities of the body into himself. This is the highly realist and ontological transfer and exchange that we observed is at the heart of divinization.

Yet, the context, and the quotation of 1 Peter 2:24, makes it clear that he sees this bearing, not only in the exchange of properties relating to the incarnation, but also in the bearing of sins that occurred on the cross in the Word's death. Sin as infirmity, and sin as condemnation, are brought into the closest possible connection—the one transfer mechanism works for both dimensions. The Word's, in some realist sense, taking sins to himself and bearing them, brings healing (for his impassibility annihilates sins along with all other fleshly infirmatries). Yet it *also* enables the Word to pay the debt owed in the place of everyone. Athanasius' understanding of the atonement is not a 'legal fiction' whereby the Word is treated as though he has sinned when he has not, but is grounded on the ontological transfer that is basic to Athansius' understanding of the atonement overall. In some, strongly realist sense, the Word transfers humanity's sins to himself and expunges them, while communicating his righteousness, immortality and incorruption to humanity.[312]

Having transferred the sins to himself he also assumes the consequent judgement arising from those sins and so dies on behalf of, and in place of, humanity. Because

[312] Again, 'righteousness' here is far more probably the actual capacity to act righteously than an alien righteous status as envisaged in Protestant soteriology. While his position that the obligation to die is discharged by actions done by the Word in people's stead is arguably not completely antithetical to such a concept, the notion of a two-way transfer of status is not in view. Our debt is transferred to the Word along with the infirmatries themselves. He pays the debt and transfers his power to live righteously to us seems to be the sense of the exchange in this extract. While our debt may imply a status that is transferred to the Word, this is not the category that Athanasius uses, and there is no suggestion of an opposite status transferred back, except inasmuch as the debt has been fulfilled and discharged.

this occurs in the Word—and humanity is in the Word because of his position of being above all and connected to all by the similarity of the body—humanity has also died in the Word and so the law is fulfilled.

Once one recognises the place of realism as central to Athanasius' approach to the law and the atonement's resolution of the problem of the law, one can similarly recognise that, in Athanasius' thought, for the Word to take sins as infirmity into himself to heal humanity of them, he must, not of necessity but certainly as fitting, also take the judgement that is integral to those sins—to do otherwise would be a 'legal fiction' in the other direction and would undercut the substantial nature of the transfer of humanity's sins to himself. It is a complex picture that draws on Athanasius' strongly realist tendencies for his understanding of how the legal dimension functions, and so is a sufficiently unusual example of a forensic understanding to merit appropriate punctuation —'forensic' understanding.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there exists within the Athanasian corpus a significant amount of material regarding the human predicament and its resolution in the cross that does not naturally fit within either Athanasius' discussion of natural corruption and mortality, or the loss of the image; (*contra* Steenberg, Pettersen, Hanson and Leithart). Athanasius depicts the law and its transgression as important aspects of the problem of the human condition: they exacerbate the original weakness of humanity and ensure that the solution must come from without. And, although Athansius believes God might have simply loosed humanity from the judgement of transgression by

divine fiat, he also considers that such an act would have been disadvantageous for humanity and absurd for God (with Leithart and Widdicombe). It would result in the 'monstrous' situation of the law being abolished before it was fulfilled.

In explaining the mechanism by which the atonement addresses this dimension of humanity's need, Athanasius is less forthcoming than later proponents of similar views—and also less expansive than he is when discussing either divinization or renewal of the image. Nonetheless, we can trace the outline of his understanding. Its basic elements are the same—albeit often put together differently—as those we have observed in his discussion of other facets of the atonement. As with those, Athanasius is concerned to argue that this aspect of the atonement occurs 'in' the Word and not external to him; the idea of transfer is basic to his understanding of the mechanism, and the efficacy of the atonement is grounded on the interplay of the Word's nature (as the Word) and his assumed body. The body's mortality both enables the immortal to die and the substitution to occur (with Anatolios, Lidgett and Smith), while the Word's position of being 'above all' and guiltless of wrongdoing enables his death to count as the death of all.

Athanasius is clear that loosening humanity from its sins and condemnation can only be accomplished by God due to the law having originally come from God, and so the atonement is also grounded in the Word's divinity. The vertical dimension to the problem and its solution is particularly unpronounced in *DI,* but is more overt in other sections of Athanasius' writing, with Athanasius speaking of the Word offering his body to the Father in his death, as well as to death itself (with Dragas and Ng).

If space permitted we could also discuss extracts that would show how in one work, he speaks of the Word bearing the anger of God;[313] and, on a couple of occasions, describes the Word either becoming a propitiation or propitiating the Father—the latter reference having a strong priestly and sacrificial framework but not connected directly to the cross.[314] Both aspects are striking. The language of the anger of God, and of God being appeased by the death of Christ is utilised by Athanasius, and its use is consistent with his writing on these topics. Most notably it resonates with his argument that the death of Christ is an offering to God alongside being offered to death.

But this terminology is also relatively infrequent for Athanasius, who characteristically explains this aspect of the atonement with other language and ideas. Substitution and representation figure more prominently; where the death of the Word removes humanity's obligation to death by paying the debt owed (to death) because of transgression.[315]

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[313] *On Luke 10* 2035.039 Vol 25 page 212 line 40 to page 213 line 10

[314] *CA.* 1.64.7-8; *CA.* 2.7.10-14

[315] Lidgett, *Atonement*, 450 notes this important nuance and seeks to do justice to how Athanasius characteristically expresses this dimension of the atonement (albeit he presents it as a universal mode of expression rather than ubiquitous) as well as its underlying congruity with more punishment orientated explanations:

> Athanasius conceives death as a debt owing on account of sin, rather than as a penalty inflicted in consequence of it. Doubtless, at bottom, these two conceptions may be united. But the emphasis, where punishment is insisted upon, is on the direct infliction of the divine will; the figure of debt points rather to death as the natural and necessary consequence of sin, following upon it by the action of the divinely ordained constitution of things.

Similarly Ng, *Spirituality*, 82, who seeks to integrate this into removing corruption and death-as-natural. A good example of a more clumsy reading is that by Grensted, *Atonement*, 80 who baldly states, "There is no sign that he anywhere regards death as penal suffering." In the haste to absolve Athanasius of any complicity in such views, there is no acknowledgement of those passages in his corpus that are suggestive of such a view. Even if one interprets them differently they at least indicate elements of this understanding, as well as the underlying logic inherent to his understanding of death as a debt incurred due to transgression of divine law, a debt that can only be fulfilled by the death of the transgressor. While this is not penal *language* it should be conceded that it is a sign of an understanding of the issue that is compatible with such the logic behind such language. It cannot simply be assumed that a difference in language indicates a completely incompatible matrix of ideas.

Behind this understanding lies Athanasius' characteristically strong 'realist' approach whereby he considers the Word to have substantially taken the sins of the world into his body and thereby overcome them with his impassiblity. It seems probable that the notion of the Word dying in the place of humanity reflects Athanasius' realist tendency to hold together cause and effect—in this case sins and their subsequent curse. Athanasius thus avoids the 'legal fiction' approach found in other accounts of this nature (which often argue for a transfer of the guilt and curse but not the sins themselves), and merits the label 'forensic' punctuated to acknowledge some of its distinctive features. Here again, however, as with the characteristically *a posteriori* nature of his logic in this theme, we note that Athanasius' thinking on this topic reflects the kinds of principles at work in his theological vision more generally. The fundmental operating principles that lie at the heart of his theological thought are expressed here as well, suggesting that this topic is also close to the heart of his understanding.

Perhaps even more than for divinization and renewal of the image, atonement and the law is explicable only through the lens of anthropology and the fall. The law, and the obligation its transgression produces, is a contingent provision from God to assist humanity's weakness. While this contingency then attaches to the atonement itself—God could have offered pardon simply from his authority—this underlying contingency highlights that the matrix for understanding this aspect of the atonement is not the doctrine of God or Christology. Precisely because this action is not necessary, it is only explicable in light of the human situation that was the reason for the promulgation of the law originally. With this 'forensic' dimension, as with divinization and the renewal of the image, the atonement is the solution to a human-

shaped problem, not primarily an expression of divine nature or the Trinitarian structure of the Godhead.

As has been demonstrated, notions of representative and substitutionary dying, of paying a debt to the law on behalf of others are a constellation of concepts that do not map simply onto those of corruption and mortality or image and knowledge. The mechanism of discharging an external debt through dying is substantially different from participation in the Word's immortality by means of the inacarnation and the gift of the Spirit or renewal of the image through revelation. There is even difference at the level of whether or not the atonement was strictly necessary to resolve the problem. This theme is yet another aspect of the atonement in Athanasius' understanding, addressing a distinct dimension of the human situation, that arising from obligations to an extrinsic law. This problem and the solution cannot be expanded out to encompass those discussed in the previous chapters, nor can it be reduced to being nothing more than a facet of either divinization or image renewal. Here again we witness the irreducibly pluralist nature of Athanasius' concept of the atonement. The human situation has multiple facets, and so too does the solution provided by the incarnate Word. This will be demonstrated in an even more radically different fashion as we turn to our final atonement theme: the atonement and the demonic.

Chapter Six

Atonement and Demons

We turn now to the fourth strand of Athanasius' atonement understanding, relating to the demonic. This is arguably the most distinctive aspect of Athanasius' view of the atonement. It is also the most superfluous, for Athanasius does not develop a separate demonic component of the atonement. Instead, demonic elements are woven into the three previous strands. However, this underlines just how inadequate monistic accounts of Athanasius' atonement thought are in illuminating his writing, for not even the three topics of corruption and mortality, knowledge of God and image, and death as obligation can be discussed simply on their own. All three strands have a fourth topic that impinges upon them such that the resolution of those three problems is also held to address the demonic dimension of humanity's condition. Thus what is noteworthy about this aspect is the way in which it adds, not a new category, but new perspectives to pre-existing categories. Accordingly this chapter demonstrates from another direction that Athanasius' atonement thought is broadly multi-faceted rather than singular and that the primary matrix for understanding it is Athanasius' anthropology in terms of his accounts of creation and fall, rather than Athanasius' doctrine of God or Christology.

Before we begin, a few words need to be ventured regarding where to position *The Life of Antony* in relation to Athanasius' corpus, as the decision to include or exclude this work will have significant implications for some of the more outlying features of his thought. This study follows the majority of contemporary scholars in accepting Athanasius' authorship of this work. In its current form the debate over authorship has

been prompted primarily by closer attention to the Syriac recension since the 1980s and the shift in stance towards Athanasius himself from overly uncritical to arguably overly critical.[316] Among the more significant objections to Athanasius' authorship include features in the Syriac text that suggest that it might have priority over the Greek,[317] the improbability of Athanasius knowing Antony's story sufficiently well to write about it, and the anomalous features of *Antony* with regards to the demonic—both its portrayal of demons as having some potency and even its willingness to use the language of 'demons' when elsewhere Athanasius prefers to use other terminology such as 'evil spirits'.[318]

None of these concerns can be considered decisive for rejecting the well-attested traditional ascription. The arguments for Syriac priority, and then for a hypothetical Coptic version standing in an even more primordial position, have been decisively contested.[319] This removes the most substantial reasons for challenging the traditional identification of the authorship. Athanasius' lack of extensive first hand knowledge of Antony's life is arguably mitigated by his ability to interview witnesses during his desert sojourns for those inclined to consider him an essentially reliable narrator and is irrelevant for his ability to construct the literary Antony he desired for those inclined otherwise.[320] Either way this factor is hardly a telling argument against his

[316] A good summary of the history of the debate is found in Ng, *Spirituality*, 203-207
[317] Ng, *Spirituality*, 203-4
[318] Mark Edwards *Religions of the Constantine Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 91; the observation regarding the differing terminology was made by Dr Edwards to the author in an email conversation.
[319] See Ng, *Spirituality*, 204-206
[320] See Edwards, *Constantinian*, 91. This writer would place Athanasius mid-way between the points. His overall competency, which is generally acknowledged, would mitigate against any tendency to create accounts from whole cloth in public documents—such matters have a tendency to be uncovered then as now. This would be the case however one assesses his character. However, in his writings he clearly writes history for a purpose other than simple precision in historical narration, and this would naturally lead him to leave out matters not conducive to his goals and to present matters in the fashion

authorship. This leaves the ways that *Life* speaks about the demonic, both in terminology and content, which is not easily aligned with how Athanasius speaks elsewhere. This is a notable feature, and could provide grounds for rejecting his authorship if there was a significant case grounded on other evidence that it could support; on its own it does not appear able to overturn the traditional ascription. This is for four reasons. First, Athanasius is capable of stating something in only one location that casts his thinking in a different light on that topic than if it did not exist, most notably *CG* 30-34. Second, unless one postulates that Athanasius would be prepared to assert things that ran counter to the common stories circulating regarding Antony, then the existence of some material in tension with Athanasius' own thought is not a pressing argument against his authorship.[321] There was likely to be a common knowledge of Antony that had to be reckoned with in any account of his life. Third, arguing against Athanasian scholarship on this ground alone faces the difficulty of incommensurate comparisons. There are no other hagiographies of this nature that are considered to be written by Athanasius to compare. We simply are not in a position to posit confidently what Athanasius might be prepared to write when penning a work in a genre so different from the rest of his extant works. Finally, as we will observe below, while *Life's* descriptions of demonic activity certainly appear puissant to a modern reader, both the author and Antony present the demonic as inherently weak notwithstanding, so the conceptual incoherence, if it exists, may not be one that raises questions of authorship.

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most harmonious to his purposes. Unless one sees Athanasius as especially virtuous or vicious, it should result in having some confidence that the historical Antony is on display in *Life*, or at least how he had been perceived, but that the account is slanted in a direction preferable to Athanasius.

[321] Note for example that Athanasius' presentation of Dionysius, while slanted, and arguably his commentary on the extracts he provides are not always compelling, nonetheless contains within it primary material that differentiates Dionysius' views from his own. If this is the case for a figure from the previous century, it is probable that Athanasius would adopt a similar strategy for a contemporary figure.

Demonic and Paganism

The link between idolatry and the demons is pronounced in Athanasius' writings. Worship of idols is considered a sign of demonic influence, tying the two themes together: ἢ πῶς οὐκ ἂν εἶεν κακοδαίμονες οἱ οὕτω φανερῶς ἐλεγχόμενοι τὰ ἄψυχα θρησκεύοντες ἀντὶ τῆς ἀληθείας;[322] The worship of idols is considered to be evidence of demonic influence over the human race and its members.[323] This perspective is developed in several locations in the argument of *CG/DI.*

It is difficult to identify a location where Athanasius explicitly and pointedly contrasts the demonically inspired false images that obscure the knowledge of God and promote corruption with the Image of God who can communicate the knowledge of God and his own incorruption. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that Athanasius would reject such a relationship between the two ideas—at least part of the importance of the link between demons (*dunameis)* and false images is likely due to how they are deceptive mirrors of the Word's identity as the living and true Image and Power (*dunamis)* of God. The lack of explicit commentary to this effect is most likely a sign that it functions at the tacit level, structuring Athanasius' thought but not thematized.

The worship of idols is not merely the means to adduce a pre-existing demonic influence. It is also the means whereby that influence is extended and takes particular

[322] *CG* 14.40-43

[323] In this Athanasius is following a pre-existing well-worn path in Christian and Jewish anti-pagan polemics. See Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 111-117; Ng, *Spirituality*, 230; and Mark Edwards, "Greeks and Demons in the Great Persecution" in G. A. Cecconi and C. Gabrielli (eds) *Politiche religiose nel mondo antico e tardocantico* for an integrated summary of Origen's position

form. At the beginning of *CG* 25 Athanasius claims that the sacrifice of human beings to idols is an expression of the extent to which corruption has taken hold of some people. He then argues, in the section above, that people observe that the demons with them take pleasure in these sacrifices.[324] This leads them to imitate these beings that they consider better, and so establishes murder as a virtuous action. A behaviour arising from the progress of corruption is reinforced by the example of the demons that are associated with the various gods.

Athanasius adduces a further dynamic. Not only are people confirmed, they are led into further corrupt behaviour. People, having come to the view that demons are higher beings, consider their behaviour to be virtuous, and so imitate it. This leads them into 'all' moral dissolution, as this is the example set by the gods (a point established at some length in chapters 9 to 16). As with the material creation itself, humanity's condition is worsened by the existence of demons, for they lead humanity into a level of moral corruption worse than people would have experienced without their involvement. An already existing trajectory of corruption is exacerbated by the example of the demons attached to the gods of the pagans.

This idea reaches its furthest development in *DI.*

> Διὰ τοῦτο γοῦν καὶ μαγεῖαι παρ' αὐτοῖς ἐδιδάσκοντο, καὶ μαντεῖα κατὰ τόπον τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐπλάνα, καὶ πάντες τὰ γενέσεως καὶ τοῦ εἶναι ἑαυτῶν τὰ αἴτια

[324] Athanasius is developing a strand in Christian thinking that associated animal sacrifices with demonic sustenance. This theme is less emphasized in Athanasius, and in its place Athanasius highlights human sacrifice, albeit reframed away from notions of nourishment for evil spirits towards pleasure, most likely due to his sense that demons, like the soul, do not require feeding.

> τοῖς ἄστροις καὶ τοῖς κατ᾽ οὐρανὸν πᾶσιν ἀνετίθουν, μηδὲν πλέον τῶν φαινομένων λογιζόμενοι.[325]

Magic has no ground or reason other than the activity of demons. People learned magic from demons because of the worship of idols and the introduction of animal sacrifices and murder. The mention of oracles, and the attribution of causality to heavenly objects, implies that they also are a consequence of people being incited by demons and as a consequence binding themselves to their will further. This suggests that magic, oracles, and an astrological outlook are not 'natural' to humanity, not even to an ever-worsening corrupt humanity, but are the consequence of a corrupt humanity's entanglement with an external agency.[326] In this way, the influence of the demonic through idolatry parallels the effect of a visible and sensate creation in giving rise to idolatry. In both dynamics the existence of the external agency was a necessary element for the practice to arise, exacerbating a pre-existing trajectory in an expression that it would not otherwise have taken.

A particularly striking example of this, one which connects this issue to another key theme in Athanasius' demonology, is found in Athanasius' treatment of war in *DI*:

> εἰδότες τῆς δὲ δαιμόνων καὶ τῆς εἰδώλων ἀσθενείας καὶ οὐθενείας ἔλεγχος οὐκ ὀλίγος ἐστὶν οὗτος. Εἰδότες γὰρ ἑαυτῶν οἱ δαίμονες τὴν ἀσθένειαν, διὰ τοῦτο

[325] *DI* 11

[326] Athanasius' views at this point exhibit both continuity and discontinuity with certain strands of prior Christian thought. The link between magic, astrology and oracles and the diabolic is in line with previous Christian reflections. Where Athanasius appears to offer a distinct voice is the way in which his account of this reflects his own doctrine of harmiatology as argued above, and in the way that he appears overall to see all such supernatural wonders as lacking genuine reality and modelled on the concept of deception in contrast to some earlier arguments that mixed such a view with an acceptance of a certain degree of demonic potency to affect the tangible world. *C.f.* Ferguson, *Demonology* 113-118 but note the counter assessment in Edwards 'Demons', 3, that most Christians in the second century considered deception to be the primary mode of how demons act.

> συνέβαλον πάλαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καθ' ἑαυτῶν πολεμεῖν, ἵνα μὴ παυσάμενοι τῆς κατ' ἀλλήλων ἔριδος, εἰς τὴν κατὰ δαιμόνων μάχην ἐπιστρέψωσιν.[327]

In the immediately previous material in chapters 51 and 52, Athanasius has contrasted the behaviour of the barbarians and Christians. The barbarians are characterised as continuing to sacrifice to idols, which is why they practice murder, and are insatiable for war. However, when they become Christians they turn from warfare to farming, cease to war against each other, and instead take up spiritual arms against the demons. Into that context Athanasius writes the above extract. The waging of a spiritual war against the demons by converted barbarians is the reason why the demons provoke humanity to war against itself. The internecine warfare that characterises human history has no source within the human heart, even once corrupt. Instead, it is instigated by the demons to prevent humanity from uniting against them. The demons know themselves to be weak and are unable to prevail when human beings make a concerted effort to contest them. Human warfare has its source in demonic agency arising from the demons' recognition of their own insubstantiality.

Demonic Weakness

This concept that the demons are ἀσθενείας and οὐθενείας is fundamental to Athanasius' understanding of the nature of the demonic contribution to the human condition. It would seem that, taking Athanasius' corpus as a whole, the conviction that demons are nothing is almost an axiom for Athanasius. So in *Life of Antony,* where the demonic is given the most expansive treatment, there is a repeated motif of

[327] *DI* 52.

the weakness of the devil and the demons. The devil confesses himself to be weak when faced with Antony's consistent faith:

> Καὶ ὥσπερ ὑποπίπτων οὐκέτι μὲν λογισμοῖς ἐπανέβαινεν (ἐκβέβλητο γὰρ ὁ δόλιος), λοιπὸν δὲ ἀνθρωπίνῃ χρώμενος φωνῇ, ἔλεγεν· Πολλοὺς μὲν ἠπάτησα καὶ πλείστους κατέβαλον· νῦν δέ, ὡς ἐπ᾽ ἄλλοις καὶ ἐπὶ σοὶ καὶ τοῖς σοῖς πόνοις ἠσθένησα.[328]

Similarly, Antony claims that the demons are weak in one of his many reported speeches in the work. Their attacks will be intensified if they fail—incitement to sensible pleasures changes to terrifying illusions. But even the latter more serious attack is classified as 'nothing' (οὐδὲν) and both attempts cannot survive when faced with faith, prayers, fasts and the sign of the Cross. The defiled thoughts fall 'immediately' (εὐθὺς) and the illusions disappear 'quickly' (ταχέως). The overall impression is of demonic activity whose power is illusionary, and is easily overcome.[329]

There are further evidences adduced for the weakness of the demons:

> Εἰ δύναμίς τις ἦν ἐν ὑμῖν, ἤρκει καὶ μόνον ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐλθεῖν ἕνα. Ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἐξενεύρωσεν ὑμᾶς ὁ Κύριος, διὰ τοῦτο κἂν τῷ πλήθει πειράζετέ πως ἐκφοβεῖν. Γνώρισμα δὲ τῆς ἀσθενείας ὑμῶν τὸ τὰς ἀλόγων ὑμᾶς μιμεῖσθαι μορφάς. Θαρρῶν γοῦν πάλιν ἔλεγεν· Εἰ δύνασθε καὶ ἐξουσίαν ἐλάβετε κατ᾽ ἐμοῦ, μὴ μέλλετε, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπίβητε· εἰ δὲ μὴ δύνασθε, τί μάτην ταράσσεσθε; Σφραγὶς γὰρ ἡμῖν καὶ τεῖχος εἰς ἀσφάλειαν ἡ εἰς τὸν Κύριον ἡμῶν πίστις. Πολλὰ τοίνυν ἐπιχειρήσαντες ἔτριζον κατ᾽ αὐτοῦ τοὺς ὀδόντας, ὅτι μᾶλλον ἔπαιζον ἑαυτούς, καὶ οὐκ ἐκεῖνον.[330]

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[328] *Life* 6.6-10
[329] *Life* 23.1-18. This is a thoroughly Origenistic note see Edwards 'Demons' 4, similarly Ng, *Spirituality*, 232, although Ng only recognizes internal phantasms and internal thoughts as possible demonic attacks.
[330] *Life* 9.33-43

Here Antony addresses a demon horde and lists the reasons why it can be observed that they are weak. These reasons include the large number of demons sent to attack him, on the basis that if they had any power then they would have been able to effect the result with only one. Similarly, the strategy of adopting illusions in the form of animals, and finally the fact that they do not attack, despite their clear desire to do so, suggest that they lack the ability to carry out their desire. This argument is repeated in chapter 28, but in that occasion it is contrasted by the example of 2 Kings 19, where a single angel sufficed to kill many people, without the need for showy displays. The eye-drawing features of obvious demonic activity – large numbers, great illusions, many threats – are all signs of a profound absence of capacity to effect anything. Hence, the basic stance that a Christian, and especially a monk, should take towards the demonic is captured in the advice by Antony:

> Τῇ δὲ προθέσει τῆς ἀσκήσεως ἑαυτῶν μᾶλλον προσέχωμεν, καὶ μὴ παρ' ἐκείνων ἀπατώμεθα πάντα πραττόντων μετὰ δόλου. Οὐ δεῖ δὲ φοβεῖσθαι αὐτούς, κἂν ἐπέρχεσθαι δοκῶσι, κἂν θάνατον ἀπειλῶσιν·ἀσθενεῖς γάρ εἰσι καὶ οὐδὲν δύνανται ἢ μόνον ἀπειλεῖν.[331]

It is an apparently comprehensive assessment of the place of demonic ability, that is consistent with Athanasius' theology overall. Demons are weak, and they are able to do nothing. The only exception allowed is 'to threaten' – to assert things that they cannot bring to pass. The evaluation indicates a total and absolute lack of capability by demonic agents.

This is surprising due to several incidents recorded in *Life* that would appear to count against such a verdict. In chapter 8 Antony is so severely beaten by demons that he

[331] *Life* 27.12-16

claims that the pain was beyond what was possible for a human to inflict, and the result is that he apparently loses consciousness and is found the next morning 'as though dead'. He returns to the same location in chapter 9 whereupon he experiences even greater pain as a result of the demonic horde. Antony's argument, quoted earlier, that the number of demons, their propensity to take on the forms of animals, and their inability to effect their desire occurs in the midst of this pain, so it is a surprising argument from the perspective of a modern reader—surely Antony's agony, beyond that possible by any human infliction, is a sign that demons are not weak, and are able to accomplish something?

A similar issue arises from chapter 12 where Antony is confronted with a quantity of gold. Athanasius leaves open the possibility whether the gold was shown to Antony by the devil or by some 'better power' to demonstrate Antony's lack of desire for wealth. This agnosticism regarding the agent is noteworthy, for one might have concluded that the power to effect a real outcome in the physical world—such as making real gold appear—would be contrary to the claim that demons are weak and able to do nothing, and so the possibility of demonic agency could be ruled out *a priori*. Yet, such does not appear to be the case, the possibility that this was the work of one or more demons is left open, and this raises a possible question regarding the parameters of the declaration that demons are ἀσθενεῖς and οὐδὲν δύνανται ἢ μόνον ἀπειλεῖν.

The final incident comes from chapter 52, which is the penultimate incident in a series of pericopes regarding Antony's power over wild animals. The devil sends almost all

the hyenas from the part of the desert in which Antony lived against him. Like the appearance of the gold, and severe beating that Antony received, the hyenas incident suggests that the 'nothingness' of the demons is not exactly what a modern reader might deduce from such language. Antony's description of the demonic contribution to the human condition is consistent with the more generic effects of corruption we have seen earlier. Like the more ubiquitous theme of corruption, demons are nothing, but a nothing that has a certain inimical power to lead others down the path to the void.

A Powerful Weakness

This paradox is arguably found in no stronger fashion than with the power of demonic deceit. In and of itself, deception is nothing, a false representation of reality. And yet in Athanasius' writings deception is arguably the key way in which the devil operates against the human race, and is spoken of in ways that suggest that it has an intrinsic power.

This notion of the potency of the demons' deceit is a recurring one:

> Οὕτω τοίνυν ἀλογωθέντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ οὕτως τῆς δαιμονικῆς πλάνης ἐπισκιαζούσης τὰ πανταχοῦ καὶ κρυπτούσης τὴν περὶ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ Θεοῦ γνῶσιν, τί τὸν Θεὸν ἔδει ποιεῖν; σιωπῆσαι τὸ τηλικοῦτον, καὶ ἀφεῖναι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὑπὸ δαιμόνων πλανᾶσθαι, καὶ μὴ γινώσκειν αὐτοὺς τὸν Θεόν;[332]

[332] *DI* 13.1-5

The emphasis is on the power of the evil spirits' deceit.[333] This deceit is described in terms that highlight its scope, 'casting such a wide shadow', as well as its effect of 'hiding the knowledge of the true God'.[334] The two questions that Athanasius poses cast the struggle as one between two parties: an existing demonic deception, and a possible divine intervention. The implication is that, in the absence of God acting, the deceit of the evil spirits will continue to successfully deceive humanity. There is no suggestion that humanity has the capacity to not be deceived by the demons. Only God is able to overturn the illusions, humans are swept before them.

This powerlessness that human beings have before the lies of the demonic is stated explicitly. In speaking of human beings' condition, Athanasius states:

> …οὔτε πρὸς τὴν τῶν δαιμόνων ἀπάτην καὶ φαντασίαν ἱκανῶν δι' ἑαυτῶν ἀντιστῆναι. Πάντων γὰρ κατὰ ψυχὴν πληγέντων καὶ ταραχθέντων παρὰ τῆς δαιμονικῆς ἀπάτης καὶ τῆς τῶν εἰδώλων ματαιότητος…[335]

Athanasius claims that everyone has been misled by the demons' deceit and has been persuaded by idolatry. From this he deduces that this is a sign that no-one has the capacity to resist the illusions of the demons on their own. All human beings are incapable of standing before demonic deception without divine help.[336] While

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[333] Note similar emphasis on the importance of deception as a matrix for understanding demonic activity in Justin Martyr *First Apology* 58; Origen *Principles* 3.3.4; and Irenaeus *Heretics* 5.24. Irenaeus' thought appears closest to Athanasius on this point as in 5.24.3 he makes the claim that the devil is limited to using deception alone.

[334] A similar concern can be observed in Tertullian *Shows* 10 of demons using deception to draw people from God and bind them to their own service.

[335] *DI* 14.17-21

[336] This would appear to be a point of genuine difference with those strands of patristic thought that emphasized free-will, such as Origen in his discussion in *Principles* 3.2 of the relationship between human free-will and demonic influence. There are two fairly clear points of common ground between his discussion there and that of Athanasius—that demonic agency does not absolve people of their personal responsibility for their stance towards God and their own moral actions, and that without divine assistance people would be helpless before demonic deception. However, this masks an arguably greater disagreement. For Origen the two ideas are linked—people are responsible *because* demonic forces are resistible, and this is buttressed by placing divine assistance primarily at the level of

deception is nothing, and the reliance upon it is a sign that demons are weak, it nonetheless is irresistible for human beings. Herein is a paradox. For something that is so weak, and is held up as such a sign of the demons' weakness, deception is nonetheless spoken of in terms that imply a great power and effectiveness.

This does not exhaust the paradoxical nature of demonic weakness on Athanasius' account. Similarly complex, and potentially almost a crux for this issue, is whether this weakness of the demons is inherent or due to the atonement. One strand of Athanasius' description of demonic weakness in his presentation of Antony's teaching would suggest that the demons' weakness is due to their inherent nature.

> Ἀμέλει μηδὲν δυνάμενος ποιῆσαι, ᾔτησε καὶ λαβὼν λοιπὸν πεποίηκεν. Ὥστε καὶ ἐκ τούτου μᾶλλον καταγνωστέος ἐστὶν ὁ ἐχθρὸς ὅτι, καίτοι θέλων, οὐδὲ καθ' ἑνὸς ἴσχυσεν ἀνθρώπου δικαίου. Εἰ γὰρ ἴσχυσεν, οὐκ ἂν ᾔτησεν· αἰτήσας δὲ οὐχ ἅπαξ ἀλλὰ καὶ δεύτερον, φαίνεται ἀσθενὴς καὶ μηδὲν δυνάμενος. Καὶ οὐ θαυμαστὸν εἰ κατὰ τοῦ Ἰὼβ οὐκ ἴσχυσεν, ὅπου γε οὐδὲ κατὰ τῶν κτηνῶν αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, εἰ μὴ συγχωρήσας ἦν ὁ θεός. Ἀλλ' οὐδὲ κατὰ χοίρων ἔχει τὴν ἐξουσίαν. «Παρεκάλουν» γάρ, ὡς ἐν τοῖς εὐαγγελίοις γέγραπται, τὸν Κύριον, «λέγοντες· Ἐπίτρεψον ἡμῖν ἀπελθεῖν εἰς τοὺς χοίρους.» Εἰ δὲ μηδὲ χοίρων ἔχουσιν ἐξουσίαν, πολλῷ μᾶλλον τῶν κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ γεγενημένων ἀνθρώπων οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἐξουσίαν.[337]

Here Antony infers the devil's weakness from the Scripture's account of Job. From the fact that the devil had to request permission to assault Job it is deduced that he lacks the capacity to act in his own right. This is reinforced by reference to two further

providence—that God does not allow any human to be tempted beyond what he is capable of resisting. For Athanasius, how we are responsible when we are not capable of resisting is not thematized, but is possibly due to how he conceives of demonic activity exacerbating a pre-existing movement away from God and towards evil—ultimately the primary engine of humanity's movement away from God and towards the void is the decision of their own soul/s that began a process that cannot be reversed by a creature. This is then buttressed, not by appeals to God's providential supervision of supernatural evil agents, but to the effect of Word's incarnation and its entailments. While the positions on the practical questions—human responsibility and dependence on God's support—are the same, the framework behind this is substantially different.

[337] *Life* 29.7-20

examples. Satan was only able to act against Job's livestock because God permitted, and the legion of demons similarly needed authorisation to be able to enter nearby swine. From this is derived an *a fortiori* argument. Human beings have been made according to the Image of God, and so (implicitly) are of a higher nature than animals. Hence, inability to affect animals without first seeking permission would suggest no power over human beings either. Interestingly, Athanasius uses a variety of terms to indicate that the devil is 'weak' (ἀσθενὴς). There are terms that suggest an innate lack of capacity to act, μηδὲν δυνάμενος ποιῆσαι, and οὐδὲ… ἴσχυσεν, as well as ἐξουσία, which often carries the connotation of a lack of proper authorisation.

However, Athanasius is also clear in his presentation of Antony's homilies that the devil has been made weak by the work of Christ, such as in chapter 24.[338] Here, the devil's weakness does not appear to be innate, but rather a state of affairs arising from divine activity. The references to 'Saviour' early on in the section, and 'grace' as it concludes brackets the material, and suggests that the devil's inability to act has been effected by what Christ has done. The image of a dragon, a tame animal, and a slave having been bound suggests an agent that would be capable of independent action if not for external restraint. The ability that believers have to conduct their lives 'against him', presumably in the pursuit of the knowledge of God and virtue, is invoked as the sign, not of the devil's inherent weakness, but that he has been 'assigned' (δέδεται) to be mocked by Christians. Perhaps most significantly, the demonic capacity to create terrifying illusions is not held up as an indication of an inherent inability to act. Instead, it is presented as something that highlights how the demons have been

[338] *Life* 24.19-26

defeated, for their illusion, and in particular the light that they produce, is claimed to be manifestations of the fire that awaits the demons. They seek to terrify others with the fires they know lie in store for themselves. But this too is a state of affairs that is not intrinsic to the nature of the demons but is something due to divine agency. Final judgement is one sphere where the Deity is clearly the primary active agent. From this, it would appear that demonic weakness is not innate but is due to the saving grace of the Saviour.

Something comparable can be seen in *CA* I.12.51

> Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδὰμ ἐτράπη, καὶ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον, διὰ τοῦτο τὸν δεύτερον Ἀδὰμ ἔπρεπεν ἄτρεπτον εἶναι·ἵνα, κἂν πάλιν ὁ ὄφις ἐπιχειρήσῃ, αὐτοῦ μὲν τοῦ ὄφεως ἡ ἀπάτη ἐξασθενήσῃ, τοῦ δὲ Κυρίου ἀτρέπτου καὶ ἀναλλοιώτου ὄντος, πρὸς πάντας ὁ ὄφις ἀσθενὴς τοῖς ἐπιχειρήμασι γένηται.[339]

The efficacy of the serpent's attacks on Adam, and his ineffectiveness against Christ as the second Adam, and against Christians, is related to the effect of Christ's divine nature in human form. The impression is that the Serpent was powerful but has become powerless because the second Adam is unchangeable and Lord and has shared this with his people.[340]

Here the mechanism of the atonement associated particularly with the issues of corruption and mortality—that of divinization through the union of Christ's divine

[339] *CA.* 1.12.51

[340] A number of Christian writers before Athanasius hold that demonic defeat is closely linked to the incarnation: Justin Martyr *Dialogue with Trypho* 45, 70, Origen *Against Celsus* 1.60, or his victory over temptation: Irenaeus *Against Heretics* V.21; Justin Martyr *Dialogue* 125. See Ferguson, *Demonology* 123

nature with human flesh—also effects a deliverance from the serpent's power over the human race through his efficacious deceit. The power of the devil is overturned, not by another atonement mechanism, but by the same mechanism that resolved corruption also addressing the sway of supernatural evil over people.

For this strand of Athanasius' thought the weakness we observe in the demonic realm is not innate but is a consequence of the atonement:

> ...ἐνθα γὰρ ὀνομάζεται Χριστὸς καὶ ἡ τούτου πίστις, ἐκεῖθεν πᾶσα μὲν εἰδωλολατρία καθαιρεῖται, πᾶσα δὲ δαιμόνων ἀπάτη ἐλέγχεται, πᾶς δὲ δαίμων οὐδὲ τὸ ὄνομα ὑποφέρει· ἀλλὰ καὶ μόνον ἀκούσας φυγὰς οἴχεται. Τοῦτο δὲ οὐ νεκροῦ τὸ ἔργον, ἀλλὰ ζῶντος καὶ μάλιστα Θεοῦ. Ἄλλως τε καὶ γελοῖον ἂν εἴη, τοὺς μὲν διωκομένους ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ δαίμονας καὶ τὰ αταργούμενα εἴδωλα λέγειν ζῶντας εἶναι, τὸν δὲ ἀπελαύνοντα καὶ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ δυνάμει μηδὲ φανῆναι ποιοῦντα τούτους, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁμολογούμενον ὑπὸ πάντων εἶναι Θεοῦ Υἱόν, τοῦτον λέγειν εἶναι νεκρόν.[341]

While there are no words with a semantic range including 'weakness' or 'nothing', there are statements to the effect that demons' deceit is undone, that demons themselves are unable to endure even the mention of Christ's name and have to flee upon hearing it, and that they are made to 'disappear'. All of these would appear to be indications of a powerless state, and all are asserted to be a consequence of Christ's resurrection from the dead.

Likewise, in the following chapter:

> …ἐργάζεται δὲ τοσαῦτα καθ᾽ ἡμέραν ὁ Σωτήρ, ἕλκων εἰς εὐσέβειαν, πείθων εἰς ἀρετήν, διδάσκων περὶ ἀθανασίας, εἰς πόθον τῶν οὐρανίων ἀνάγων, ἀποκαλύπτων τὴν περὶ Πατρὸς γνῶσιν, τὴν κατὰ τοῦ θανάτου δύναμιν ἐμπνέων, ἑκάστῳ δεικνύων ἑαυτόν, καὶ τὴν εἰδώλων ἀθεότητα καθαιρῶν· τούτων δὲ οὐδὲν δύνανται οἱ παρὰ τοῖς ἀπίστοις θεοὶ καὶ δαίμονες, ἀλλὰ

[341] *DI* 30.33-41

> μᾶλλον τῇ Χριστοῦ παρουσίᾳ νεκροὶ γίνονται, ἀργὴν ἔχοντες καὶ κενὴν τὴν φαντασίαν· τῷ δὲ σημείῳ τοῦ σταυροῦ πᾶσα μὲν μαγεία παύεται, πᾶσα δὲ φαρμακεία καταργεῖται, καὶ πάντα μὲν τὰ εἴδωλα ἐρημοῦται καὶ καταλιμπάνεται…[342]

Here it is argued that to not act, but to lie lifeless is so characteristic that it is a mark, not only of idols, but also of demons. This is not held up as an indication of the intrinsic weakness of demons or even idols. Rather, it is a consequence of Christ's resurrection; the gods and demons 'fall dead at the very coming of Christ', and 'demons become more and more lifeless'. Further the activities associated with the demons are undone—idols are abandoned, magic comes to an end, and witchcraft is emptied. The result is that Athanasius speaks of these activities in summary terms that recall his presentation of Antony's vocabulary for them: they are a 'show' and 'vain'. The demons are becoming lifeless, their distinctive activities are a mere show, and a futile one at that. All of this is adduced to be a result of the work of Christ.

This tension, between the demons' innate weakness and their weakness due to the work of Christ is a feature of the issue in *Life of Antony*, where both strands can occur together in the same material, such as in chapter 28. This passage is an intriguing conflation of themes. It begins with a forthright statement that it is with 'the coming of the Lord' that the enemy has been weakened, signalled by means of Διὰ τοῦτο. However, the evidence invoked for this assertion would appear to be an innate trait. It is observed that the demons are not bound to bodies in the way that humans are. From this comes their ability to discover almost anything currently occurring and their inability to act and affect the outcomes of events. There is no suggestion that this is

[342] *DI* 31.5-14

something that has arisen due to the incarnation of the Word but would appear to be an intrinsic feature of demons. Nonetheless it is asserted, as the section draws to a close, that they are 'no longer' capable of acting. There is at this point an irreducible tension in Athanasius' presentation of demonic weakness in its relation to the atonement and demonic nature.

Demonic Role in the Fall and the Production of Human Evil

There is also a degree of paradox in Athanasius' account of the demonic involvement in the fall and human evil. There are places where Athanasius will tangentially mention a place for diabolic agency in the fall:

> προγινώσκων τε, ὅτι, καλοὶ γενόμενοι, ὕστερον παραβάται τῆς ἐντολῆς ἐσόμεθα, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ παραδείσου ἐκβληθησόμεθα διὰ τὴν παρακοὴν, φιλάνθρωπος καὶ ἀγαθὸς ὢν, προετοιμάζει ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ Λόγῳ, δι' οὗ καὶ ἔκτισεν ἡμᾶς, τὴν περὶ τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν οἰκονομίαν, ἵνα, κἂν ἀπατηθέντες παρὰ τοῦ ὄφεως ἐκπέσωμεν, μὴ τέλεον ἀπομείνωμεν νεκροὶ[343]

Humanity transgressed the command and so was expelled from paradise because of disobedience. This resulted in a prospect of permanent death. These actions are described in a way that places the spotlight on the human agency: it is 'we' who are described as 'transgressors of the command' and who are thrust out of paradise 'for disobedience'. Nonetheless, a role is briefly highlighted for the devil. In a highly elliptical statement it is stated that the serpent's deceit is the instrument by means of which we fell. Human beings were the primary agents, but the serpent's deceit is nonetheless an important factor. Our disobedience and fall occurred 'by' his deceit (ἀπατηθέντες παρὰ τοῦ ὄφεως). This suggests a certain, albeit bounded, efficacy. It

[343] *CA* 2.75.9-13

also indicates that the fall cannot be fully understood without discussion of the role of the devil in tempting humanity. The turn away from the knowledge of God did not occur in a vacuum, rather there was a diabolic dimension.

Accordingly, elsewhere Athanasius speaks in a way that suggests that the devil has a wide ranging, albeit illegitimate, rule over the human race because of his involvement in the fall:

> τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ ὁ πατὴρ τῆς Ἀρειανῆς αἱρέσεως ἐν πρώτοις ἠρώτησεν, *Εἰ Υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ Θεοῦ.*Ἤδει γὰρ, ὅτι τοῦτό ἐστιν ἡ ἀλήθεια, καὶ τὸ κύριον τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν· καὶ ὅτι, ἐὰν μὲν αὐτὸς ᾖ ὁ Υἱὸς, τέλος ἕξει ἡ διαβολικὴ τυραννίς· ἐὰν δὲ κτίσμα ᾖ, εἷς ἐστι καὶ αὐτὸς τῶν ἐκ τοῦ Ἀδὰμ τοῦ ἀπατηθέντος παρ᾽ αὐτοῦ, καὶ οὐδεμία φροντὶς ἦν αὐτῷ.[344]

In this extract Athanasius offers two alternatives. If Jesus Christ was the Son, then 'the tyranny of the devil would have its end'. If he was a creature then the devil had no reason to be anxious because Jesus would be 'one of those descended from that Adam whom he deceived'. The devil's rule over the human race, his 'tyranny', is paralleled with his primordial deception of Adam. Because the devil successfully deceived Adam he therefore has nothing to fear from any of Adam's descendants as he has wide ranging authority over them. The devil's deception is the foundation of the devil's control over the human sphere—the devil was able to effect the fall through the potency of his deceit. Due to the devil's agency, evil is not simply what happens when people turn from the good, but he is actively involved in turning people from the good. The interplay of good and evil is here essentially reversed in comparison to Athanasius' more characteristic fashion of describing the relationship.

[344] *CA* 2.73.10-14

The personal nature of the devil's agency appears to give rise to the possibility of a more active potency to produce evil.

As with many of the elements of this chapter, there is some tension in Athanasius' thought at this point for elsewhere he can express the connection between demonic influence and turning from the good in a fashion more in keeping with his overall view of the relationship of good and evil:

> Now, my beloved, our will ought to keep pace with the grace of God, and not fall short; lest while our will remains idle, the grace given us should begin to depart, and the enemy finding us empty and naked, should enter [into us], as was the case with him spoken of in the Gospel, from whom the devil went out; 'for having gone through dry places, he took seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and returning and finding the house empty, he dwelt there, and the last state of that man was worse than the first.' For the departure from virtue gives place for the entrance of the unclean spirit. [345]

Writing in 342 during his second exile, Athanasius reflects on the parable in Mat 12:45 and Luke 11:26 to support an exhortation to the church in Alexandria. The argument is similar to our earlier observations regarding Athanasius' views on the nature of the fall. The primary act is fundamentally passive and in relation to the good—it is to not keep pace with the grace of God. An idle will with respect to grace given ensures that grace will begin to leave and as a consequence the devil then fills the space thus evacuated. There is no suggestion that the devil is able to actively participate in promoting someone to turn from grace, his role is limited to an after the fact inhabitation.

[345] *Festal Letter* 3.3 *c.f.* 25. below

The difference between these two extracts reflects an enduring dichotomy in Athanasius' account of supernatural evil powers. In his writings Athanasius is capable of speaking of the devil in terms reminiscent of his description of corruption; of being essentially parasitical and passive and little more than the label given to what is left when substantial and real goodness is lost. On this axis evil spirits are described as being inherently weak and impotent. However, Athanasius can also speak of these powers as being in possession of potent personal agency, of being able to effectively determine humanity's fate for ill. On that axis, Athanasius will still affirm their weakness and powerlessness, but only as extrinsic condition imposed upon them by the atonement. For this strand of Athanasius' thought, they were once powerful, and had the capacity to produce evil and to turn people from the good by their efforts, but now have been rendered impotent through the things that Christ has done in the body. Part of what makes the demonic strand of his thinking distinct from creation, image, and the law is this interplay of these two ways of conceiving of demonic capability.

Demonic and the Atonement

We turn now to consider how Athanasius presents the atonement in relation to the demonic world. This is arguably the most unusual of the four strands of atonement thinking that we will examine for Athanasius does not conceptualize the demonic as contributing an independent factor to the human condition. The demonic is not a fourth problem in a way analogous to creation, image, and law but an overlay onto those three basic categories, exacerbating and personifying them by presenting them as spheres of human existence through which demonic influence over the human race is mediated. Consequently, there is no fourth atonement 'mechanism' that is

specifically focused on abolishing the sway of the demonic world from human life. Instead, Athanasius characteristically presents the demonic as being overturned when the other three aspects of the human condition are resolved.

The Demonic, Creation and Atonement

There are three ways in particular that we can observe that utilize creation ideas to speak of the atonement with regard to the demonic. First, is that Athanasius draws upon the notion of the incarnate Word's immutability in a fashion closely analogous to how we observed it harnessed to address the problem of corruption:

> Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδὰμ ἐτράπη, καὶ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον, διὰ τοῦτο τὸν δεύτερον Ἀδὰμ ἔπρεπεν ἄτρεπτον εἶναι·ἵνα, κἂν πάλιν ὁ ὄφις ἐπιχειρήσῃ, αὐτοῦ μὲν τοῦ ὄφεως ἡ ἀπάτη ἐξασθενήσῃ, τοῦ δὲ Κυρίου ἀτρέπτου καὶ ἀναλλοιώτου ὄντος, πρὸς πάντας ὁ ὄφις ἀσθενὴς τοῖς ἐπιχειρήμασι γένηται. Ὥσπερ γὰρ, τοῦ Ἀδὰμ παραβάντος, εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἔφθασεν ἡ ἁμαρτία, οὕτως, τοῦ Κυρίου γενομένου ἀνθρώπου, καὶ τὸν ὄφιν ἀνατρέψαντος, εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἡ τοιαύτη ἰσχὺς διαβήσεται, ὥστε λέγειν ἕκαστον ἡμῶν· *Οὐ γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὰ νοήματα ἀγνοοῦμεν.*[346]

Here the fall of humanity is explained in terms of Adam's 'transgression' and subsequent 'alteration', or corruption. These themes are linked to the serpent's deceit. This deceit is paralleled with the concept of 'assault': 'even if the Serpent assaulted, the Serpent's deceit might be confounded', suggesting a certain potency to the deception. This is strengthened by the surrounding argument. Adam's alteration is paralleled with his transgression as the explanation of the problem that must be solved. The answer that Christ provides consists of his inalterability and consistent righteousness. However, this solution is defined primarily against his overcoming of

[346] *CA* 1.51.9-16

the serpent, which has the effect of suggesting that the problem initiated by Adam similarly involved the serpent. This is explicitly the case in the above quote: 'even should the Serpent *again* assault', but the implication carries throughout. Adam's transgression, and his sin extending to all people, is paralleled, not just with Christ maintaining a love of righteousness, and so addressing the internal issue of corruption, but also of his overthrowing the Serpent, an external problem, and Christ's 'strength' extending to all people. This occurred so that 'the Serpent might become powerless in his assault against all'. By this Athanasius gives the impression that Adam's alteration and transgression occurred because the serpent's assault overcame him. In Athanasius' intertextual reading of Genesis 3 with Paul's two Adam framework there is no suggestion that Adam had the capacity to choose differently. The two Adam structure shapes the account of the serpent's temptation in such a way as to render it a story of humanity's powerlessness in the face of demonic deception rather than a narrative of human capacity for self-realisation gone awry. The serpent's deceit is powerless now for all Christ's people, but it was originally a powerful assault that overcame the first man and led to his transgression and alteration. Consequently, one of the key ideas for how the atonement addressed corruption is also utilized here. The immutable Word, who is already focused upon what is good, became the second Adam. When he was tempted, those temptations proved powerless in the face of the Word's immutability, and this same immunity to temptation is now extended into the human race.[347] This, Athanasius holds, is the import of 2 Cor 2:11, arguably one of his most quoted Scriptures when speaking of the demonic and our deliverance from its power.

[347] See also *To the Bishops of Egypt and Libya* 2, for a similar argument.

This can be observed in another topic from within the creation range of motifs. From the first Festal Letter, written in 329 early in Athanasius' episcopacy:

> For virtues and vices are the food of the soul, and it can eat either of these two meats, and incline to either of the two, according to its own will. If it is bent toward virtue, it will be nourished by virtues, by righteousness, by temperance, by meekness, by fortitude, as Paul saith; 'Being nourished by the word of truth.' Such was the case with our Lord, who said, 'My meat is to do the will of My Father which is in heaven.' But if it is not thus with the soul, and it inclines downwards, it is then nourished by nothing but sin. For thus the Holy Ghost, describing sinners and their food, referred to the devil when He said, 'I have given him to be meat to the people of Æthiopia.' For this is the food of sinners. And as our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, being heavenly bread, is the food of the saints, according to this; 'Except ye eat My flesh, and drink My blood;' so is the devil the food of the impure, and of those who do nothing which is of the light, but work the deeds of darkness.[348]

The progress towards corruption is portrayed as the soul feeding upon sin and this is equated with the devil being the food that those being corrupted consume. Some of the difficulty in definitively stating Athanasius' demonology can be grasped from this, for here the devil is not simply a creature, a fallen angel, but is effectively the personification of evil, which, as corruption, is the process of decreation itself. However, Athanasius does not explore this perspective on the devil beyond what is needed for his pastoral exhortations to the believers in Alexandria, utilizing it as a foil for his exposition of the alternative path for the soul. This is to feed on Christ, who is portrayed as a positive mirror image of the devil, as the Image of virtue. The virtue on consideration is relatively narrow, consisting of items such as humility and the consideration of God, qualities important particularly for the knowledge of God. This suggests that pursuit of virtue on view here is not simply a generic moralism, which if undertaken with sufficient vigour, will obtain a pardon for sins and lift the soul to heaven, but something similar to what we observed in chapter four; an understanding

[348] *Festal Letter* 1.5

that progress in the knowledge of God involving both a rational and an ethical dimension. The process of corruption is a path that the soul can choose and that vitiates the image. This is not simply the natural consequence that occurs when people turn from the knowledge of God but also involves a genuine participation in the devil. There is an external and personal spiritual agency involved alongside the natural trajectory of the creature unmoored from God. Similarly, the solution is not simply a pursuit of moral progress in the abstract, but a participation in Christ. In light of what we have previously observed, this is a process of renewing the image, or feeding the soul, of creating the conditions to receive the knowledge of God. In this extract also, an aspect of the human condition that elsewhere in Athanasius' corpus can be described without any reference to a diabolic dimension, is here portrayed as intrinsically containing this factor. Nonetheless, the resolution of this does not require its own special mechanism, but is addressed by the same atoning action as the underlying problem. The demonic adds an extra layer of complication to the ongoing loss of the image, but is addressed through the same means of people's moral transformation through communion with Christ.

Something similar can be observed with the notion that in the resurrection we will change abodes. This theme interweaves with the concept of rebuking Satan, to illuminate yet another angle on how Christ has resolved the influence of the devil on human affairs.

> To this intent He hath prepared many mansions with the Father, so that although the dwelling-place is various in proportion to the advance in moral attainment, yet all of us are within the wall, and all of us enter within the same fence, the adversary being cast out, and all his host expelled thence. For apart from light there is darkness, and apart from blessing there is a curse, the devil also is apart

> from the saints, and sin far from virtue. Therefore the Gospel rebukes Satan, saying, 'Get thee behind Me, Satan.'[349]

> Τοῦ γὰρ Λόγου ἐνδυσαμένου τὴν σάρκα, καθὼς πολλάκις δέδεικται, πᾶν μὲν δῆγματοῦ ὄφεως δι' ὅλου κατεσβέννυτο ἀπ' αὐτῆς· εἴ τι ἐκ τῶν σαρκικῶν κινημάτων ἀνεφύετο κακὸν, ἐξεκόπτετο, καὶ συνανῃρεῖτο τούτοις ὁ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἀκόλουθος θάνατος, ὡς αὐτὸς ὁ Κύριός φησιν·Ἔρχεται ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, καὶ οὐδὲν εὑρίσκει ἐν ἐμοί· καὶ, Εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ἐφανερώθη, ὡς ἔγραψεν ὁ Ἰωάννης, ἵνα λύσῃ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ διαβόλου. Τούτων δὲ λυθέντων ἀπὸ τῆς σαρκὸς, πάντες οὕτω κατὰ τὴν συγγένειαν τῆς σαρκὸς ἠλευθερώθημεν, καὶ λοιπὸν συνήφθημεν καὶ ἡμεῖς τῷ Λόγῳ. Συναφθέντες δὲ τῷ Θεῷ, οὐκέτι μὲν ἐπὶ γῆς ἀπομένομεν, ἀλλ' ὡς αὐτὸς εἶπεν, ὅπου αὐτὸς, καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐσόμεθα· καὶ λοιπὸν οὔτε τὸν ὄφιν ἔτι φοβηθησόμεθα·κατηργήθη γὰρ ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ διωχθεὶς παρὰ τοῦ Σωτῆρος, καὶ ἀκούσας·Ὕπαγε ὀπίσω μου, Σατανᾶ·καὶ οὕτως ἔξω τοῦ παραδείσου τυγχάνει βαλλόμενος εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον·[350]

Our initial situation was vulnerable so to secure the grace of being the image, people were placed in a fixed location, Eden, and given the law. With these external assisting agencies then proving to exacerbate humanity's situation, part of Athanasius' resolution of our mortality and the other entailments of our creaturely nature involved the idea that our location would eventually be changed as we would cease to live on earth and instead dwell in heaven, and so our new condition would be secured. In these two extracts we find this same concept restated and extended to address the diabolic as well. The problem of internal corruption has a diabolic aspect to it; it is a bite of the serpent and a work of the devil and so the removal of this from the flesh is not simply the extinguishing of a problem arising from our creaturely nature separated, but is also an overturning and surgical removal of the serpent's influence upon the human person. Further, the transformation of our location also has an eye to the removal of Satan's capacity to influence human beings. Satan has been cast out from paradise, and so there will no longer be any need to fear him. The same

[349] *Festal Letter* 10.5
[350] *CA* 2.69.11-22

mechanism that addresses the problems arising from life on the earth also secures people against the devil's attacks.

This exclusion of the devil from paradise is, in *Festal Letter* 10, foreshadowed by the dominical rebuke of Satan in the Gospel. The idea is extended in *CA* 2.69, where the words 'Get behind me Satan' is portrayed as an actual assault on the devil by Christ and as the act which ensures that Satan is cast down from paradise. These two connected themes of exclusion and rebuke are given yet another development in the final book of *CA* 3.40. In that passage the casting out of Satan from heaven and the rebuke of Satan are combined with another theme, that of Christ receiving humanly what he already had by virtue of being the Word and then communicating this to believers. Thus, Christ's rebuke of Satan is not only a harbinger of Satan's exclusion from paradise, but also of a new relationship that exists between believers and demons. Having become partakers of the divine nature, Christians are now characterized by their power against demons as well anticipating a future eternal reign in heaven, removed from corruption and from the presence of the demonic. The transcending of those things proper to humanity's creaturely nature also overthrows diabolic influence. People now have power against demons because they have come to partake of a divine nature.

A similar approach can be observed in how the abolition of death also is considered to overthrow the devil:

> 'That Christ rose from the dead, of the seed of David, according to the Gospel.' And let us not forget that which Paul delivered, declaring it to the Corinthians; I mean His resurrection, whereby 'He destroyed him that had the

> power of death, that is, the devil;' and raised us up together with Him, having loosed the bands of death, and vouchsafed a blessing instead of a curse, joy instead of grief, a feast instead of mourning, in this holy joy of Easter, which being continually in our hearts, we always rejoice, as Paul commanded; 'We pray without ceasing; in everything we give thanks[351]

> Ἐκεῖνος δὲ ὁ πάλαι τῷ θανάτῳ πονηρῶς ἐναλλόμενος διάβολος, λυθεισῶν αὐτοῦ τῶν ὠδίνων, ἔμεινε μόνος ἀληθῶς νεκρός·[352]

The union of the flesh with the one who is Life results in the resurrection, which was the elimination of mortality and death from Christ's body and will in time be experienced by those who belong to Christ. Christ's resurrection therefore is the overthrow of the reign of death in the human race. In these extracts, drawing on the language of Heb 2:14, Athanasius perceives there to be a close relationship between the devil and death—the devil rejoiced in death and had the power of death. Consequently, when death comes to an end, the devil is also affected. Thus, in the *Festal Letter*, Athanasius repeats the Scriptural language of the devil being 'destroyed' by the resurrection, whereas in *DI* he employs a more evocative image of the resurrection returning everyone to life, but leaving the devil himself genuinely dead. The abolition of death is also the abolition of the devil because the two are so closely linked.

In these examples we observe the same basic pattern. Liberation from the oppression of the demonic is integrated into concepts important to how the atonement addresses humanity's creaturely condition. The mechanisms that address mortality and corruption do the same for those aspects of demonic influence on humanity that are

[351] *Festal Letter* 2.7
[352] *DI* 27.14-15

intertwined with those intrinsic creaturely conditions. There is no separate strand of atonement thought that is specifically and only related to the demonic. Precisely because the demonic is parasitic upon, and an aggravating influence with, pre-existing natural conditions the saving acts that engage those underlying factors also provide resolution for the demonic.

The Demonic, Image and Atonement

The impact of the atonement on the demonic also features in themes associated with the strand of material relating to the loss and recovery of the image in humanity and the knowledge of God. While the basic narrative and structure of the interaction of atonement, demonic, and image ideas are similar to that with creation motifs, as we will observe there are some minor but important differences arising from the distinctive features of the image constellation of ideas. These divergences begin with how the problem of the loss of image and the loss of the knowledge of God, and its relationship to demonic influence, is conceived:

> Οὐκ ἄξιον γὰρ ἦν τῆς ἀγαθότητος τοῦ Θεοῦ τὰ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ γενόμενα διαφθείρεσθαι, διὰ τὴν παρὰ τοῦ διαβόλου γενομένην τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἀπάτην. Ἄλλως τε καὶ τῶν ἀπρεπεστάτων ἦν τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ τέχνην ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἀφανίζεσθαι ἢ διὰ τὴν αὐτῶν ἀμέλειαν, ἢ διὰ τὴν τῶν δαιμόνων ἀπάτην. [353]

> Οὕτω τοίνυν ἀλογωθέντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ οὕτως τῆς δαιμονικῆς πλάνης ἐπισκιαζούσης τὰ πανταχοῦκαὶ κρυπτούσης τὴν περὶ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ Θεοῦ γνῶσιν [354]

Unlike the various aspects of the matrix of creation ideas, where demonic influence is more reliant on the pre-existing creaturely dynamics, demons are considered to have a

[353] *DI* 6.15-19
[354] *DI* 13.1-3

more directly causal relationship to the loss of the knowledge of God and the image in humanity. While Athanasius can narrate the loss of the knowledge of God without respect to demonic agency the reverse is also possible in locations such as the above two extracts from *DI.* Here, the devil's deceit is an underlying cause, along with humanity's own neglect and carelessness, of the loss of being in the image. Demonic deceit is the ongoing condition that obscures the knowledge of God from human beings and, along with their corrupt behaviour, consigns them to the lives of non-rational animals. As with the creation motifs, the demonic aspect of the human condition is still correlated to a theme that Athanasius can discuss without reference to the demonic. The demonic is an overlay onto the intertwined problems of the loss of the knowledge of God and the loss of being according to the image. Nonetheless, there is a significant point of difference, in that the demonic is considered more directly to share responsibility for the existence and extent of this aspect of the problem.

Accordingly, the resolution of this aspect of the human condition also has points of similarity and difference with the creation and mortality ideas:

> Εἰ δὲ καὶ εἰς δαίμονας ἦσαν προληφθέντες, ἀλλ' ὁρῶντες αὐτοὺς διωκομένους ὑπὸ τοῦ Κυρίου, ἐγίνωσκον μόνον εἶναι τοῦτον τὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγον, καὶ οὐκ εἶναι θεοὺς τοὺς δαίμονας.[355]

> Ταῦτα δὲ πάντα ποιεῖν τῷ Σωτῆρι καλῶς ἔχειν, ἐδόκει, ἵν' ἐπειδὴ τὴν ἐν τοῖς πᾶσιν αὐτοῦ πρόνοιαν ἠγνόησαν οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ οὐ κατενόησαν τὴν διὰ τῆς κτίσεως αὐτοῦ θεότητα, κἂν ἐκ τῶν διὰ τοῦ σώματος ἔργων αὐτοῦ ἀναβλέψωσι, καὶ ἔννοιαν λάβωσι δι' αὐτοῦ τῆς εἰς τὸν Πατέρα γνώσεως, ἐκ τῶν κατὰ μέρος τὴν εἰς τὰ ὅλα αὐτοῦ πρόνοιαν, ὡς προεῖπον, ἀναλογιζόμενοι. Τίς γὰρ ἰδὼν αὐτοῦ τὴν κατὰ δαιμόνων ἐξουσίαν, ἢ τίς ἰδὼν τοὺς δαίμονας ὁμολογοῦντας, εἶναι τούτων αὐτὸν

[355] *DI* 15.25-27

> Κύριον, ἔτι τὴν διάνοιαν ἀμφίβολον ἔξει,εἰ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ Υἱὸς καὶ ἡ Σοφία καὶ ἡ Δύναμις;[356]

Unlike other parts of his corpus, such as *CA* and the *Festal Letters* and *Life of Antony*, in *DI* the dominical exorcisms are characteristically not shared more broadly with Christian believers as a beachhead of liberation from the power of the demonic. Instead they are an activity that uniquely belongs to Christ due to his being the Word of God. His power over evil spirits is revelatory of his actual relationship with them, 'that he was their Lord'. This revelation of Christ being the Word of God is the means of reissuing the knowledge of God to humanity. People come to know the Father by coming to know that Jesus is the Son of God. Christ's demonstrated power over the evil spirits is therefore one of various 'works of his body' that renews the image in humanity.

This argument reaches its strongest exposition in the latter parts of *DI*, in chapters 46 and 47. Here we can observe how thoroughly idolatry and the demonic are connected in Athanasius' thought. Both chapters utilize a similar argument structure to outline the same implication from two parallel situations, one concerning the evacuation of the worship of idols the other, the impotency of oracles and demonic deceits of a supernatural nature. Nonetheless, there is substantial overlap in content—the collapse of magic, the impotence of philosophy, and that the gods were simply mortal humans are notes that are struck in both chapters. These two chapters demonstrate something implicit throughout Athanasius' writing; that paganism as a whole is conceived of as demon-ridden, with the possible exception of philosophy, which nonetheless is

[356] *DI* 19.1-10

portrayed as bearing guilt by association. The same paradox that we have observed with regards the demons is on view in both chapters as both philosophy and idolatry are presented as being both inherently weak and unable to effect genuine transformation in human lives, and also decisively weakened by the advent of Christ. These components of human life, around which Athanasius perceives demonic shadows to gather, are all ways in which the knowledge of God is obscured and hidden from people. On view here then, is their defeat, and the exposing of their intrinsic enigmatic weak-yet-still-powerful nature, that most probably derives from their animating principle in the demonic. This combined overturning and unveiling appears to be both a consequence of the incarnate Word's reissuing the knowledge of God to people, and a cause of it. As the incarnate Word reveals himself in this fashion, the works of the demons are abolished; and as the works of the demons are abolished the Word is revealed for who he truly is. In a fashion similar to how the knowledge of God is recovered and the image is restored, both the defeat of the demons through their societal forms and the self-revelation of the Word arise together. The consequence of this is that people again turn to eternal matters and again know and worship God.

Hence, there is a definite difference between the image material and the creation and mortality material at this point. In the image material, the Word does address the power of the demonic in a direct confrontation and victory, the resolution of the problem of demonic influence on human beings is not simply contained within the solution to the problem of the loss of the image. In fact, arguably the relation is the opposite. The atonement's capacity to broker the knowledge of God and reform us as beings according to the image is, at least in part, dependent upon Christ's

demonstrated power over demons and evil spirits. On this axis, the atonement is concerned with the demonic as a problem in its own right and aspect of the atonement relating to image and the knowledge of God obtains its potency from the way in which the atonement can speak to the overcoming of the demonic.

Nonetheless, while this difference is notable, its overall impact upon Athanasius' understanding of the atonement at this point is arguably minor. Even in the extracts above, Athanasius does not conceive of the deceptions of the demons as a separate problem alongside that of the loss of the knowledge of God. The demonic activity, while having notions of agency and puissance, is nonetheless one component in the narrative of how humanity lost its position of being in the image of God. Similarly, while the topic of the restoration of the knowledge of God progresses by means of a path that includes the defeat of evil spirits, that is not a separate resolution of an independent demonic strand of the human situation. Rather it is simply one building block in the mechanism by which humanity's fundamental problem, its loss of the knowledge of God and of being in the image, is resolved. Consequently, while there are some distinct features here, the demonic is not presented as contributing an extra and distinct issue that requires its own special solution with regards to the knowledge of God. Demonic agency is one important factor leading to humanity's current position, and Christ's power over the demons is one important way in which he restored the knowledge of God to human beings. Here, as with the creation motifs, the demonic is integrated into a strand of thought—both problem and its solution—that can be in other places in Athanasius' corpus, discussed without any reference to the diabolic.

The Demonic, Law and Atonement

There is also a demonic aspect to those atonement themes involving ideas of external obligations and transgression of the law. Twice in *Life of Antony,* Athanasius portrays this in very evocative terms:

> εἶτα πικροὺς καὶ δεινούς τινας ἑστῶτας ἐν τῷ ἀέρι καὶ θέλοντας αὐτὸν κωλῦσαι ὥστε μὴ διαβῆναι.Τῶν δὲ ὁδηγούντων ἀντιμαχομένων, ἀπήτουν ἐκεῖνοι λόγον, εἰ μὴ ὑπεύθυνος αὐτοῖς εἴη. Θελόντων τοίνυν συνᾶραι λόγον ἀπὸ τῆς γεννήσεως αὐτοῦ, ἐκώλυον οἱ τὸν Ἀντώνιον ὁδηγοῦντες, λέγοντες ἐκείνοις· Τὰ μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς γεννήσεως αὐτοῦ ὁ Κύριος ἀπήλειψεν· ἐξ οὗ δὲ γέγονε μοναχὸς, καὶ ἐπηγγείλατο τῷ Θεῷ, ἐξέστω λόγον ποιῆσαι. Τότε κατηγορούντων, καὶ μὴ ἐλεγχόντων, ἐλευθέρα γέγονεν αὐτῷ καὶ ἀκώλυτος ἡ ὁδός·[357]

> ἐθεώρησέ τινα μακρὸν ἀναβλέψας, ἀειδῆ καὶ φοβερὸν, ἑστῶτα καὶ φθάνοντα μέχρι τῶν νεφελῶν, καὶ ἀναβαίνοντάς τινας ὥσπερ ἐπτερωμένους· κἀκεῖνον ἐκτείνοντα τὰς χεῖρας· καὶ τοὺς μὲν κωλυομένους παρ᾽ αὐτοῦ, τοὺς δὲ ὑπεριπταμένους καὶ διελθόντας λοιπὸν, ἀμερίμνως ἀνάγεσθαι.Ἐπὶ μὲν οὖν τοῖς τοιούτοις ἔτριζε τοὺς ὀδόντας ὁ μακρὸς ἐκεῖνος· ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς ἀποπίπτουσιν, ἔχαιρε. Καὶ εὐθὺς πρὸς Ἀντώνιον ἐγένετο φωνή· Νόει τὸ βλεπόμενον· καὶ διανοιχθείσης αὐτοῦ τῆς διανοίας,ἐνενόει τῶν ψυχῶν εἶναι τὴν πάροδον, καὶ τὸν ἑστῶτα μακρὸν εἶναι τὸν ἐχθρὸν τὸν φθονοῦντα τοῖς πιστοῖς· καὶ τοὺς μὲν ὑπευθύνους αὐτῷ κρατοῦντα καὶ κωλύοντα διελθεῖν, τοὺς δὲ μὴ πεισθέντας αὐτῷ μὴ δυνάμενον κρατεῖν ὡς ὑπερβαίνοντα[358]

Both extracts describe the same basic idea. People's ability to ascend into heaven is able to be prevented by demonic agency. These demonic figures are portrayed as being personally invested in their opposition to human ascension. Diabolic envy continues to be expressed even after sin has been introduced, and now finds its expression in preventing people from passing through the air into heaven—again a quite spatial description of spiritual realities. The key criteria by which a soul is prevented from successfully undertaking its heavenly journey is described in the second extract as whether the person 'is accountable' to the devil, and only those who

[357] *Life* 65.8-18
[358] *Life* 66.11-24

'had not been subservient to him' are able to sufficiently escape his grasp as to complete their skyward pilgrimage. The extract from 65 offers us some insight into what these two alternatives involve. In that passage Antony finds himself 'caught up in the spirit,' and escorted by beings that are presumably angelic in nature. His passage through the air is contested by a number of 'bitter and terrible beings', again, probably demons. The contest between the two sets of entities revolves around the question of whether or not Antony is accountable to the demons. In order to establish that he is, the dark figures seek to recount his life story from birth. This is not permitted, on the grounds that Athanasius' sins from his birth have been removed by the Lord, and so only his actions since becoming a monk may be tendered as evidence. Apparently, there was no evidence from this period of his life to justify a conviction and so Antony's journey continued without further hindrance, suggesting that here again, forgiveness and transformed ethical conduct are both constitutive elements of Athanasius' understanding of salvation.[359]

It is unquestionably a strange pair of narratives for modern eyes. Nonetheless, here again the devil is closely associated with evil, to the degree that living in a corrupt fashion can be described as being subservient to him. Similarly, demonic agency is portrayed as enjoying some form of control over human beings. However, unlike the examples we examined earlier, in this instance the relationship is not grounded in the irresistible power of demonic deceit, wonder working, or temptation, but rather an almost extrinsic authority or obligation, grounded in the possibility of a successful prosecution against a person due to their actions in their life. This indicates that the

[359] Also Ng, *Spirituality,* 233-234

elimination of this aspect of the demonic contribution to the human condition will not involve the overturning of the potency of diabolic devices but the removal of Satan's capacity to accuse effectively. While a mechanism along these lines is arguably less clear than for the previous categories of creation and image, there are places in Athanasius' writing that suggest just such an atoning mechanism, particularly focusing on the notion of cleansing the air and so opening the way to Heaven:

> Where our Lord Jesus Christ, who took upon Him to die for all, stretched forth His hands, not somewhere on the earth beneath, but in the air itself, in order that the Salvation effected by the Cross might be shewn to be for all men everywhere: destroying the devil who was working in the air: and that He might consecrate our road up to Heaven, and make it free.[360]

> ...stretching out His hands upon the Cross, He overthrew the prince of the power of the air, that now works in the sons of disobedience, and made the way clear for us into the heavens.[361]

The incarnate Word has overthrown the devil, here described in terms of his relationship to the air—the prince of the power of the air—and has made the way clear for Christian believers to enter the heavens. While the precise method to accomplish this is not explained nonetheless the outcome is apparent as the way in which it was effected: his bodily death on the cross. Satan, in his role as one having power and authority over the air, has been overthrown and the way through the atmosphere has been cleared by the death of the incarnate Word.

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[360] *Festal Letter* 22
[361] *Festal Letter* 60.7

That it is specifically the death of the Word that has produced this state of affairs is clear from two passages from *DI*, which also suggest the process by which this was accomplished:

> Ὅθεν, ὡς προεῖπον, ὁ Λόγος, ἐπεὶ οὐχ οἷόν τε ἦν αὐτὸν ἀποθανεῖν—ἀθάνατος γὰρ ἦν—ἔλαβεν ἑαυτῷ σῶμα τὸ δυνάμενον ἀποθανεῖν, ἵνα ὡς ἴδιον ἀντὶ πάντων αὐτὸ προσενέγκῃ, καὶ ὡς αὐτὸς ὑπὲρ πάντων πάσχων, διὰ τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸ ἐπίβασιν, «καταργήσῃ τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου, τουτέστιν τὸν διάβολον· καὶ ἀπαλλάξῃ τούτους, ὅσοι φόβῳ θανάτου διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ζῆν ἔνοχοι ἦσαν δουλείας». [362]

> Καὶ πάλιν εἰ ὁ ἐχθρὸς τοῦ γένους ἡμῶν διάβολος, ἐκπεσὼν ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, περὶ τὸν ἀέρα τὸν ὦδε κάτω πλανᾶται, κἀκεῖ τῶν σὺν αὐτῷ δαιμόνων ὡς ὁμοίων ἐν τῇ ἀπειθείᾳ ἐξουσιάζων, φαντασίας μὲν δι’ αὐτῶν ἐνεργεῖ τοῖς ἀπατωμένοις, ἐπιχειρεῖ δὲ τοῖς ἀνερχομένοις ἐμποδίζειν· καὶ περὶ τούτου φησὶν ὁ Ἀπόστολος· «Κατὰ τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος, τοῦ νῦν ἐνεργοῦντος ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς τῆς ἀπειθείας», ἦλθε δὲ ὁ Κύριος ἵνα τὸν μὲν διάβολον καταβάλῃ, τὸν δὲ ἀέρα καθαρίσῃ, καὶ ὁδοποιήσῃ ἡμῖν τὴν εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἄνοδον, ὡς εἶπεν ὁ Ἀπόστολος, «διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος, τοῦτ’ ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ», τοῦτο δὲ ἔδει γενέσθαι διὰ τοῦ θανάτου·ποίῳ δ’ ἂν ἄλλῳ θανάτῳ ἐγεγόνει ταῦτα, ἢ τῷ ἐν ἀέρι γενομένῳ, φημὶ δὴ τῷ σταυρῷ; Μόνος γὰρ ἐν τῷ ἀέρι τις ἀποθνῄσκει, ὁ σταυρῷ τελειούμενος. Διὸ καὶ εἰκότως τοῦτον ὑπέμεινεν ὁ Κύριος. Οὕτω γὰρ ὑψωθείς, τὸν μὲν ἀέρα ἐκαθάριζεν ἀπό τε τῆς διαβολικῆς καὶ πάσης τῶν δαιμόνων ἐπιβουλῆς λέγων· «Ἐθεώρουν τὸν Σατανᾶν ὡς ἀστραπὴν πεσόντα», τὴν εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἄνοδον ὁδοποιῶν ἐνεκαίνιζε λέγων πάλιν· «Ἄρατε πύλας οἱ ἄρχοντες ὑμῶν καὶ ἐπάρθητε πύλαι αἰώνιοι.» Οὐ γὰρ αὐτὸς ὁ Λόγος ἦν ὁ χρῄζων ἀνοίξεως τῶν πυλῶν, πάντων Κύριος ὤν, οὐδὲ κεκλεισμένον ἦν τι τῶν ποιημάτων τῷ ποιητῇ, ἀλλ’ ἡμεῖς ἦμεν οἱ χρῄζοντες, οὓς ἀνέφερεν αὐτὸς διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος αὐτοῦ. Ὡς γὰρ ὑπὲρ πάντων αὐτὸ προσήνεγκε τῷ θανάτῳ, οὕτως δι’ αὐτοῦ πάλιν ὡδοποίησε τὴν εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἄνοδον. [363]

We have already had cause to discuss *DI* 20 on several occasions, a reflection of its importance as a locus passage for the atonement. In this extract, Athanasius has completed his summary of the things that the Word has accomplished by his incarnation and by his actions in his incarnate life both on earth and now in the heavens and is now, in summary form, preparing for the discussion of the significance of the death of Christ in the following chapters. Something of the importance of the

[362] *DI* 20.34-41
[363] *DI* 25.17-39

demonic for our understanding of the atonement can be deduced from the fact that the defeat of the devil also appears in this chapter. In this extract the death of Christ is identified as the reason why the devil has been brought to nothing. This argument is prosecuted by means of a quotation from Heb 2:14, a passage that we had cause to note earlier was used to expound the consequences of Christ's resurrection. The fact that in this location the same Scripture is utilized in a discussion of the death of Christ is more evidence that Athanasius' understanding of death is multifaceted, and includes both intrinsic conditions that are addressed by the union of the body with the Word and the resurrection as well as extrinsic conditions that are removed by the death of Christ. This latter idea would appear to be in view in this extract, coming as it does as the conclusion to an extended treatment of the idea that the death of Christ was a sacrifice offered on behalf of all to pay the debt owed by all. Hence, just as we have observed how the resurrection of the body of the Word has destroyed the devil by removing mortality from the body and so excising a diabolic domain from human existence, so in this extract the death of the body of the Word has also destroyed the devil by removing another sphere of his power over the human race. Precisely how this has occurred is not discussed in detail, but the language in the extract, and its context, suggests that it happens because of the Word discharging humanity's obligation to die. The devil is connected to both death as natural and death as obligation, and so as each dimension of death is addressed, the devil is also rendered impotent as a factor in human life.

The second extract comes from Athanasius' treatment of the death of Christ and particularly his justification for that death occurring by means of crucifixion. Here the focus is on another of the relevant Scriptures that shapes Athanasius' thinking on this

matter, Eph 2:2, with its language of the devil being the prince of the power of the air, and hence the idea of clearing a way through the atmosphere into heaven predominates. After an initial acknowledgement of demons' capacity to deceive people through illusions, the extract focuses on the efforts of the devil to 'hinder them that are going up' and links this to the quote from Ephesians, suggesting that this hindrance of people's ascension is a prime implication of Satan's power in the air. Resolving this problem is discussed under three categories—the casting down of the devil, the cleansing of the air, and the preparation of the way into heaven. In this extract, Athanasius speaks in fashion that suggests that the cleansing of the air and the casting down of the devil occur contemporaneously—that the air is cleansed *by* the devil falling like lightning, which removes his 'malignancy' from the air. Thus, these two ideas are two sides of one coin, and they focus on the mode of Christ's death—that that is uniquely a death on the cross that involves being suspended in the air, which enables the air to be cleansed in this fashion. The opening of the way into heaven is less clear in this passage, but appears to involve both ideas associated with what we have termed Athanasius' 'forensic' understanding as well as divinization ideas. In discussing how the Word did not need the gates to heaven opened, because all his works are open to him as their Maker, but that it was we humans that needed them opened, Athanasius notes two things that the Word did—he carried us up by his own body, and he offered his body to death on behalf of all. The first of these ideas is almost definitely a brief explanation of how the Word opened the gates of heaven to us utilizing divinization motifs. Whether the idea of the Word offering his body to death on behalf of all is also as closely connected is less clear. It is possible that Athanasius is simply including it at this point as a separate idea, presumably due to the way in which this entire block of material is focused primarily on the meaning of

the death of Christ, rather than his resurrection or incarnation. However, given the connection in the extract with the removal of the devil's capacity to hinder people ascending into heaven, a capability that we have observed is linked to his ability to successfully argue that particular individuals are subservient to him due to their sins, and the way in which the carrying of people in the Word's own body is grammatically linked to the offering of that same body to death on behalf of all, "For as….so", it is more probable that the death of Christ on behalf of all is being, albeit somewhat obscurely, presented as a causal factor in the opening of heaven to human beings. Thus, what is on view in this passage is a two-stage saving act, where the air is cleansed of the devil's corruption by means of the devil being cast to the earth and the devil's ability to successfully prosecute a case against human beings is brought to an end. Both of these occur in the death of Christ, which, because of its location in the air is able to cleanse the air, and because it is an offering to death on behalf of all, removes any obligation humans have to death, and hence to the one who has the power of death, the devil. The other stage is accomplished by the resurrection, in dependence upon the union effected by the incarnation, which enables people to be divinized to the degree that Heaven, rather than the earth, becomes their natural abode.

The findings of this section are consistent with what we have observed with the devil and creation and the devil and the image. While Athanasius is capable of discussing humanity's obligation to death without any reference to the devil, he does in a number of locations indicate that this obligation to death is an important domain for the devil's sway over the human race. In doing so, Athanasius does not suggest that the involvement of personal supernatural agents of corruption and death contributes any

additional problem that must be addressed by the atonement. Instead, the devil utilizes human beings' obligation to death to ensure that they cannot enter heaven upon their death. The demonic contributes a further difficulty to the problem of humanity's extrinsic obligations to death and those obligations are a sphere of the devil's power but there is no further unmediated influence that the demonic world exercises in this category. Consequently, the primary way in which Athanasius conceives of the interaction between the atonement and the devil on this axis is that the devil is undone through the atonement addressing the problem of humanity's incurred obligation to the law. The precise fashion this occurred is far less clear or explicit than with the previous two topics, but nonetheless what tangential comments Athanasius makes on these topics are consistent with his other statements regarding how the death of Christ is a death in the place of people to offer his body to death on their behalf and so fulfilling the requirement that they die. Accordingly, the most probable conclusion is that this same basic idea is on view when the devil's involvement is on view also. As the obligation is discharged, and people's sins are forgiven, the devil ceases to be able to successfully prosecute a charge against them after their death that they are in subjection to him and are shut out of heaven. He still accuses the brethren, but now ineffectively. Here also the one atoning action addresses both the underlying issue of extrinsic obligation as well as the demonic overlay.

The Demonic as a Nexus of Atonement Thinking

This same basic pattern with regards to the demonic that pertains across the three main atonement categories that we have examined is suggestive of one additional insight. The way in which the devil works through the other major components of the

human condition, rather than add his own independent aspect, raises the possibility that this category of the diabolic might at times function as a nexus for Athanasius' atonement thinking, linking together two or more strands of notions together by means of their common connection in evil supernatural agents. While this is not a common feature of Athanasius' writing, there is at least one example where this occurs, in *CA* 2:

> Ἵνα οὖν μηδὲ τοῦτο γένηται,πέμπει τὸν ἑαυτοῦ Υἱὸν, καὶ γίνεται υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου, τὴν κτιστὴν σάρκα λαβών· ἵν', ἐπειδὴ πάντες εἰσὶν ὑπεύθυνοι τῷ θανάτῳ, ἄλλος ὢν τῶν πάντων, αὐτὸς ὑπὲρ πάντων τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα τῷ θανάτῳ προσενέγκῃ, καὶ λοιπὸν, ὡς πάντων δι' αὐτοῦ ἀποθανόντων, ὁ μὲν λόγος τῆς ἀποφάσεως πληρωθῇ (πάντες γὰρ ἀπέθανον ἐν Χριστῷ)· πάντες δὲ δι' αὐτοῦ γένωνται λοιπὸν ἐλεύθεροι μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τῆς δι' αὐτὴν κατάρας, ἀληθῶς δὲ διαμείνωσιν εἰσαεὶ ἀναστάντες ἐκ νεκρῶν, καὶ ἀθανασίαν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν ἐνδυσάμενοι. Τοῦ γὰρ Λόγου ἐνδυσαμένου τὴν σάρκα, καθὼς πολλάκις δέδεικται, πᾶν μὲν δῆγμα τοῦ ὄφεως δι' ὅλου κατεσβέννυτο ἀπ' αὐτῆς· εἴ τι ἐκ τῶν σαρκικῶν κινημάτων ἀνεφύετο κακὸν, ἐξεκόπτετο, καὶ συνανῃρεῖτο τούτοις ὁ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἀκόλουθος θάνατος, ὡς αὐτὸς ὁ Κύριός φησιν·Ἔρχεται ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, καὶ οὐδὲν εὑρίσκει ἐν ἐμοί· καὶ, Εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ἐφανερώθη, ὡς ἔγραψεν ὁ Ἰωάννης, ἵνα λύσῃ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ διαβόλου. [364]

This extract joins together motifs characteristic of Athanasius' discussions on divinization with those connected to his thinking on a 'forensic' understanding of the death of Christ. In the former we have the opening idea of people being joined to God by being joined to the Son, and that this results in humanity not having 'remained mortal as before.' He returns to this set of ideas towards the end of the extract in anticipating people being risen from the dead, able to 'truly abide for ever' and 'clothed in immortality and incorruption'. Within this inclusio, he focuses on the meaning of the death of Christ, in language indicative of what we have observed elsewhere—that all people were 'under sentence of death', that as there is something different about Christ's relationship with death, 'he being other than them all', he was

[364] *CA* 2.69.4-16

able to ‘offer to death his own body’ and do this ‘for all’. The effect of this is that ‘the word of that sentence might be accomplished’. Both of these topics are discussed here in ways quite consistent with what we have already observed in the relevant chapters. Noteworthy in this extract is the way in which these two topics are connected by means of a common factor, the devil. While the connection is not entirely transparent, it seems probable that the evil which ‘sprung from the motions of flesh’ and which is cut away is broadly synonymous with the ‘every bite of the serpent’ that is ‘utterly staunched’. If so then again we see that evil and the devil are closely connected and this is another location where Athanasius is prepared to speak of the devil standing behind human evil in a causative relationship. The key idea here appears to be that evil has been removed from the flesh, and as death is the companion of sin, it too has been ‘abolished’. Both sin and death then appear to be regarded as ‘works of the devil’—drawing upon language from 1 Jn 3:8, which are naturally alien to the incarnate Son in light of the dominical statement in Jn 14:30. Consequently, as Athanasius surveys the defeat of corruption and death through the Son’s union with the flesh, and his offering his body to death, he portrays this as the destruction of the devil’s handiwork, for both evil and death are spheres of the devil’s activity and influence in the human race. Both atonement themes find a connection in their common relationship to the overcoming of ‘the prince of this world’. Precisely because the diabolic does not contribute a fourth component to the human condition, but works through the previously discussed three lines of atonement thought, it is capable of acting as the pivot when more than one set of atonement ideas are in view.

Conclusion

Athanasius' understanding of the demonic is an unexplored feature of his thought in scholarship and a study such as this can only offer an initial, somewhat impressionistic, overview of some of the key features of this topic particularly as it relates to how Athanasius conceptualizes the atonement. Nonetheless, it should be apparent that Athanasius' conception of the demonic world is relatively developed and consists of features that are simultaneously unique to it as well as analogous and consistent with other domains of his theological thought. Demons and the devil have a unique relationship with death and corruption, being so closely connected as to almost verge on identification such that at times they seem almost the personification of these abstract dynamics. Some of the assimilation of the demonic to corruption can arguably be witnessed in Athanasius' account of demonic weakness, where just as corruption is quite literally a process of nothing, and yet has a seemingly irresistible hold upon people, so similarly demons are presented as being both intrinsically weak and yet possessed of incontestable control over human affairs that is only decisively ended with Christ's earthly sojourn. Deceit appears to be Athanasius' paradigm for this paradoxical account—an activity which lies at the heart of demonic activity and which obtains its puissance precisely from the fact that it has no reality to it. Unravelling this enigma in Athanasius' thought is beyond the scope of this investigation, but it is possible that future efforts could do worse than consider Anatolios' attempt in *Coherence* to resolve a similar dialectical feature in Athanasius' Christology regarding the passibility and impassibility of the incarnate Word.[365] There

[365] Anatolios, *Coherence*, 148-50

would appear to be some definite parallels in the structure of Athanasius' thinking in both topics.

It is when we turn to the relationship between the atonement and the demonic that this topic takes on its most distinctive cast relative to that of creation, image, and the law. Athanasius presents the demonic as an important factor in humanity's situation and one which is also resolved by the atonement. However, it is unique among the themes we have examined in that it does not add an element in its own right, either to the problem or to the solution. That the devil enjoys a certain kind of hegemony over humanity is apparent, but this tyranny is not expressed in an unmediated fashion towards humanity, such that the atonement will simply overturn it by a direct action upon it in isolation. In this sense, there is no *Christus Victor* understanding of the atonement as classically conceived, where the idea of reign of the devil being defeated by the victory of Christ is presented as an alternative understanding to other ways of conceiving the atonement. On the contrary just as demons are uniquely connected to matters such as death and corruption, so the problem they present for humanity is joined to these features of creaturely existence. The problem of the demonic is immanent within the other dimensions of humanity's condition, and those factors are instruments of the demon world's destructive tyranny over the human race. From the problem of idolatry and the other pagan institutions, through to our mortality, corruption's defacing of the image, the obscuring of the knowledge of God, and people's obligation to the law and to death, all of these are spheres of demonic power to blight and destroy the human race. This gives the issue of the atonement and the demonic a unique cast. Alone among the four strands of thinking, it is possible to give an account of Athanasius' understanding of the human condition and its solution in

the atonement *sans* the demonic, and nothing of material importance is lost. There is no new content that this theme contributes to the topic in the way that the previous three chapters provide. This arguably is one contributing factor as to why this topic is so underdeveloped in Athanasian scholarship—it is possible to give an account of the human condition without any reference to the demonic and in the process to not present a distorting absence in the details of Athanasius' views.

However, while this is true materially, it is arguably less so formally. While the demonic is not presented as an additional problem, it functions to change the way we think of the other main strands of Athanasius' thought. These are not simply impersonal forces or dynamics at work in the created order and to which humanity is subjected. The presence of the demon world indicates that there is a personal aspect to all these factors. Alongside the ways in which creaturely mortality, corruption and the law work through their own inherent power to blight and destroy human life, they are also instruments of a very deliberate and personal assault by malign unseen supernatural agents. Understood in this light, it gives a decidedly personal cast to what is often presented in Athanasian scholarship as a somewhat impersonal account of the human condition. The problems of our inherent mortality as creatures, our inescapably ever growing corruption and loss of the image, and our external debt to the law to die are in fact mediums of demonic domination. In this sense, all of Athanasius' views on these matters are a *Christus Victor* understanding of the atonement. There is no aspect of human life, when not orientated to the knowledge of God, that is not the domain of malevolent and personal darkness. Consequently, if the atonement, in any aspect, is anything, it is the defeat of the devil and his demons. Whether it is death as natural for creatures or death as obligation to the law or the problem of our loss of the knowledge

of God, the abolition of each of these from human life is also conceived of as the breaking of the evil one's hold on humanity alongside the amelioration to the particular problem that has been provided. Precisely because the demonic is immanent within the other topics, their solution also resolves it. However, the converse is true, precisely because the demonic is connected to the others strands, all of those topics can, in a sense, be presented as aspects of the defeat of the devil in the manifestation in the body of the Word. In this sense the demonic offers the least and the most to our understanding of Athanasius' concept of the atonement. No new categories of thought, but a new perspective on those already established.

It should also be apparent that this chapter also reinforces two of our major arguments. It demonstrates that Athanasius' understanding of the atonement can only be understood when read in light of his doctrines of creation, anthropology and the fall, rather than other theological loci. It should also be clear that monistic accounts of Athanasius' atonement thinking are impossibly reductionist. When done well, they say nothing that is incorrect, but in presenting only one or two aspects of Athanasius' thought as though they are the whole picture, they flatten out what is a far richer and more interconnected set of theological ideas.

Conclusion

Reflections on Key Findings

We noted at the outset that one of the original motivations prompting for this study was to compare Athanasius' method of deriving his understanding of the atonement with the contemporary interest in 'Trinitarian' accounts of key loci of Christian doctrine. From our observations we are now well positioned to conclude that Athanasius' view of the atonement is not 'Trinitarian' in the sense that he directly derives his view of the atonement from a reflection on the trinitarian nature of the Godhead. The Trinity, and in particular the nature of the Father-Son relationship, does not directly inform his view of the atonement, such that his argument for the nature of the atonement begins with reflection on the relationships between the persons and subsequently derives its shape and content from that origin. The Trinity does not act as an engine of theological reflection in that sense. Instead, we have observed that Athanasius' doctrines of creation, anthropology and the fall directly shape his view of what Christ did to save human people. This is indicated by the structure of his twin work *CG/DI*, where an explanation of the creation of the world and of humanity, and of humanity's turn from God and subsequent decline into increasingly greater corruption precedes a discussion of the various strands of the atonement. It is also indicated by explicit statements, where Athanasius nominates an understanding of humanity's origin, rather than an understanding of the nature of the Godhead, or some other fundamental principle, as being necessary for an understanding of the purpose of the incarnation. It is also shown by Athanasius' method of argumentation in his anti-Arian works such as *CA*, where he regularly argues *to* the nature of the Word *from* the Word's actions in redeeming humanity. This method of arguing for the Word's deity makes the nature of the Godhead the conclusion of the argument rather than the

starting point. Our findings leads to the inference that it is Athanasius' realism which leads him to reflect on the nature of the things redeemed (creation and anthropology) and the nature of the problem (the fall and harmartiology) when he seeks to explain what occurred in the atonement. Analysis of what exists and what those things require determines Athanasius' understanding of the atonement, he does not derive his views from *a priori* considerations of God's omnipotence, character, or Trinitarian nature. This means that for Athanasius, the atonement is pre-eminently a solution to a problem; either a single problem with a large number of facets or a large number of interlinked problems, and it is Athanasius' analysis of the problem that informs his understanding of its solution: the atonement. Consequently, the single set of ideas most directly influencing Athanasius' view of the atonement is his view of humanity's need. Athanasius invariably establishes the nature of what is required first, and only then argues that the Word has the resources to meet that need either through the incarnation itself, or through some other consequence of the incarnation, such as the miraculous signs, teaching, or the cross. Trinitarian considerations are not entirely absent from Athanasius' understanding of the atonement, for his doctrine of creation and the fall is shaped by his understanding of the role of the Word in creation and anthropology, an element with background Trinitarian principles. Athanasius is concerned that the atonement is fitting for God, and that it is fitting for God to save everyone in the one by whom he made all things, and so the doctrine of God indirectly shapes the view of the atonement at that point also. Nonetheless, the overall shape of his theological method leads to the conclusion that, at least with the doctrine of the atonement, the Trinity is not the engine room for his theological reflections. He has not directly derived the atonement from his understanding of the nature of the Word,

or of the nature of the Word's relationship with God: the role these things play, while still profound, are indirect.

One consequence of this is that Athanasius' views on the atonement are well integrated into his theology overall. The effect of having a direct relationship between his view on the atonement and his understanding of creation, anthropology and sin, and an indirect relationship with his doctrine of the Word and of the Godhead is that many of the concerns that we observed in these other fields also had an expression in his views on the atonement. Three links in particular have been noted at various times. First, as mentioned in the previous point, Athanasius moves directly from atonement to Christology, not that the former derives from the latter, but nonetheless in a direct and repeated fashion. This suggests that the atonement is highly important to his overall theological vision, as it is not immediately clear whether his Christological convictions arose from reflecting upon the implications of his atonement thinking, whether the relationship occurred in the opposite direction or even whether it was something more recursive and synergistic. Given the importance of Christology for Athanasius' overall thought, its close relationship with the atonement suggests the latter is a significant topic for him. Second, there have been a number of theological methodological principles at work in Athanasius' atonement thinking which appear to be significant for his overall theological concerns. These include Athanasius' strongly realist approach to names and abstract concepts and, as we will discuss, how his multivalent approach to the atonement mirrors his approach to the how the names for the Word function. Even more strikingly distinctive, however, is arguably how strongly *a posteriori* his reasoning consistently is on the atonement, where the way things have occurred disclose the true essence of the agents involved and so there is a

deterministic tendency—there are few grounds offered for thinking that things could have occurred other than they have. These methodological principles have also been evident in our forays into Athanasius' views on creation, anthropology and Christology, and their formative influence on Athanasius' atonement thinking is suggestive that that topic as well is significant for his overall theological vision. Finally, there are foundational theological assumptions behind his atonement thinking that reflect his broader theological concerns. Most notably in this sphere is how the principle identified by Anatolios: the two-fold origination from the Father by nature and by will shapes how God's transcendence is expressed through his immanence, has explanatory power to explain Athanasius' understanding of the atonement as necessary for some of its aspects but not for others, as we will discuss below. While none of these are conclusive individually, together they are suggestive that the atonement is a more deserving topic in Athanasius' corpus then its relative neglect might indicate.

Another conclusion that we may now offer is that Athanasius does not have a monistic understanding of the human condition or of its solution. While theology since Athanasius has introduced organizing structures such as 'models of the atonement' and theologians are classified as to which (sole) model they are considered to propound or at least which appears to be central to their thinking, Athanasius' thought is both more multivalent and more interconnected. This appears to be an area where Athanasian scholarship, overall, is relatively weak in its explanation of his thought, forcing Athanasius into a Procrustean Bed of later doctrinal alternatives that do not appear to exist for Athanasius. This makes him something of an ecumenical theologian of the atonement—atonement and creation,

atonement and image, atonement and law and atonement and demons all can be located within fairly classic typologies of atonement thinking even if many of his treatments of these 'models' are distinctive. This is a significant point of Athanasius' divergence from contemporary theological tendencies to identify one 'model of the atonement' as primary or fundamental (if not exclusive) for a writer, and the others as incompatible with, or ancillary to, the main lines of his thought. Corruption and mortality, loss of the knowledge of God and loss of humanity's image and rationality, an obligation to death, the work of the devil, all are significant elements of humanity's problem, and while in other figures one or two of these elements might suffice to describe the human condition, what is distinctive about Athanasius' thought is the breadth the situation from which the human race requires redemption. In this aspect of his thought, Athanasius is no devotee of Occam's razor; even though any of his basic elements could be abstracted and would suffice on its own to require the Word to be incarnate to address it and so the insistence on multiple strands is superfluous from the perspective of demonstrating the need for the Word to be divine, nonetheless Athanasius embraces complexity in his exposition of the problem and its solution. Athanasius' thought cannot be sufficiently explained simply by appeal to one or two basic motifs such as divinization or image renewal. Treatments of his thought that seek to do this invariably distort the richness and breadth of his understanding.

One implication of this finding of the irreducible complexity of Athanasius' atonement thinking is it strengthens the hand of those scholars who see a strong division in the theology of the early church between 'East' and 'West', 'Greek' and 'Latin' as inadequate. Athanasius' thoughts on the nature of the human condition and the atonement have components that are generally considered to be 'Latin' – most

particularly, a concern for the law and the removal of the penalty for transgressing it, but also an interest in the demonic, as well as elements that are considered to be 'Greek' – especially the transcendence of our natural mortality by participating in the properties of the Godhead, as well as those considered to be epistemological and ethical – the idea that humanity's problem is a lack of knowledge, and it is the revelation that Christ brings that solves the problem of humanity's ignorance and subsequent noetic errors. The existence of these various elements in Athanasius' explanation of the atonement suggests that the underlying theological concerns—forensic, or mortality, or epistemology, or diabolic—are not necessarily as incommensurate in a single thinker as is sometimes implied in discussions of the topic. While there is little debate that, for example, Orthodoxy and Latin Christianity developed in different directions over time, our study supports the contention that it may be anachronistic to use these later differences to interpret patristic figures.

Moreover, it is arguable that a lack of appreciation of this complexity in Athanasius' atonement thinking, combined with a tendency to read him either through the lens of academic reduction, or through an East-West schema, appears to have led to a propensity to argue that Athanasius cannot hold to a particular view on the atonement (most commonly atonement and the law) *because* he holds another view on the atonement (usually divinization). Sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly, it is presented as though the presence of one strand of atonement thinking in Athanasius precludes the possibility of other strands. However, this greatly misunderstands Athanasius. In this study we have focused on what we consider to be the four main topics of his atonement thinking, a position due to the way these topics appear in various summary statements in *DI* and especially in chapter twenty. Beyond these

there are other motifs, if possibly not actual themes, that also appear in Athanasius' thought—unity, Jew and Gentile, opening the way to Heaven and similar. Athanasius' atonement thinking is marked, not by the use of a single or primary governing model, but by the enlisting of as wide a range of concepts as he could find in Scripture. Athanasius gives explicit indication of this in a statement in *DI* 54:

> Καὶ ὅλως τὰ κατορθώματα τοῦ Σωτῆρος τὰ διὰ τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως αὐτοῦ γενόμενα, τοιαῦτα καὶ τοσαῦτά ἐστιν, ἃ εἰ διηγήσασθαί τις ἐθελήσειεν, ἔοικε τοῖς ἀφορῶσιν εἰς τὸ πέλαγος τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ θέλουσιν ἀριθμεῖν τὰ κύματα ταύτης. Ὡς γὰρ οὐ δύναται τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς περιλαβεῖν τὰ ὅλα κύματα, τῶν ἐπερχομένων παριόντων τὴν αἴσθησιν τοῦ πειράζοντος, οὕτως καὶ τῷ βουλομένῳ πάντα τὰ ἐν σώματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ κατορθώματα περιλαβεῖν ἀδύνατον τὰ ὅλα κἂν τῷ λογισμῷ δέξασθαι, πλειόνων ὄντων τῶν παριόντων αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐνθύμησιν, ὧν αὐτὸς νομίζει περιειληφέναι. Κάλλιον οὖν μὴ πρὸς τὰ ὅλα ἀφορῶντα λέγειν, ὧν οὐδὲ μέρος ἐξειπεῖν τις δύναται, ἀλλ' ἔτι ἑνὸς μνημονεῦσαι, καὶ σοὶ καταλιπεῖν τὰ ὅλα θαυμάζειν. Πάντα γὰρ ἐπίσης ἔχει τὸ θαῦμα, καὶ ὅποι δ' ἄν τις ἀποβλέψῃ, ἐκεῖθεν τοῦ Λόγου τὴν θειότητα βλέπων ὑπερεκπλήττεται.[366]

The irony is that, despite the frequency of its quotation, the implications of this extract do not appear to have impinged upon all discussions of Athanasius' atonement thinking. It is not uncommon to read explanations of Athanasius' thought which either explicitly or implicitly present the problem of natural mortality (and possibly loss of the image) as the fundamental, or even the sole, difficulty of the human condition addressed by the atonement. While our investigation supports the existence and significance of this topic, it is clear that Athanasius' thought does not move in the direction of a single model, or of a small group of closely related ideas, in his thinking about the atonement. Athanasius likens reflection upon the atonement to a person watching a long section of ocean shore and trying to count the waves they form and break. His claim is that the achievements of Christ in the body are of such a number, and of such a kind, as to be impossible to grasp as a whole, even by listing them and

[366] *DI* 54.17-30

then adding them together. Further, he does not indicate that some of the ‘waves’ are of greater significance than others. Quite the contrary, Athanasius states that all are marvellous, and each one displays the Word’s divinity. It should be apparent that this extract is on the opposite trajectory to those accounts of his theology that articulate a centre to his thought on the atonement and represent other ideas as either tangential or non-existent, as though Athanasius is only concerned with mortality, or mortality and the loss of the image. When Athanasius himself speaks to this issue he offers a picture that is inherently unbounded, where the extent of the atonement, the different elements of what the Word has done in the body, cannot be comprehended, let alone taken as a whole. This certainly does not rule out attempts to find a central ‘wave’, or set of waves—such as has been done here—or to attempt to identify relationships between various elements of his atonement thinking, but there needs to be some recognition that Athanasius presents his own approach to the atonement as open-ended, where the only limit is his ability to keep enumerating the benefits of Christ’s incarnation for the human race, and so maintain a certain reticence in nominating a precise ‘centre’ to his thought on this topic and particularly not hastily to establish boundaries to his thought.

In this multivalent approach to the atonement there are obvious parallels with Athanasius’ Christological thinking. When speaking of the Word, Athanasius uses a range of terms and images, with Word, Son, Image, Likeness, Wisdom, Radiance, and Stream being particularly frequent. In his account, each of these terms makes their own particular contribution to our understanding of the person of Christ, with a semantic content that it is incommensurate with the others. However, none of these

aspects are to be understood in isolation of the others, a point Athanasius makes explicit:

> ὁ λόγος γὰρ τοῦ θεοῦ υἱός ἐστιν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὁ υἱὸς λόγος ἐστὶ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ σοφία· λόγος δὲ καὶ σοφία οὔτε μέρος ἐστὶ τούτου, οὗ καὶ ἔστι λόγος, οὔτε κατὰ πάθος ἐστὶ γέννημα. ἀμφότερα γοῦν ἡ γραφὴ συνάπτουσα «υἱὸν» μὲν ἔφησεν, ἵνα τὸ φύσει καὶ ἀληθινὸν τῆς οὐσίας γέννημα εὐαγγελίσηται· ἵνα δὲ μή τις ἀνθρώπινον ὑπολάβοι τὸ γέννημα, πάλιν τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ σημαίνων «λόγον» αὐτὸν εἶναι καὶ σοφίαν καὶ ἀπαύγασμά φησιν. ἐκ γὰρ τούτου καὶ τὸ ἀπαθὲς τῆς γεννήσεως, καὶ τὸ ἀίδιον καὶ τῷ θεῷ πρέπον λογιζόμεθα.[367]

The various perspectives inform each other, and provide a composite meaning that is more than the sum of the parts considered in isolation and then combined. While they have their own meaning, these particular meanings are not hermetically sealed from each other but bleed into and inform each other. The overall effect of using the various terms in this fashion is to build up a rich portrait of the Word. This approach to theological language, where categories of thought mutually inform each other is arguably analogous to our observations of Athanasius' discussion of the atonement. There are different strands to Athanasius' thinking regarding the atonement and, as we have done in this study, they can be distinguished. Indeed in *DI* there are sections where Athanasius seems to focus on one topic almost exclusively for a period. But his more common practice is to combine the topics, alluding to multiple aspects of the atonement in close proximity, and we have observed locations in his corpus where the topics intersect and arguably overlap. As with Christology, Athanasius' practice gives the indication that he understands the various elements of the atonement to inform one other. Natural corruption and mortality, loss of image, the debt that comes from transgressing the command, the deceit of the devil, are not to be understood in isolation despite possessing their own integrity and unique substantial content. Here

[367] *CA* 1.28.8-14

also an important part of their meaning comes from their existence in relation with the other strands. There are differences between the methodologies in the two domains – in one the subject is the eternal Word, in the other it is a set of acts or events that were done in and through and by the incarnate Word – nonetheless a similar methodology is at work. Athanasius' approach in his discussion of the atonement of not utilising a single model that sets the boundaries and primary concepts for the other models, but instead invoking multiple perspectives on the one atonement is consistent with his approach to one of the most significant areas of his theology, Christology. This unbounded, perspectival, approach to the atonement would therefore appear to reflect a more basic approach to theological methodology observable elsewhere in his thought.

Differences and Similarities between the Atonement Strands

One of the more interesting features of Athanasius approach to the atonement is that there appears to be a relatively small number of basic elements that combine differently for different aspects of the atonement. A particularly striking example of this is the interaction between the Word and the Word's body in the atonement. For divinization there was a very definite relationship between the two, with the Word's difference from humanity, and in particular his immortality and incorruption, providing the solution to humanity's natural mortality and corruption. In this situation, the Word was only capable of enabling humanity to participate in his properties through the likeness of his body to that of the human race. The body is both a problem and an element of the solution, while the Word's difference from humanity is the other component of the solution. With the Word's revelation of God through the

revelation of himself as the Word and hence humanity's recreation in the image, matters are somewhat altered from divinization. Here, it is the Word's similarity to the human race, inasmuch as the human race was created in accordance with him, as the Image, and so has a shadow of his power as part of their constitution, that is the heart of the solution. It is this similarity between the two that enables the image to be restored, and the knowledge of God to be received, through the Image's self-revelation by teaching and miracle. For this aspect of the atonement, the body's contribution to the problem is arguably lessened, for the soul's attachment to the horizon of the body's pleasures and senses is only an exacerbation of the more fundamental problem of the soul's turn from the knowledge of God. However, the body's contribution to the solution is arguably increased, for renewal of the image in humanity requires the similarity of the body of the Word to that of the human as with divinization but, unlike divinization, the body's properties are not transcended. The soul's turn to the body is used to effect this dimension of the atonement, the Word revealing himself through the senses of the body to people whose epistemic horizon has become limited to the body's senses. The interaction is different again with the 'forensic' dimension of the atonement. Here the Word's immortality is the 'problem' and the body's mortality provides the 'solution'—almost the opposite relationship to that of divinization. Humanity is under obligation to the law to die, and for this to be annulled it must first be fulfilled by the death of a substitute and representative. The Word is unable to die, and so the Word's body, specifically its mortality, the very quality that divinization seeks to transcend, is the element that enables the cross. Again, the similarity of the Word's body to that of the human race is significant, enabling the exchange and transfer to take place, while the Word's difference to humanity, this time the Word's position of being above all, enables the death of one to

count as the death of all and for the Word to act representatively on behalf of all. It is the same simple pallet of key ideas regarding the properties of the Word and his body, but the portrait painted in each case is strikingly unique while remaining fundamentally compatible with the other perspectives.

As we have observed, these differences lead at points to significantly different principles underlying various dimensions of the atonement. There are four variances in particular that we have had cause to note in the course of this study. First, the issue of timing. Both divinization and 'forensic' elements of the atonement in Athanasius' thought occur more or less in an instant, although an individual's participation in them may come at an indeterminate length of time later. While divinization is effected by the incarnation, and the law is fulfilled by the cross, both are essentially accomplished in a single act. On this axis, renewal of the image is unusual, for it is far more open ended. For Athanasius, the Word reveals himself, and so renews the image in human beings, pre-eminently through his miracles and teaching. However, Christ's death and resurrection also reveal him for who he is, in particular that he is Life, as sections 22 and 24 of *DI* make clear. Even the post-ascension progress of the gospel should arguably be included in this topic: Athanasius demonstrates Christ's deity and living status in *DI* 27-32 by people turning from idolatry and vice to the Son and virtue, and their attendant loss of fear of death. This being the case, renewal of the image is bounded only by the end of history, for as long as there is evidence of conversion of life in people who belong to Christ then, Athanasius would argue, there are signs by which the Word is revealing his deity. This is one element that gives Athanasius' account of the atonement a decidedly complex dimension, for, depending on which aspect of the problem of the human condition one focuses upon, the solution is either

finished in its entirety, or is still underway, albeit already ‘accomplished’ from the perspective of its ability to solve the problem of humanity’s culpable ignorance of God.

This issue of timing is potentially linked to another point of difference, the relationship between the Word, the atonement effected by him, and humanity, for here as well renewal of the image is construed differently from the other two topics we have examined. The revelation of God through the ministry of the incarnate Word is, for Athanasius, an external relationship, of the kind that Athanasius explicitly rejects as suitable for divinization. Where dealing with the consequences of the transgression of the law fits in Athanasius’ bifurcated ‘external/internal’ alternative is less clear and more implicit. Our assessment is that it too is considered by Athanasius to be an ‘internal’ relationship between humanity and the atonement, due to the way the similarity of the Word’s body functions in this strand. While all three topics rely upon the similarity of the body, only with divinization and ‘forensic’ is that similarity utilized to establish an internal relationship between humanity and the atonement where the similarity of the body enables the transfer to take place—the atonement is able to be accomplished due to a constitutional element of human nature. For revelation the requirement of the similarity of the body is explained on the model of a teacher who descends to the level of her students and of the need to meet the human race in their own form in order to reorient their gaze from the depths of creation back ‘higher’ where God is to be known. This revelation was occurring before the incarnation as the Word manifested himself in and through the physical creation. Whereas the body makes divinization and dealing with the consequences of

transgressing the law possible, for revelation it simply increases its potency until it passes over into the threshold of effectiveness.

On the other side of the equation is the relationship between the atonement and the Word who effects it. Here the most distant relationship is arguably found in atonement and the law, where the substance of the atonement, dying the death the human race was obliged to die, has little intrinsic relationship to the Word, in part because it is almost a purely negative action – removing the deleterious. Divinization presents a far closer relationship between person and act, for the qualities of immortality and incorruption are 'proper' to the Word and 'his own', and so there is an important intrinsic relationship between what the Word does and who he is. Nonetheless, there is a certain distance here also, for the way that Athanasius uses this same language to describe the relationship between the Word and God, and the Word and his body indicates that Athanasius does not hold to the idea that there is an identity between God and his attributes. The Word 'has' immortality and incorruption, not 'is' them and so, while this strand of the atonement gives to the human race that which can only be enjoyed by participation, for it cannot be abstracted from the person of the Word, it is not coterminous with him. The closest relationship is arguably in revelation and renewal of the image, for Athanasius' highly realist approach to abstract concepts requires the distinction between having the knowledge of God and having God himself to be blurred. This is particularly so because, as we have observed, the image in humanity is in some ways identified with the Image, where the Word's revelation of the Father is in some sense his own personal nature. "Image", unlike incorruption and immortality, is not a possession of the Word but something he 'is'. Here the atonement and the atoner are either identical or almost

so—participation in the knowledge that the Word reveals is participation in the Word himself, and what is given, a shadow of the Image, is not merely a quality proper to the Word, but that which uniquely identifies him as the Image.

When we turn to the question of the mechanism of the atonement, then divinization becomes the most distinctive strand. At its most basic understanding all three strands operate with a principle of transfer, either from the Word to humanity or from humanity to the Word. With renewal of the image and with the 'forensic' dimension this transfer is unidirectional. In the renewal of the Image a shadow of the Image is transferred to humanity, inscribed again upon us through the Word's self-revelation. With the atonement and the law a debt is transferred from humanity to the Word and paid representatively for them and substitutionally in their place through the cross. Both of these are unidirectional transfers, either of the positive, moving from Word to humanity or negative, moving from humanity to the Word. Only in divinization is this transfer bidirectional and so becomes an exchange. The mortality and corruption of the body are transferred to the Word and are obliterated by his impassibility, while his immortality and incorruption and the Spirit is participated in by his body, and from there extend out into the human race more generally. Here the transfer is both negative and from his human body to the Word as well as positive and from the Word to his body. Divinization is also distinctive in this light as what is being transferred is proper to the Word's own body, and once his body has experienced salvation this is then extended out into humanity more generally, whereas there exists no suggestion that the Word's own body has either incurred a debt to the law or has suffered a loss of the image. These concerns are proper to humanity more generally, but not to the Word's own body. His body does not, strictly speaking, require saving from these two

aspects of the human condition more broadly, and so while the Word's body is needed for the transfer in the solution to be efficacious it is so for a solution to a problem not properly its own.

The Necessity of the Atonement in Relation to Athanasius' Broader Theological Concerns

Perhaps the most striking variation across these three categories is found in Athanasius' views on the degree to which the atonement was necessary for human redemption and the degree to which God was free to save people without it. As we have observed, Athanasius presents a substantially different answer to that question depending on which element of the atonement he is addressing. Divinization is clearly and explicitly stated to require the incarnation to be accomplished, and supporting argument for this extends for an entire chapter of *DI*. The supporting argumentation is less extensive for renewal of the image in humanity, although Athanasius does explicitly state that here also, the image requires the coming of the original Image. In neither of these aspects can there be an atonement by divine fiat, modelled upon the original creation. The argument is, however, quite different when atonement and the law are discussed. Athanasius is quite prepared to entertain the possibility that God could loosen sins and the consequences of transgressing the law simply from his own authority and without recourse to an atoning death. Divine fiat is certainly possible when the legal dimension of the atonement is considered. As we noted, even here Athanasius raises other issues that, in practice, would seem to make this hypothetical divine freedom a null set—such a solution would leave human beings in a situation of ever increasing corruption, dependent on a permanent (possibly eternal) cycle of sin

and forgiveness, and would entangle God in having spoken falsely. It is important to note that this is a 'strong' qualification of God's freedom. Athanasius does not simply say that the cross had better outcomes for humanity; he paints a portrait of salvation by divine fiat that is clearly, to his mind, disastrous. He does not simply state that the cross better expresses God's nature, but that the alternative would be absurd and involve God in speaking untruths. While the freedom is clearly and explicitly declared in the abstract, in practice it is difficult to see how it might have occurred given Athanasius' overall concerns. Nonetheless, while these qualifications are important for how they illuminate the fairly minimal way that speculative considerations regarding possible actions for God shape Athanasius' theological approach, the fundamental difference on this question remains. For divinization and renewal of the image the atonement was strictly necessary, God had no other alternative if humanity was to be redeemed. For atonement and the law, other possibilities existed. God could have resolved the issue with a divine command analogous to the original creative word, although disadvantageous for humanity and entangling God in untruth. Two elements of the atonement that we examined are functioning at the level of necessity, the other at the level of substantial appropriateness.

It is not inconceivable that at least some readers will see this difference as evidence of a lesser status to the atonement and the law in Athanasius' thought, which is to some degree ancillary, prompted only by considerations of suitability and not actually required by his overall thought. In fact, Athanasius' thought at this point would appear entirely consistent with a feature of his overall vision that Anatolios identified in *Athanasius: the Coherence of his Thought.* As Anatolios demonstrated there, Athanasius' thought coheres, among other things, around a two-fold origination from

the Father, each relationship of which has their own properties, but each of which is analogically related to the other. On the one hand there is the origination of the Son from the Father. This relationship is eternal and operates beyond will, at the level of the Father's inherent nature – because the Father is Father he necessarily begets the Son, and yet does so freely, without any external compulsion. This relationship is fundamentally one of ontology and necessity, for while the Father acts freely in begetting the Son there is no freedom to not beget the Son. The begetting of the Son is not a matter of choice between alternatives, and so has no sense of contingency, it is something that exists at the level of the Father's essential nature, and so defines the Father's fundamental nature. The begetting of the Son constitutes the Father as the Father, and it is because the Father is the Father that he begets the Son. This relationship is 'internal' to God, defines his nature, and is necessary. On the other hand is the origination of creation from the Father. This occurs in time, and as an act of will. Like the origination of the Son, it is a free act by the Father, but in this instance there is no necessity arising from the Father's nature either. The Father was free to either create or not to create, and while Athanasius is prepared to highlight the aspects of the Father's nature which demonstrate that creation was appropriate and suitable for him, there is no suggestion that the Father's nature made the creation of the world an inevitability. As contingent, and based upon the Father's will, the relationship between creation and the Father does not define the Father's fundamental nature, it is external to God, producing that which does not have God's own being as its being. This is why Athanasius argues that it is more fitting to call the Father 'Father' in light of the relationship that exists between the Son and the Father than to call him 'unoriginate' in light of the relationship that exists between him and creation. As a relationship that exists due to the will of the Father, and not arising necessarily

from his nature, the creation of the world occurs 'externally' to the Father and so is less fundamental to the nature of the Godhead and our knowledge of the Father – he *is* Father but *became* Creator.

Nonetheless, while the two relationships of origin are profoundly different, they are also related to each other analogically. While creation is contingent, it is not arbitrary. When the Father creates he creates in a way that expresses his nature as Father; the Father does not cease to be Father when described as 'Creator' but is the way in which the Father relates, as Father, to creation. In other words, the relationship between the Father and creation depends upon and is given its particular shape by the relationship between the Father and the Son. Perhaps the clearest indication of the link between the two relationships is Athanasius' argument that if there was no Son then the Father would not be Father and if he is not Father then he would be unable to create for he would lack the creative energies that beget the Son and by which created the world.[368] Here the connection is explicit, that creation is only possible for God because God's nature is such that it is eternally creative of the Son. The relationship of creation to Creator depends upon the pre-existing relationship of Son to Father. However, there are further connections between the two relationships. Athanasius' argument that without an eternal Word and Power God would lack the Word and Power through whom he makes the world,[369] and his argument that the Father does everything through the Son and does nothing apart from him[370] indicate a further link. The creation-Creator relationship does not simply require the pre-existing, and more

[368] *CA* 2.2
[369] *CA* 2.2
[370] *CA* 2.35; 41

foundational Son-Father relationship, it is constituted by that prior relationship. The Father-Son relationship both acts as the ground that makes creation possible, and also shapes the nature of that relationship, with the Word being the one through whom God creates, such that his relationship as Creator is constituted by his relationship with his own Word.

It should be apparent that while the relationship between creation and the Father is external to the Father, is contingent, depends on the prior Father-Son relationship, and receives much of its form from that prior relationship, this does not make either creation or anthropology ancillary to Athanasius' theology, or even to his doctrine of God. Creation is not the Son, but that does not render creation tangential to Athanasius' theological vision. It has value simply by being what it is, by existing, as we have had cause to observe. We would argue that the relationship between the 'forensic' element of Athanasius' thought to the other elements such as morality, death, corruption, and the image of God is arguably of a similar kind. The problems of humanity's morality, its inevitable death, a permanent and ever worsening corruption, are ontological in nature. They arise from humanity's creaturely nature when it is severed from participation in the knowledge of God. Once God has created by a divine command, the things that have come into existence can no longer be saved from the things that are in accordance with their own creaturely nature by the same means that brought them into existence. Their reality must be addressed along lines that are internal to their existence. As such, these elements of the atonement are 'necessary' and there is minimal freedom if their associated problems are to be solved – the incarnation of the Word is necessary because, unless the Word takes residence in human flesh, they cannot be solved. Their resolution requires a participation from one

nature to another. God cannot bring resolution through an external act, but must be joined to human nature. The atonement must occur in the Word and be internal to humanity because what is being addressed are issues of ontology and hence involve necessity.

On the other hand is the issue of guilt and transgression of the commandment. This is an external and contingent relationship where God is concerned—God chose to give humanity a law in order to provide a strengthening of the grace of the image, there was no necessity for a law to be given. The problem of the human condition at this point arose from a contingent act, and a contingent act that does not create anything that exists, but merely regulates what has come into existence prior to it coming into existence, a distinction that we have had cause to note Athanasius explicitly makes. Accordingly, the problem that arises from the transgression of the command is inherently contingent, and does not reside at the level of that which is in accordance with humanity's creaturely nature. Further, the forensic element adds no extra dimension to the problem. The consequence for transgression is to die and to remain in corruption – and these are things that would have occurred even without the law due to humanity's creaturely nature reasserting itself. Nonetheless, even though it does not add a new consequence, it does exacerbate the existing ones. Humanity is said to be more severely under the corrupting power due to its ability to bring the transgressed law against humanity. The exact meaning of this is not explained, but there is a probable parallel with the place of creation in Athanasius' account of humanity's progress in corruption, where humanity's turn to creation and then the growth of idolatry leads humanity into further corruption than might have occurred without their influence. Like the law, Athanasius presents the creation as given in

order to help secure the grace that had been given to humanity of being made according to the Image, and there are similarities in the pernicious effect both have once humanity turns away. Like the law, creation does not add anything 'extra' to the problem of the human condition – corruption is still the same fundamental problem that it would have been even if the soul had no body to turn to once it had turned away from the knowledge of God. However, creation does appear to exacerbate the problem by giving the soul an alternative to which it can become wedded and so give rise to the problem of idolatry and demon worship, which in turn leads to a level of corruption in behaviour that Athanasius appears to suggest is worse than might have been without their involvement. Creation does not add anything to the problem arising from humanity's rejection of the knowledge of God – a problem that arises from humanity's own created nature – but it does appear to exacerbate it. In the same way, the law, and God's ordinances, do not appear to add any extra problem to the human condition. Even without the law humanity without God would face corruption and death, but it does appear to make the pull of corruption worse, and add to the problem of natural death an obligation upon the human race to die that must be dealt with alongside the problem of humanity's natural mortality.

Taken together, these factors suggest that behind Athanasius' view on the necessity of the atonement for divinization and renewal of the image, and its non-necessity for atonement and the law, stands a number of interlinked theological concerns that lie close to the heart of his theological vision. It is not simply coincidence that Athanasius compares the atonement to the original creative word so as to either reject or affirm the analogy between the two depending on which aspect of the atonement is under consideration. It is an indicator that Athanasius understands different aspects of

the atonement in a fashion that is analogous to the two relationships of origin around which his broader theological understanding takes shape. Some aspects of the atonement address issues that are internal to humanity, arising from humanity's constitution. These operate in the realm of necessity. Some aspects address issues that arise from the giving of the law after the creation. These have an external relationship with humanity, for they do not arise from humanity's own creaturely nature, and so they are, at least in theory, capable of being dealt with contingently, by a divine fiat modelled on the original creative word. Although they depend upon, and take their basic shape, from the more ontological issues addressed by divinization, they are no more ancillary to Athanasius' thought with respect to those issues than Athanasius' doctrine of creation is ancillary with respect to his Christology. All the waves matter for Athanasius and all are signifiers of the deity of the Word and the nature of his relationship with the Father. In fact, this difference in how necessity and contingency operates in the atonement are indicators that his thinking in this field cohere with some of the fundamental principles and methodological assumptions that operate more broadly in his thought, the second of the two overarching questions that this investigation sought to uncover.

Connections of Atonement Thinking with Trinitarian View

This leads back to the other interest that gave rise to this exploration, Athanasius' understanding of the atonement in light of his view of the Father-Son relationship. Athanasius offers a rich account of the connections between the relationship between God and his Word and the atonement effected by God in the Word. Athanasius is able to trace concretely the particular quality the Word has that stands behind each

dimension of the atonement that he discusses. Athanasius links both the Word being Creator, as well as his inherent incorruptibility, to making human beings incorruptible, his being Life and being immortal to making mortal things immortal, his being the Word to revealing God, his being the Image to renewing the image, and being above all to standing in for all in his death. Athanasius' multivalent approach to the nature of the God-Word relationship and how this constitutes the Word and his multivalent approach to the atonement interact and reinforce each other. He does not simply offer a generic 'the Word can do this because he is divine' answer to each element of the atonement, but is able to offer specific aspects of the Word that undergird each particular atoning act. Many of these qualities are related to the divine nature, an important aspect of Athanasius' 'anti-Arian' polemics. But some are traced to the qualities that that the Word has *per* the Word. The most obvious of these are that he is the Image and Word—which are names unique to the Son—but it is arguably also present in the idea of the Word being 'above all'. This gives Athanasius' account a double effect—he can use his multivalent account of the atonement to bring out both the Word's equality with God (by highlighting those qualities that are connected to the being of God that stand behind that aspect of the atonement) as well as the Word's differentiation from God (with those qualities that are his own properties as the Word and so are not shared with either the Father or the Spirit). Thus Athanasius is able to argue that this composite work is both 'divine' and 'trinitarian'—requiring the one effecting it to be fully God, and also for the Godhead to include the Word, the Word as understood along Athanasian lines.

One of the most significant effects of this interweaving of particular aspects of the nature of the Father-Son relationship to particular aspects of the atonement, is

arguably Athanasius' commitment to the view that atonement is accomplished 'in' the Word, and not simply 'through' him as with creation. This is the case for his 'forensic' and renewal of the image accounts, even though both have, in different ways, 'external' relationships at work in how they are effected. Nonetheless, in all three topics that we have examined, Athanasius either explicitly states that the atonement occurred in the Word (forensic), or that would seem the most probable way to understand what he says (renewal of the image). This means that for Athanasius the Son is not instrumental in achieving an outcome that can be abstracted from the Son himself. The differing elements of the atonement interact in particular ways, resulting in the atonement as a whole occurring in the Word and by which people are brought into the closest possible participation in the Word of which it is possible for a creature. In dying as substitute offering to death, in renewing the image in humanity by revealing himself as the Word, and in extending his impassibility and immortality into the human race by the likeness of his body with that of humanity, the Word is establishing redemption within himself, and giving humanity a, highly realist, share in him. To the degree that it is possible for a creature, humanity is being brought from the external relationship that exists between creation and Creator to participate in the internal relationship that exists between God and the Word, Father and Son, and the greatest sign of this is that humanity possesses that which is properly the Son's own, immortality and incorruption, as properly humanity's own. In the atonement, humanity is being reconstituted more closely along the lines of the Father-Son relationship, albeit while respecting an ongoing difference between the Son and humanity.

Hence, while Athanasius has not derived his understanding of the atonement from his understanding of the nature of the Father-Son relationship, and while it might be speculative as to which was the chronological instigator of the relationship, it can be argued that both perspectives inform other another reciprocally. God is revealed by his acts, his redemptive acts pre-eminently, because for Athanasius these acts are expressions of God's nature. Thus the atonement is, at every point, the most important signifier of the nature of the God-Word relationship, and the nature of the Word. It does more than simply indicate the Word's deity in abstract, each element of the atonement illuminates another specific facet of the relationship of the Father and the Son and the precise fashion in which this constitutes the Word as the Word. Here again, our finding is that the atonement is not a *cul de sac* in Athanasius' thought, but evidences deep links with some of the most significant topics that he discusses.

The Multi-Faceted Nature of Athanasius' Atonement Thinking

Athanasius' atonement thinking is broadly polyvalent and not narrowly monistic. Our investigation has shown that there are at a minimum four different aspects to the atonement in Athanasius' thinking, and that they are significantly distinct enough that three of these can be shown to vary significantly from each along differing axes in terms of their underlying principles such as necessity or the atonement as an internal relationship are considered. This is arguably the most important finding of the investigation, for it is most at odds with the tendency in current patristic thinking to explain Athanasius' atonement thinking in terms of single, integrated, model, most commonly some kind of divinization understanding. There are not simply different

dimensions to the atonement in Athanasius' thought, they differ from each other on significant theological questions.

It is worth taking a moment to reflect as to why patristic scholarship has tended to overlook this feature of Athanasius' thought. While the reasons are no doubt complex, we are in a position to suggest one possibility for consideration: an over-reliance on one general approach to reading texts from the period. As indicated in the introduction, this investigation is distinctive in part for its methodology. Presently a narrative approach is arguably dominant, where texts are read primarily through the lens of a reconstruction of the past and in order to help illuminate that narrative of the past even further by developing the narrative into new areas where into which it has not expanded and correcting it when a better way of explaining the evidence of the documents arises. These narratives can take different forms—it can be an attempt to give an integrated account of the development of theological thinking around the debates in the fourth century, or to offer an overarching integrated account of Athanasius' theological thought, or how the theological topics of God and anthropology interact over several centuries and where a figure such as Athanasius is located within that comparison, or to show how Athanasius is best understood through the lens of his spirituality or through the different dimensions of his historical existence. There is no question that this approach produces substantial insights into the past and into texts, and whatever insights this investigation have generated have done so by drawing upon the scaffolding provided by previous narrative studies. However, all methodologies have elements of contingency and trade-offs inherent to them. No approach is equally adept at exploring all subjects. There are two strengths of the narrative approach that arguably become limitations when faced with a topic

such as Athanasius' understanding of the atonement. The first is that the approach functions optimally when reading matters in the text that are most capable of being illuminated by narrative approach. The difficulty is that the narratives that have been generated to date have been relatively uninterested in Athanasius' atonement thinking, and so the narratives struggle to illuminate this topic. We simply do not have a sufficient reconstruction of the trajectory or circumstances of atonement thinking and debate in the fourth century and its antecedents to harness this to read the relevant texts more insightfully. This is undoubtedly to our loss, for a greater insight into Athanasius and his times on this front would likely enable us to read some of the relevant texts with new eyes, as has occurred in other aspects of Athanasian scholarship. However, the overall effectiveness in this approach for the matters it can illuminate encourages an approach where all texts are interrogated through that reconstructed narrative, because it is either a response to the narrative (in the case of historical settings and the history of theological ideas) or an expression of it (in the case of exposition's of Athanasius' identity or overall thought). Where conditions are not optimized for this approach, the method is likely to result in speculation beyond what can be reasonably extrapolated.

The second limitation is the tendency to over implement Occam's razor. The narrative approach, by its very nature, encourages a method that looks to reduce and simplify diversity to identify a single line continuing that narrative into the text. Narratives tend towards metanarratives. Narratives generally seek to identify simple and singular explanations and are less prepared for the existence of pluralism. Hence, one reason for the relative lack of scholarship identifying the importance of image, legal, and demonic strands in Athanasius' atonement thinking is that the narrative methodology

intrinsically prioritizes a singular and somewhat monistic account of what is in texts. Discovering genuine pluralism is likely to occur when the findings of narrative approaches are harnessed, but in a less explicit and more implicit fashion, and the texts are examined, at least to some degree, on their own terms as to what they have to say about the topic in question, with concerns about how that contributes to, or reflects, an overarching narrative at least temporarily suspended. This is not to argue that the method utilized here is superior overall, simply that in the path towards unified accounts of reality, sometimes a large amount of diversity must be embraced along the way and in those preliminary steps methods that are more open to the possibility of pluralism might have some utility.

Particularly noteworthy in this respect is the topic of the atonement and the demonic. In the pluralism category, this topic stands apart. Not only does it function as yet another dimension of Athanasius' atonement thinking, but the underlying logic of how it operates is radically different from the other three topics examined here. This can be observed from the fact that questions such as necessity or contingency, internal or external relationship and the like, by which we have demonstrated the extent of the variation between the other three aspects, do not even correlate to the atonement and the demonic. As such it destabilizes any tendency to turn the other three topics into a totalizing account of Athanasius' understanding of the atonement. Athanasius' thought on this topic is too resistant to any attempt to create a bounded discourse even by way of enumerating the components of his understanding in order to construct a comprehensive picture. We have observed glimpses of this throughout the study, as each of the topics of creation, image and law had locations where it seemed to overlap with the others, and so escaped its own boundaries. These incidents pale compared to

the theme of the demonic, however. This theme transgresses all boundaries, for it has no existence except through the mediation of the other categories and so only exists through their domains and, presumably, functions according to their operating conditions as it does. As we have observed, the demonic does not add a new component to the problem in the way that creation, image, and the law present. Instead it functions on yet another different axis altogether, acting as an overlay on the other three, both in terms of the problem it presents as well as the solution. There is for Athanasius, no clearly distinct devil ransom theory, or *Christus victor* mechanism that addresses the power of the demonic directly. However, this absence is the corollary of this theme's affect on the others. Its influence transforms them from being static and impersonal accounts of the atonement into more dynamic and personal categories, for they become the vehicle for addressing the power and influence of personal supernatural agents. This has an enduring effect, for once the reader is sensitized to the interaction with the other themes, then this personal dimension remains at least implicitly in view even in the (majority) of locations where those themes are discussed without any reference to the demonic at all. The existence of this personal aspect remains in view even when it is not being highlighted by Athanasius.

This then raises a potential temptation to recast the whole of Athanasius' thinking into a monistic cast yet again, albeit one with a level of diversity within it, through the lens of the demonic. If the demonic exists in and through the other atonement topics, and can even function as the means for the connection of the other accounts, then is not the atonement in Athanasius one complex *Christus victor*, where the demonic is the ultimate organizing principle for the topic as a whole? The problem here is that,

outside of *Antony*, the topic of the demonic is not significant enough for the atonement to function in this fashion. The other three aspects are discussed in far more detail and at far more length in their own right than the occasional locations where their relationship with the demonic is expounded. Hence, the demonic serves to destabilize and not reconfigure. It is insufficiently prevalent to function as the integrating factor for the atonement, yet sufficiently present, and radically different in how it functions, to demonstrate the inability of anything else to function in this fashion either. Athanasius' atonement thinking is ultimately polyvalent and not monistic. His imagery of the unbounded waves is the best metaphor to understand his atonement thinking as a whole—there simply is no end to the things that can be articulated as to what the incarnate Word has done to save humanity.

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