

PASCHA

In the Beginning Was the Word

John 1: 1-17

From The Explanation of the Gospel of St. John
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

1. In the beginning was the Word. I will say again here what I have already said in the preface, that the other Evangelists give a lengthy account of the Lord's birth in the flesh, His childhood, and His growth to manhood, while John omits these things altogether because they have been dealt with sufficiently by his fellow disciples. Instead, he takes as his theme the Godhead Who became man for our sake. But if you consider carefully, the other Evangelists did not neglect to speak of the divinity of the Only-begotten Son. They too declared it, but not at length. Nor was John so intent on the more exalted Word that he neglected the economy of the Incarnation; for it is one and the same Spirit Which moved and inspired all the Evangelists. John, then, tells us about the Son, for the Father was already known from the Old Testament. Yet John is not silent about the Father on that account; on the contrary, he mentions the Father while speaking of the Son. He shows that the Only-begotten is eternal when he says, In the beginning was the Word, which means, "From the beginning." Because He is from the beginning, there is no time when He was not. "How do you know," one might ask, "that In the beginning means the same as "from the beginning?" We know this both from the common meaning of the words, and in particular because this same Evangelist says so in one of his Epistles: That Which was from the beginning, Which we have heard. [I Jn. 1:1] Do you see how the Beloved Apostle himself interprets these words? "Yes," one might answer, "but I understand In the beginning to mean what it meant to Moses when he said, In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth. [Gen. 1:1] In the beginning, there, does not mean that the things God made are eternal; why, then, should In the beginning, here, mean that the Only-begotten is eternal?" So speaks the heretic. But to such quibbling, we say this, "O cunning sophist, why do you say nothing about the words that follow? But we will mention them, even if you do not. In that place Moses said, In the beginning God made heaven and the earth. But here John says, In the beginning was the Word. What similarity is there between the words made and was? If it were written here, "In the beginning God made the Son," I would keep silent. But instead it is written, In the beginning was. From this I understand the Word to be eternal, and not from a later point in time, as you say in your babbling. Why did the Evangelist say, In the beginning was the Word, and not, "In the beginning was the Son?" Listen: he did so on account of the weakness of his listeners, so that we would not, in the very first words, hear of a "Son" and at once imagine a passionate and carnal birth giving. He calls Him Word, so that you may learn, O readers, that just as a word is born from the mind without passion, in the same manner the Word was begotten of the Father without passion. He also called Him Word because Christ the Word proclaimed to us the things of the Father, just as every word and speech proclaims the thoughts of the mind. He is also called the Word to show that the Word is co-eternal with the Father. Just as it is impossible to say that the mind ever existed without words, so too is it impossible that God the Father ever was without the Son. The Evangelist said the Word, using the definite article, for there are many other words of God, as for example, prophecies and commandments. It is said of His angels that they are mighty in strength,

that perform His word [Ps. 102:18], that is, His commands. But the very Word Himself is divine essence and Person. (1)

1. And the Word was with God. And the Word was God. Here he shows more clearly that the Son is co-eternal with the Father. So that you would not imagine that the Father ever was without the Son, the Evangelist states that the Word was with God [pros ton Theon], that is, together with God in the bosom of the Father. You should understand that pros here means "with," as it does elsewhere in the Scriptures: And are not His brothers and His sisters here with us? [Mk. 6:3] This means "living with us and among us." It is not possible that God is ever without word and reason, without wisdom, or without power. Therefore, since the Son is the Word [Logos], the Wisdom, and the Power of God, we believe that He always was with God, meaning, with the Father. But how is it possible to be the Son and not come after the Father? Learn from an example in the material world. The brightness of the sun is from the sun, is it not? Most certainly. Does it then come after the sun, so that the sun is understood to have once been without brightness? This is impossible. How can the sun not have brightness? How much more is this true of God the Father and God the Son? Because the Son is the brightness of the Father, as the Apostle Paul says [Heb. 1:3], we must believe that the Son always shone forth together with the Father, and did not come after Him. Consider how Sabellius the Libyan is refuted by these words. He taught that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one person, and that this one person sometimes appeared as the Father, sometimes as the Son, and sometimes as the Spirit. Sabellius babbled these things, being himself the son of the father of lies, and full of the evil spirit. He is openly rebuked by these words: and the Word was with God. The Evangelist speaks most clearly here that the Word is one thing, and God the Father is another. Because the Word was together with God, it is clear that two Persons are presented, though these two share one nature. The proof that there is one nature is this: and the Word was God. Do you see that the Word is God? Therefore the Father and the Son have one nature, because there is one divinity. Let both Arius and Sabellius be put to shame. Arius, who said that the Son is the creation and work of the Father, is shamed by this: in the beginning was the Word and the Word was God. And Sabellius, who said there was a unity, not a Trinity, of persons, is shamed by this: the Word was with God. The great John here proclaims clearly that the Word and the Father are different from each other, but not different in kind. They are different in their persons, but one and the same in their natures. I will give an example to make the thought more clear. Peter and Paul are different from each other because they are two different persons; but they are not different in kind, because they have the same human nature. This is how we must teach concerning the Father and the Son: They are different from one another in their two persons; but They are not different in kind, because They share the same divine nature.

2. The same was in the beginning with God. God the Word never was separated from God the Father. Since he had said that the Word was God, he wanted to quell any devilish suspicion that might disturb us, that perhaps, because the Word was God, He may have risen up against the Father, and separated Himself from Him, and become the enemy of the Father, as the gods behave in Greek mythology. This is why John says that, while the Word indeed is God [and equal in power to the Father], yet He is always together with the Father, and never separated from Him. We should also address the Arians. Listen, you deaf men who say that the Son is the work and creation of God the Father: understand what name the Evangelist has given to the Son of God. He called Him Word. But you name Him work and creation. He is Word, not work or

creation. "Word" is twofold. There is the inner word [diathetos logos] which we possess even when we are not speaking, namely, the faculty of speech. When a man is not talking, and even when he sleeps, the power of word and speech is still within him. There is also the outward word [prophorikos logos], when we articulate with our lips the inner power of speech, bringing it forth into activity and deed. Therefore, "word" is twofold, yet neither aspect fittingly describes the Son of God. For the Word of God is neither the spoken word nor the inner power of speech. These things pertain to the physical world and to us. The Word of the Father is above nature and is not subject to any analysis of the things of this world. Therefore the sophistry of Porphyrius the Greek was rendered useless and vain when he tried to refute the Gospel by using such distinctions. If the Son of God is Word, he said, He is so either as spoken word or as the inner power of speech. But since He is neither one nor the other, He cannot be Word at all. But the Evangelist foresaw this argument and disarmed it by saying that the distinction between inner and outer speech is used in reference to us and the physical world. But to that which is beyond nature, there is no such thing. It should also be said that if the name Word was truly worthy of God, and if He were called this in a literal and essential sense, then the doubt of the Greek would be justified. But this is not the case. Not only does this name, Word, not apply literally and essentially to God, but no other name can be found that would do so. It merely indicates the passionless begetting of the Son from the Father, as a word springs forth from the mind, and it shows that the Son is an Angel of the Father's will. Therefore, why do you lay hold of the name with your sophistry, wretched Porphyrius? And how is it that when you hear Father, Son, and Spirit, you descend to material things, and imagine in your mind carnal fathers and sons, and an aerial spirit, such as the North Wind or the South Wind, or something else which whips up storms? But if you wish to learn what kind of Word is the Word of God, listen to what follows.

3. All things were made by Him. And without Him was not anything made which was made. Do not think, the Evangelist is saying, that the Word is like a spoken word which is uttered and then dies away in the air. The Word is the Maker of everything, both that which is perceived by the mind and that perceived by the senses. Again the Arians leap to the attack, saying, "We may also say that a door was made by a saw, that is, by a tool, yet the craftsman who moves the tool differs greatly from the tool itself. Therefore, where it is written that all things were made by the Son, it does not mean that the Son is the Maker, but that he is an instrument, just like the saw. God the Father is the Maker Who uses the Son as His tool. Therefore the Son is something which was created for the very purpose of making all other things, just as a saw is made as the tool by which crafted items are produced." This is how the wicked band of Arians speaks. How do we answer? Simply and directly, that if, as they claim, the Father created the Son to be the instrument whereby He fashioned the world, then the Son would be held in less honor than the created world. The things made by a saw are more precious than the saw itself, which is only a tool. The saw was made for the sake of the things which it will produce; the crafted objects were not made for the sake of the saw. In the same vein, creation would be honored more highly than the Only-begotten Son, since the Father made the Son, they say, for the sake of creation, and if He had not intended to make the universe, neither would He have formed the Only-begotten Son. What could be more foolish than these words? "But," protests the Arian, "why did the Evangelist not say directly, 'The Word Himself made all things but instead that the Father made all things by [dia] the Son?' Why? So that you would not think that the Word, because He was uncreated and without beginning, was also an enemy and rival of God. Imagine a king intending to build a new city, who entrusts the work to his son.

If one said, The city was founded by the son of the king, this would not mean that the son of the king is a servant. It would show, instead, that the son has a father and that he is not acting alone. So it is here, that when the Evangelist says that all things were made by the Son, he shows that the Father used Him, as it were, as an intermediary in the creating, not as someone inferior to Himself, but, on the contrary, as One of equal power, able to carry out such a great command. I will add this: if you are still troubled by the preposition by, and want to find in Scripture some expression that says that the Word Himself made all things, listen to the words of David. In the beginning, O Lord, Thou didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Thy hands. [Ps. 101:25] You see that he did not say, "By Thee were the heavens made and the foundation of the earth was laid," but, Thou didst lay the foundation, and "these things are the work of Thy hands." That David said this concerning the Only-begotten Son and not the Father, you may learn from the Apostle Paul himself, who used these lines in his Letter to the Hebrews. [Heb. 1:8-10] It is also clear in the very same Psalm. For when it says that the Lord hath looked upon the earth, to hear the groaning of them that be in fetters, to loose the sons of the slain, to declare in Sion the name of the Lord [Ps. 101:20-21], to whom else can it refer except the Son of God? For it is He who looked upon the earth, meaning either this earth on which we move, or our nature which became earthly, or our flesh of which it was said, Earth thou art. [Gen. 3:20] This earthly flesh He took upon Himself and loosed us who were bound by the bonds of our own sins, and freed us, the sons of the slain, Adam and Eve, and declared in Sion the name of the Lord. For He stood in the temple and taught concerning His Father, as He Himself says, I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me. [Jn. 17:6] To Whom do these things apply, to the Father or to the Son? Certainly, they apply to the Son. For the Son declared the name of the Father as He taught. After saying these things, the blessed David then adds the words, In the beginning, O Lord, Thou didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Thy hands. Does not David clearly present the Son as the Maker, and not as an instrument? But if the preposition dia still seems to you to indicate something lesser and inferior, what will you say when Paul uses this same preposition to refer to the Father? For he writes, God is faithful, by [dia] Whom ye were called into the communion of His Son. [I Cor. 1:9] Surely Paul here does not suggest that the Father is an instrument. And again, Paul, an apostle by [dia] the will of God. [I Cor. 1:1] But enough said: let us return to where we began. All things were made by Him. Moses described the visible creation and revealed nothing to us concerning the creation of the noetic world. But the Evangelist with one word includes all. All things were made by Him, both the visible and the noetic. And without Him was not anything made that was made. The Evangelist first says that all things were made by the Son. Then, to dispel any idea that the Son also created the Holy Spirit, he carefully defines the words, all things. Everything which is by its nature created was made by the Word. But the Spirit is not part of created nature, and therefore It was not made by the Son. Without the power of the Word was not anything made that was of a created nature.

4. In Him was Life; and the Life was the Light of men. The Pneumatomachoi (2) read this verse and the previous as follows: "And without Him was not anything made." Here they punctuate, and read the next words as the beginning of a new sentence: "[That] which was made was life in Him." They interpret the passage according to their own understanding, claiming that here the Evangelist is describing the Holy Spirit and saying that the Holy Spirit was life. The followers of Macedonius give this interpretation in their eagerness to show that the Holy Spirit is a created thing and to categorize Him among the things that have been made. We do not give the

text such an interpretation, but place a period after the words, which were made, and read the words, In Him was life, as the beginning of a new sentence. Because he had spoken of the creating of things, that all things were made by Him, now he speaks of the providence and care which the Word has for His creation. He says that the Word did not simply create the world and then withdraw from it, but that it is He Himself Who sustains the life of all that has been created. For he says, In Him was life. I know that one of the saints has read this passage as follows, And without Him was not anything made that was made in Him. Here he punctuates and begins again, "He was life." I consider that this reading is not in error, and that it contains the same Orthodox understanding. This saint thought in Orthodox manner that without the Word there was not anything made that was made in Him. For I say that everything that was made and created in Him, the Word, was not made without Him. Then in the new sentence, He was Life, and the Life was the Light of men. (3) The Evangelist names the Lord Life, because it is He Who sustains the life of every living thing, and Who gives spiritual life to all reason endowed creatures. He is Light, not light perceivable by the senses, but noetic light which enlightens the soul itself. He does not say that the Lord is the light of the Jews only, but of all men. For we can say that all men have been enlightened by Him, inasmuch as we all have received mind and reason [logos] from the Word [Logos] Who created us. For the reason bestowed upon us, by which we are called rational [logikoi] creatures, is a light to guide us into what we ought, and ought not, to do.

5. And the Light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. The Light, namely, the Word of God, shineth in the darkness, which means, It shines in death and in deception. Even when He Himself was dead, He so completely vanquished death that He compelled death to vomit forth those whom it had swallowed before Him. And the preaching of the Word also shines amidst the deception of the pagan Greeks. And the darkness comprehended it not. Neither death nor deception overcame it, for this Light, God the Word, is unconquerable. Some have thought that darkness means "flesh" and "life." For the Word shone forth while in the flesh and in this life. And the darkness, that is, the opposing power of the evil one, tempted and persecuted the Light, but found It to be unassailable and invincible. Darkness means "flesh," not according to the nature of flesh far from it! but because of sin. Flesh contains absolutely nothing evil when it is directed in accordance with its nature. But when directed against its nature and made to serve sin, it is called, and indeed becomes darkness.

6. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. After the Evangelist has declared to us the existence of God the Word from before the ages, and because he is about to speak of the Word becoming flesh, he inserts here an account of the Forerunner. Since John is the Forerunner of the Lord, is it not fitting that an account of the Forerunner's nativity should precede that of the Lord's nativity in the flesh? The Evangelist says of the Forerunner that there was a man sent from God. False prophets are not from God. When you hear that he was sent from God, do not think that the Evangelist is speaking of anything individual or human. Here all is divine. This is why John is also called an "angel," for the virtue of an angel is that he speaks nothing of himself. But when you hear him called an "angel," do not think that he was an angel by nature, or that he came down from heaven. Rather, he is called an angel because of his work and ministry: to be a servant of the preaching and to announce the Lord. Therefore the Evangelist himself refutes the opinion of many who suspected that John was an angel by nature, when he says, There was a man sent from God.

7. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. This man was sent by God in order to bear witness of the Light. Lest anyone imagine that the Only-begotten was in need of this witness because He Himself lacked in something, the Evangelist immediately follows his statement, that John came to bear witness to the Son of God, with the reason, namely, that all men through him might believe. Did all men in fact believe through him? No. In what sense, then, did the Evangelist say, that all men ...might believe? As much as it was his part to do, John gave witness in order to draw all men to the Light; if some did not believe, he is not to blame. The sun rises each day for the purpose of giving light to all. If a man shuts himself up in a gloomy dwelling and does not enjoy the sun's rays, is the sun at fault? So it is here. John was sent so that all might believe. It is not his fault that it turned out otherwise.

8. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. It often occurs that the man who gives testimony is greater than the one of whom he testifies. Therefore, to prevent the evil thought that John, in bearing witness to Christ, was greater than Christ, the Evangelist says, He was not that Light. But could we not call John, or any one of the saints, a light? Yes, we may call every saint a light. But we cannot call them the Light, with the definite article. If someone says to you, "Surely John is a light?" agree with him. But if he says, "Surely John is the Light," say no. For he is not the very Light Itself, but a light by participation, which derives its brightness from the true Light.

9. He was the true Light, Which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world. The Evangelist is about to speak of the divine economy of the Incarnation of the Only-begotten, Who came unto His own and became flesh. So that no one would think that the Word did not exist before He took flesh, the Evangelist leads our mind upwards to that existence which is beyond every beginning, and says, "He was, even before He took flesh, the true Light." By this means he refutes the heresy of Photinus and Paul of Samosata, who taught that the Word began to exist when He was born of Mary, and before this, was not. And you also, O Arian, who say that the Son of God is not true God, listen to what the Evangelist calls Him: the true Light. And you, O Manichee, who say that we are the creations of an evil demiurge, listen: the true Light enlighteneth every man. If the evil demiurge is darkness, how could he enlighten anyone? Therefore, we are the creations of the true Light. How, you might ask, can He enlighten every man, when we see some who are in darkness? As far as it is His part to do, He enlightens all. Tell me, are we not all endowed with reason? Do we not all by nature know right from wrong? Do we not all have the power to comprehend the Creator from His creation? Therefore, the logos which has been given to us, which teaches us by nature and which is also called the natural law, may be called "light" which is given to us by God. If some make poor use of this logos, they darken themselves. But some have answered the question in this manner: the Lord enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world. That is to say, He enlightens those who have come to a better condition, and who strive to put in order and adorn their own soul and not to leave it disordered and ugly. (4)

10. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He was in the world, being God, Who is everywhere present. It may also be said that He is in the world, because of His providence, care, and sustenance of the world. "But I should not stop at saying that He was in the world," declares the Evangelist, "when the world would not even exist

if He Himself had not made it." At every point the Evangelist shows the Word to be the Creator. Thus he dispels the ravings of the Manichee, who claims that an evil demiurge produced the universe; he refutes the Arian, who says that the Son of God is Himself a created thing; and at the same time he leads all men to confess the Maker, and to worship the Creator, not created things. The Evangelist says, And the world knew Him not, meaning, the spiritually coarse people who are attached to the things of this world. World means, first of all, the whole universe, as in the line above, the world was made by Him. It also means those who think in a worldly manner, as it does here when he says, And the world knew Him not, that is to say, earthly men knew Him not, for all the saints and the prophets perceived who He was.

11. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. Here the Evangelist clearly begins his account of the divine economy of the Incarnation. The whole thread of what he says is this: the true Light was already in the world without flesh, and was not recognized. Then He came in the flesh unto His own. By His own you may understand either the whole world, or the Jews, whom He had chosen as the line of His inheritance, His portion, and His own possession. And His own received Him not, neither the Jews, nor the rest of mankind, who had been created by Him. Here the Evangelist bewails man's madness, and marvels at the Master's love for mankind. Although they are His very own, not all received Him. For the Lord draws no one to Himself by force, but by a man's own will and choice.

12. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God, even to them that believe in His name. Whether slaves or free, children or elders, barbarians or Greeks, as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God. Who were they who received Him? Those who believed in His name. Those who received the Word and the true Light received and accepted Him through faith. Why did the Evangelist not say that He made them sons of God, but instead that He gave them power to become sons of God? Listen, and I will tell you. To guard the purity of the soul and body, it is not enough to be baptized. We must also exercise much zeal and effort to preserve unspotted the image of adoption imprinted on us in Baptism. Therefore, many who have received the grace of adoption through Baptism were lazy and in the end did not become sons of God. One might add this as well, that many receive Him through faith alone, such as those whom we call the catechumens, but have not yet become sons of God. Yet they indeed have the power to become sons of God if they choose to be baptized and to be counted worthy of this grace, that is, adoption as sons. Furthermore, even if we receive the grace of adoption through Baptism, we will receive the completion and perfection of this grace only in the resurrection, and we hope to receive at that time the fullness of adoption. As Paul says, Even we are waiting for the adoption. [Rm. 8:23] For all these reasons, then, the Evangelist did not say, "As many as received Him, He made them sons of God," but instead, to them gave He power to become sons of God, that is, to receive this grace in the age to come.

13. Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. He draws a comparison, as it were, between divine and human births, but he does so not to give us an unseemly reminder of the pangs of labor and delivery, but in order that we might recognize the ignoble and humble nature of fleshly childbirth and run towards divine grace. He says, Who were born, not of blood, that is, the blood in the womb of a woman, which nourishes and gives growth to the embryo. It is also said that the seed of the man first becomes blood, and then is formed into the flesh and the rest of the body of an infant. It was likely that some would

say that believers in Christ are not born in a manner any different than that of Isaac. He, too, was not born of blood, for the blood in Sarah's womb had ceased to flow. Because some might think this, the Evangelist adds, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man. Even if Isaac's birth was not of blood, it was of the will of man; undoubtedly the man desired that a child be born to him from Sarah. Nor are believers in Christ born of the will of the flesh, as Samuel was born from Anna. We might say, then, that Isaac was born of the will of man and Samuel was born of the will of the flesh, that is, of the will of a woman, Anna. For this barren woman had longed for a child. And perhaps both sons were born of both these desires. If you wish to learn something more, listen: intercourse of the flesh sometimes occurs as a result of a natural ardor. It often happens that one has a more fervent disposition and is more easily moved to intercourse (this is what the Evangelist calls the will of the flesh). Intercourse of the flesh also occurs as a result of evil inclinations and dissolute appetites, when the urge for intercourse is uncontrollable. This the Evangelist calls the will of a man, when intercourse does not result from physical nature, but from the depravity of a man. Because sometimes the woman is inclined to intercourse, and sometimes the man, perhaps by the will of a man he indicates the burning desire of the man, and by the will of the flesh he indicates the desire of the woman. All this has been said for the sake of those who ask foolish questions. To speak of what is essential, one idea is clear: the lowly nature of childbirth in the flesh. Now, the Israelites too were called "sons of God." What more have we who believe in Christ than the Israelites who believed in the law? More beyond compare. The law, in every point, contained only the foreshadowing of things to come, and therefore did not grant the Israelites adoption as sons as their actual possession, but only in type and figure. But we who in truth have received the Spirit of God through Baptism cry out, Abba, Father. [Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6] Just as to them baptism was only a type and foreshadowing, so also their adoption as sons was a prefiguring of ours. They were called sons, but only as a foreshadowing of the true adoption as sons which we now have through Baptism.

14. And the Word was made flesh. Having said that we may become sons of God, if we so desire, by believing in Christ, here he adds the cause of such a great gift. The Evangelist is saying, "Do wish to learn what enabled us to be adopted as sons of God? It is this that the Word was made flesh." When you hear He was made flesh, do not think that He abandoned His divine nature and was changed into flesh. He would not be God if He had been changed and altered. Instead, remaining what He was, He became what He was not. Here is where Apollinarius of Laodicea formed his heresy. He taught that our Lord and God did not assume the whole nature of a man, that is, a body and a rational soul, but took on flesh only, and not the rational and spiritual soul of a man. Christ God had no need of a human soul, he said, since His divine nature governed His human body, in the same manner as we have a soul which governs and moves our body. To support his argument, so he imagined, Appolinarius used these very words, And the Word was made flesh. He said, "The text does not say that He became man, but flesh. Therefore, Christ did not assume a human soul with mind and reason, but only flesh, without a human mind or reason." But was that pitiable man ignorant that Scripture often mentions the part for the whole? For example, when it refers to the whole man it often names him by one part only, the soul: "Let every soul which is not circumcised be put to death." [See Gen. 17:14.] Instead of saying, "Let every man," it mentions the part, namely, the soul. In another example, Scripture names the whole from the part, in this case, the flesh, when it says, And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. [Is. 40:5] Here "all flesh" means "every man." In exactly the same manner here, instead of saying, "The Word became man," the Evangelist says, The Word was made

flesh, naming the man, composed of both body and soul, by one part only. Because flesh is alien to the divine nature, perhaps the Evangelist used the word flesh to show the boundless condescension of God, Who astounds us by His ineffable love for man, in that, for our salvation, He took upon Himself something that was completely alien and foreign to His divine nature, namely, our flesh. Our soul has some kinship with God, but flesh shares nothing whatsoever with the divine. Therefore I think that the Evangelist here uses only the word flesh, not because the soul had no part in what was assumed, but as a stronger indication of the marvelous and fearful mystery of the Incarnation. If the Word had not assumed a human soul when He took flesh, our souls would still remain unhealed. For what He did not assume, He did not sanctify. The soul was the first to fall, for it was the soul which first succumbed to the words of the serpent and was deceived in Paradise, and then the hand, following after its lady and mistress, reached out to touch. How laughable it is, then, to suppose that the handmaid, the flesh, should be assumed, sanctified, and healed, while the mistress, the soul, should be left unassumed and unhealed. Away with Appolinarius! When we hear that the Word was made flesh, we believe that He became perfect man, for Scripture habitually uses either "body" or "soul" to refer to the whole man. Nestorius is also refuted by these words. He claimed that God the Word Himself did not become that Man which was conceived from the most holy blood of the Virgin, but instead, that the Virgin gave birth to a man. To this man, filled with grace and with all virtue, was joined the Word of God, giving him power over unclean spirits. Thus Nestorius taught that there were two sons: one, the man Jesus, born of the Virgin, and the other, the Son of God, joined to the man and inseparable from him, but "inseparable" only by grace, by closeness, and by love, because he was a virtuous man. Teaching these things, Nestorius chose to be deaf to the truth. For if he had so desired, he would have heard this blessed Evangelist say, The Word was made flesh. Is Nestorius not clearly refuted here? The Word Himself became man. The Evangelist did not say that the Word found a man and was joined to him, but He Himself became a man. Eutyches, Valentinus, and Manes are also here rebutted. They taught that the Word of God appeared in semblance only. Let them hear also that the Word was made flesh. The Evangelist did not say that the Word appeared to be flesh, or was imagined to be flesh, but that He became flesh in truth and in essence, not by phantasy. It is foolish and absurd to believe that the Son of God, Who is Truth and is called Truth, would have made a lie of His Incarnation. For what is phantasy, if not a false appearance?

And dwelt in us. He had said above that the Word became flesh. Now, lest anyone imagine that Christ became one nature, he adds the words, and dwelt in us, to show us two natures: our own and that of the Word. A tent has a certain nature; he who dwells in a tent has another. (5) In the same way, the Word dwells in us, that is to say, in our nature, though His nature is different than ours. Let the Armenians [i.e. Monophysites] be put to shame who claim that Christ has one nature. From the words, The Word became flesh, we learn that the Word Himself became man, and, while being the Son of God, also became the Son of a woman who is called the Theotokos, God's Birthgiver, precisely because she gave birth to God in the flesh. From the words, He dwelt in us, we learn to believe the two natures in one Christ. Though He is one in hypostasis, that is to say, in person, He is two in nature, both God and man. The divine and human natures could not have become one unless they had appeared in One, that is, in Christ.

And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Because he had said, The Word became flesh, here he adds, and we beheld His glory, that

is to say, "While He was in the flesh, we beheld His glory." The Israelites had been unable to look upon the face of Moses when it shone with glory after he spoke with God. [See Ex. 34:29-35.] Could the Apostles possibly have been able to endure the full divinity of the Only-begotten, had it not been revealed to them through the veil of the flesh? We beheld His glory, but not such glory as Moses' face reflected, nor as the glory in which the cherubim and seraphim appeared to the prophet [Ezek. 10:4], but such glory as befits the Only-begotten Son of the Father, and belonging to Him by nature. Here, the word as does not express similarity [i.e. glory similar to that of the Only-begotten], but, instead, certain and unambiguous identity. When we see a king approaching in great glory, we say, "He approached as king," meaning, "He approached being in truth the king." So too, here, we should understand as of the Only-begotten to mean, "The glory which we beheld was the glory of Him Who is in truth the Son of God." Full of grace and truth. He was full of grace, inasmuch as even His speech was gracious, as David says, Grace hath been poured forth on Thy lips. [Ps. 44:2] And the Evangelist Luke records, They all marvelled at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth. [Lk. 4:22] Furthermore, He graciously bestowed healings on all those in need of them. He was also full of truth. All that was spoken or done by the prophets, even by Moses himself, was only a foreshadowing of the truth. But all that Christ said and did is full of truth, for Christ Himself is Grace and Truth, and He bestowed these things on others. Where did they behold His glory? Perhaps some will think that the disciples did so on Mount Tabor when He was transfigured. This is true, but not on the mountain only, but in everything that the Lord spoke and did, they beheld His glory.

15. John bare witness of Him, and cried, saying, This was He of Whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for He was before me. The Evangelist often cites the testimony of John, not because the words of a servant would give credibility to the Master, but because the people held John in such high regard that they would trust his testimony more than that of any other. By saying that John cried, he shows that John did not witness timidly in a corner, but shouted out with great boldness concerning Christ. What did he say? This was He of Whom I spake. John gave witness to Christ even before he saw Him. This was certainly by the will of God, so that John's good testimony of Christ would not appear biased and partial to Christ. This is why John said, He of Whom I spake, that is, even before he had seen Christ, He that cometh after me, meaning, who was born after I was, for the Forerunner preceded Christ in birth by six months, is preferred before me, that is, has become more highly honored and more glorious than I. Why? Because He was before me in His divinity. The Arians have interpreted these words in a foolish manner. They want to show that the Son of God was not begotten of Father, but was made as one of His creatures. Therefore they say, "Look! John bears witness to Christ, saying, 'He came into being before me, meaning that He was born before me and was created by God as one of His works.'" (6) Their wrong interpretation is refuted by the words which follow. For what meaning is revealed by saying, "He, Christ, came into being before me," meaning, He was created before me, "because He was before me"? It is utterly foolish to say, "God created Him first because He was before me." It ought to say just the opposite, "He is before me because He came into being, was created, before me." So much for the Arians. But we, in Orthodox manner, understand that He that cometh after me in His birth in the flesh from the Virgin is preferred before me, meaning, has become more highly honored and more glorious than I because of the miracles that took place, because of His Birth, His upbringing, and His wisdom. And rightly so, for He was before me according to His begetting from the Father from before the ages, even though He came after me according to His advent in the flesh.

16. And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. These are the words of the Forerunner continuing to speak of Christ, "All we prophets have received of His fullness." For there is no greater grace than that which filled these Spirit-bearing men. As the source of every good thing, of all wisdom and prophecy, [God the Word] pours out these things on all who are worthy, while He Himself remains full and is never emptied. We have received grace, that is, the grace of the New Testament, for grace, that of the old lawgiving. (7) Because the Old Testament has grown old and weak, in place of it we have received the New. How, one might ask, could he name the Old Testament "grace"? Because the Jews also by grace were adopted and accepted as sons. For it is said, "Not because you are numerous, but for the sake of your fathers have I chosen you." [Dt. 7:7-8] The ancients, then, by grace were accepted, and we, most assuredly, by grace have been saved.

17. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The Evangelist explains to us how we have received the greatest grace in place of a small grace, saying that the law was given by Moses, God using a human mediator. But the New Testament came by Jesus Christ, which he calls both grace and truth: grace, because God graciously bestowed on us not only forgiveness of sins but adoption as sons; truth, because everything which the men of old saw and spoke only in type, the New Testament proclaimed in radiant clarity. Therefore, the New Testament, which is called grace and truth, had no mere man as mediator, but the Son of God. See how he said of the Old Testament that it was given by Moses, for Moses was a minister and servant. But of the New Testament he said, not that it "was given," but that it came, showing that by our Lord Jesus Christ as Master, not servant, it came into being, revealing grace and truth. The law was given through the mediation of Moses, but grace came, and was not given, through Jesus Christ. The word came [egeneto] is a mark of the master's authority; was given [edoth] is a mark of a servant. (8)

1. allâ o kyris Logos ousia tis estin enypostatos.

2. Literally, adversaries of the Spirit, also called Macedonians after their leader, Macedonius, who taught in an Arian manner that the Holy Spirit was a ministering creature, not of one essence with the Father and the Son. This heresy was condemned at the Second Ecumenical Council held in Constantinople in 381 A.D.

3. Notice that Bl. Theophylact has here given three different readings for the same unpunctuated words in the original Greek text. The first and third readings are Orthodox; the second is heretical. Concerning the absence in ancient texts of modern punctuation and verse numbering, and its significance for the proper, that is, Orthodox, interpretation of Scripture, see footnote 11 on p.175 of Vol. 3, The Explanation of St. Luke.

4. The Greek word kosmos, world, has the literal meaning of "good order" and "adornment."

5. The Greek verb esknse, translated in the text of the Gospel as dwelt, comes from the noun skn, meaning tent, or tabernacle. This verb has a special meaning in Scripture, indicating the presence and dwelling place of God Himself, first of all in the moveable temple constructed by God's

command by the Israelites during the forty years in the wilderness. By the revelation of the New Covenant the prototype of this earthly tabernacle is shown to be heaven itself, the true tabernacle. (Heb. 8:2) When the Word became flesh and God made His dwelling in our human nature, truly heaven was opened to us, and the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Mt. 4:17) and within you. (Lk. 17:21)

6. Outos emprosthen mou gegonen. He is preferred before me. The verb gegone, present perfect of ginomai, can mean "came into being, became (in regards to quality or rank), was born, is." The Church interprets this to mean, "He is before me in rank." The Arians interpret the same words to mean, "He came into being," that is, was created, "before me."

7. charin anti charitos, grace for grace. anti means "instead of, in place of," indicating exchange or succession. This phrase might better be translated, "grace instead of grace."

8. charis kai altheia dia Isou Christou egeneto, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Compare this to verse 10 above, o kosmos dia autou egeneto, the world was made by Him.