

## FOREWORD

by John C. Cavadini

G.W. Butterworth's translation of Origen's *On First Principles*, originally published in 1936 and twice reprinted (1966, 1973), is the only complete English translation based on the critical edition of the text (Koetschau, 1913). Though the standard English translation, classic in its own right, Butterworth's has been unavailable for many years. For reasons unrelated to its quality, teachers and individual readers found it increasingly hard to use.

Butterworth translated the only complete attestation of the text remaining from antiquity, Rufinus's Latin translation. But, following Koetschau's edition, Butterworth supplemented it with translations of Greek fragments taken from various sources. Where there was a Greek fragment, he divided the page between "Latin" and "Greek" columns, or even alternated "Latin" and "Greek" sections, making for a presentation that was difficult for any but the most advanced readers to follow.

Further, Koetschau's presentation was predicated on a hermeneutic of thoroughgoing suspicion regarding Rufinus's translation, alleging a systematic purge of opinions of Origen that by the late fourth century were not considered orthodox. Butterworth fully adopted, and even extended, Koetschau's hermeneutic of suspicion, as anyone who reads his Introduction will easily discover. The average reader could miss the fact that the "Greek" columns and supplements were not taken from a continuous ancient source, but were, in effect, a running

polemic against the translation of Rufinus, using texts from sources as hostile as the anathemata of Justinian as though they were unbiased, objective witnesses to the original Greek.

In the seventy-five years since initial publication, scholarly consensus regarding the reliability of Rufinus's translation has considerably shifted. Instructors who wanted to use Butterworth's *On First Principles* found the bias governing the original presentation of the text increasingly glaring. This, coupled with the desire for an easier-to-read, more free-flowing text, gave rise to other expedients, such as the use of partial translations, or the substitution of other texts by Origen, omitting *On First Principles* altogether. Many individual readers gave up too.

This new presentation retains Butterworth's division of the page into "Greek" and "Latin" columns only where there is a substantial, continuous attestation of the text preserved in the *Philocalia*, the anthology of Origen's texts assembled by Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus. Otherwise the text of Rufinus stands alone. All other instances where Butterworth included the translation of a Greek fragment are omitted from the text, but the place of omission is noted in the text, and a reference to the discussions of each fragment in Crouzel and Simonetti's *Sources Chrétiennes* version is provided.

We hope this reader-friendly and inexpensive edition inspires its renewed presence in classrooms. We also hope it will find its way more easily into the hands of individual readers, who can now read one free-flowing text rather than negotiating a thicket of columns, lines, and asterisks and daggers.

The rewards for those who read, not in the first instance to wade into controversy, but to allow this work to settle into their soul on its own terms, are great. The encounter with this text leaves the soul with a memory of greatness—of architectonic ambition tempered everywhere by declarations of

tentative results; of the boldest possible speculation undertaken in a spirit of loving self-effacement that chose, like Moses, *rather to suffer affliction with the people of God* than to enjoy the pleasures of worldly prestige (1.P.1); of the most specialized inquiry on behalf of the educated in which, nevertheless, the needs of the “simplest” among believers preserve the work from the impersonal coldness of elitism and fill it with warmth. Thus does this work display its configuration to the mystery of the Incarnation that forms its heart.

In Book II, Origen offers perhaps the most sublime evocation of the Incarnation in patristic literature, the mystery in the face of which, “the human understanding with its narrow limits is baffled, and struck with amazement at so mighty a wonder knows not which way to turn.” Therefore, “we must pursue our contemplation with all fear and reverence” (II.vi.2). This “fear and reverence,” diffused from contemplation of the Incarnation into every nook and cranny of the text, also passes into the soul of the reader, and, almost imperceptibly, elevates it. Such is the benefit of reading the most breathtaking work bequeathed to us by Christian antiquity.

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# BOOK I

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## PREFACE

1. All who believe and are convinced that grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 1:17), and who know Christ to be the truth (in accordance with his own saying, “I am the truth” [Jn 14:6]), derive the knowledge which calls men to lead a good and blessed life from no other source but the very words and teaching of Christ. By the words of Christ we do not mean only those which formed his teaching when he was made man and dwelt in the flesh, since even before that Christ the Word of God was in Moses and the prophets. For without the Word of God how could they have prophesied about Christ? In proof of which we should not find it difficult to show from the divine scriptures how that Moses or the prophets were filled with the spirit of Christ in all their words and deeds, were we not anxious to confine the present work within the briefest possible limits. I count it sufficient, therefore, to quote this one testimony of Paul, taken from the epistle which he writes to the Hebrews, where he speaks as follows: “By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, accounting the reproach of Christ greater

riches than the treasures of Egypt” (Heb 11:24ff.). And as for the fact that Christ spoke in his apostles after his ascension into heaven, this is shown by Paul in the following passage: “Or do ye seek a proof of him that speaketh in me, that is, Christ?” (2 Cor 13:3).

2. Many of those, however, who profess to believe in Christ, hold conflicting opinions not only on small and trivial questions but also on some that are great and important; on the nature, for instance, of God or of the Lord Jesus Christ or of the Holy Spirit, and in addition on the natures of those created beings, the dominions and the holy powers. In view of this it seems necessary first to lay down a definite line and unmistakable rule in regard to each of these, and to postpone the inquiry into other matters until afterwards. For just as there are many among Greeks and barbarians alike who promise us the truth, and yet we gave up seeking for it from all who claimed it for false opinions after we had come to believe that Christ was the Son of God and had become convinced that we must learn the truth from him; in the same way when we find many who think they hold the doctrine of Christ, some of them differing in their beliefs from the Christians of earlier times, and yet the teaching of the church, handed down in unbroken succession from the apostles, is still preserved and continues to exist in the churches up to the present day, we maintain that that only is to be believed as the truth which in no way conflicts with the tradition of the church and the apostles.

3. But the following fact should be understood. The holy apostles, when preaching the faith of Christ, took certain doctrines, those namely which they believed to be necessary ones, and delivered them in the plainest terms to all believers, even to such as appeared to be somewhat dull in the investigation of divine knowledge. The grounds of their statements they

left to be investigated by such as should merit the higher gifts of the Spirit and in particular by such as should afterwards receive through the Holy Spirit himself the graces of language, wisdom and knowledge. There were other doctrines, however, about which the apostles simply said that things were so, keeping silence as to the how or why; their intention undoubtedly being to supply the more diligent of those who came after them, such as should prove to be lovers of wisdom, with an exercise on which to display the fruit of their ability. The men I refer to are those who train themselves to become worthy and capable of receiving wisdom.

4. The kind of doctrines which are believed in plain terms through the apostolic teaching are the following:

First, that God is one, who created and set in order all things, and who, when nothing existed, caused the universe to be.<sup>1</sup> He is God from the first creation and foundation of the world, the God of all righteous men, of Adam, Abel, Seth, Enos, Enoch, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, of the twelve patriarchs, of Moses and the prophets. This God, in these last days (cf. Heb 1:1), according to the previous announcements made through his prophets, sent the Lord Jesus Christ, first for the purpose of calling Israel, and secondly, after the unbelief of the people of Israel, of calling the Gentiles also. This just and good God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, himself gave the law, the prophets and the gospels, and he is God both of the apostles and also of the Old and New Testaments.

Then again: Christ Jesus, he who came to earth, was begotten of the Father before every created thing.<sup>2</sup> And after he had ministered to the Father in the foundation of all things, for “all things were made through him” (Jn 1:3) in these last times he emptied himself and was made man, was made flesh, although he was God (cf. Heb 1:1; Phil 2:7; Jn 1:14); and being made

man, he still remained what he was, namely, God. He took to himself a body like our body, differing in this alone, that it was born of a virgin and of the Holy Spirit. And this Jesus Christ was born and suffered in truth and not merely in appearance, and truly died our common death. Moreover he truly rose from the dead, and after the resurrection accompanied with his disciples and was then taken up into heaven.

Then again, the apostles delivered this doctrine, that the Holy Spirit is united in honor and dignity with the Father and the Son. In regard to him it is not yet clearly known whether he is to be thought of as begotten or unbegotten,<sup>3</sup> or as being himself also a Son of God or not; but these are matters which we must investigate to the best of our power from holy scripture, inquiring with wisdom and diligence. It is, however, certainly taught with the utmost clearness in the Church, that this Spirit inspired each one of the saints, both the prophets and the apostles, and that there was not one Spirit in the men of old and another in those who were inspired at the coming of Christ.

5. Next after this the apostles taught that the soul, having a substance and life of its own, will be rewarded according to its deserts after its departure from this world; for it will either obtain an inheritance of eternal life and blessedness, if its deeds shall warrant this, or it must be given over to eternal fire and torments, if the guilt of its crimes shall so determine. Further, there will be a time for the resurrection of the dead, when this body, which is now “sown in corruption,” shall “rise in incorruption,” and that which is “sown in dishonor” shall “rise in glory” (1 Cor 15:42f.).

This also is laid down in the Church’s teaching, that every rational soul is possessed of free will and choice; and also, that it is engaged in a struggle against the devil and his angels and the opposing powers; for these strive to weigh the soul

down with sins, whereas we, if we lead a wise and upright life, endeavor to free ourselves from such a burden. There follows from this the conviction that we are not subject to necessity, so as to be compelled by every means, even against our will, to do either good or evil. For if we are possessed of free will, some spiritual powers may very likely be able to urge us on to sin and others to assist us to salvation; we are not, however, compelled by necessity to act either rightly or wrongly, as is thought to be the case by those who say that human events are due to the course and motion of the stars, not only those events which fall outside the sphere of our freedom of will but even those that lie within our own power.

In regard to the soul, whether it takes its rise from the transference of the seed, in such a way that the principle or substance of the soul may be regarded as inherent in the seminal particles of the body itself; or whether it has some other beginning, and whether this beginning is begotten or unbegotten, or at any rate whether it is imparted to the body from without or no; all this is not very clearly defined in the teaching.

6. Further, in regard to the devil and his angels and the opposing spiritual powers, the Church teaching lays it down that these beings exist, but what they are or how they exist it has not explained very clearly. Among most Christians, however, the following opinion is held, that this devil was formerly an angel, but became an apostate and persuaded as many angels as he could to fall away with him; and these are even now called his angels.

7. The Church teaching also includes the doctrine that this world was made and began to exist at a definite time and that by reason of its corruptible nature it must suffer dissolution. But what existed before this world, or what will exist after it,



has not yet been made known openly to the many, for no clear statement on the point is set forth in the Church teaching.

8. Then there is the doctrine that the scriptures were composed through the Spirit of God and that they have not only that meaning which is obvious, but also another which is hidden from the majority of readers. For the contents of scripture are the outward forms of certain mysteries and the images of divine things. On this point the entire Church is unanimous, that while the whole law is spiritual, the inspired meaning is not recognized by all, but only by those who are gifted with the grace of the Holy Spirit in the word of wisdom and knowledge.

The term *asomaton*, that is, incorporeal, is unused and unknown, not only in many other writings but also in our scriptures. If, however, any one is inclined to produce it for us out of that little book called *The Teaching of Peter*, where the Savior is represented as saying to his disciples, "I am not an incorporeal daemon,"<sup>4</sup> I must answer in the first place that the book itself is not included among the books of the Church and I can show that it is not a writing of Peter nor of anyone else who was inspired by the Spirit of God. But even supposing this point is waived, the sense conveyed by the word "incorporeal" in that passage is not the same as is expressed by Greek and non-Christian writers when they record a discussion by philosophers on incorporeal nature. For in the book in question the Savior used the words "incorporeal daemon" in order to denote that the fashion and outline, whatever it may be, of the daemonic body is not like this dense and visible body of ours. And the words must be understood in the sense intended by the author of that writing, namely, that the Savior did not have such a body as the daemons have. Now this body is by nature a fine substance and thin like air, and on this account most people think and speak of it as incorporeal; but

the Savior had a body which was solid and capable of being handled. It is customary for everything which is not like this to be termed incorporeal by the more simple and uneducated of men, just as the air we breathe may be called incorporeal because it is not a body that can be grasped or held or that can resist pressure.

9. Nevertheless we shall inquire whether the actual thing which Greek philosophers call *asomaton* or incorporeal is found in the holy scriptures under another name. We must also seek to discover how God himself is to be conceived, whether as corporeal and fashioned in some shape, or as being of a different nature from bodies, a point which is not clearly set forth in the teaching. The same inquiry must be made in regard to Christ and the Holy Spirit, and indeed in regard to every soul and every rational nature also.

10. This also is contained in the church teaching, that there exist certain angels of God and good powers, who minister to him in bringing about the salvation of men; but when these were created, and what they are like, or how they exist, is not very clearly defined. And as for the sun, moon and stars, the tradition does not clearly say whether they are living beings or without life.

Everyone therefore who is desirous of constructing out of the foregoing a connected body of doctrine must use points like these as elementary and foundation principles, in accordance with the commandment which says, "Enlighten yourselves with the light of knowledge" (Hos 10:12 [LXX]). Thus by clear and cogent arguments he will discover the truth about each particular point and so will produce, as we have said, a single body of doctrine, with the aid of such illustrations and declarations as he shall find in the holy scriptures and of such conclusions as he shall ascertain to follow logically from them when rightly understood.



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## Chapter I

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### THE FATHER

1. I am aware that there are some who will try to maintain that even according to our scriptures God is a body, since they find it written in the books of Moses, “Our God is a consuming-fire” (Dt 4:24) and in the Gospel according to John, “God is spirit, and they who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth” (Jn 4:24). Now these men will have it that fire and spirit are body and nothing else. But I would ask them what they have to say about this passage of scripture, “God is light,” as John says in his epistle, “God is light, and in him is no darkness” (1 Jn 1:5). He is that light, surely, which lightens the whole understanding of those who are capable of receiving truth, as it is written in the thirty-fifth psalm, “In thy light shall we see light” (Ps 35:10 [LXX]). For what other light of God can we speak of, in which a man sees light, except God’s spiritual power, which when it lightens a man causes him either to see clearly the truth of all things or to know God himself who is called the truth? Such then is the meaning of the saying, “In thy light shall we see light”; that is, in thy word and thy wisdom, which is thy Son, in him shall we see thee, the Father. For can we possibly think that, because it is termed light, it is like the light of our sun? And how can there be the slightest reason for supposing that from that material light

the grounds of knowledge could be derived and the meaning of truth discovered?

2. If then they accept this argument of ours, proved by reason itself, about the nature of light, and will admit that the use of the word light cannot possibly mean that God is to be thought of as being a body, they will allow a similar reasoning in regard to the phrase “a consuming fire.” For what does God “consume” by virtue of this fact of being a “fire”? Are we to suppose that he consumes bodily matter, “wood or hay or stubble”? (cf. 1 Cor 3:12). What is there in this statement consistent with the praises due to God, if he is a fire that consumes material substances like these? Let us rather consider that God does indeed consume and destroy, but that what he consumes are evil thoughts of the mind, shameful deeds and longings after sin, when these implant themselves in the minds of believers; and that he takes those souls which render themselves capable of receiving his word and wisdom and dwells in them according to the saying, “I and the Father will come and make our abode with him”(cf. Jn 14:23)<sup>1</sup> having first consumed all their vices and passions and made them into a temple pure and worthy of himself.

To those, however, who think that God is a body in consequence of the saying, “God is spirit” (Jn 4:24) we must reply as follows. It is a custom of holy scripture, when it wishes to point to something of an opposite nature to this dense and solid body, to call it spirit, as in the saying, “The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Cor 3:6). Here undoubtedly the letter means that which is bodily, and the spirit that which is intellectual, or as we also call it, spiritual. The apostle also says, “Even until this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their hearts; but when a man shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor 3:15–17). For so long as a man does

not attend to the spiritual meaning “a veil lies upon his heart,” in consequence of which veil, in other words his duller understanding, the scripture itself is said or thought to be veiled; and this is the explanation of the veil which is said to have covered the face of Moses when he was speaking to the people (cf. Ex 34:33, 35), that is, when the law is read in public. But if we turn to the Lord, where also the Word of God is, and where the Holy Spirit reveals spiritual knowledge, the veil will be taken away, and we shall then with unveiled face behold in the holy scriptures the glory of the Lord.

3. Further, although many saints partake of the Holy Spirit, he is not on that account to be regarded as a kind of body, which is divided into material parts and distributed to each of the saints; but rather as a sanctifying power, a share of which is said to be possessed by all who have shown themselves worthy of being sanctified through his grace. And to make this statement more easily understood let us take an illustration from things admittedly of lesser importance. There are many who share in the teaching and art of medicine; yet are we to suppose that all who share in medicine have some material substance called medicine placed before them from which they take away little particles and so obtain a share of it? Must we not rather understand that all who with ready and prepared minds gain a comprehension of the art and its teaching may be said to share in medicine? These illustrations from medicine must not be supposed to apply in every detail when compared with the Holy Spirit; they establish this point only, that a thing in which many have a share is not necessarily to be regarded as a body. The Holy Spirit is far different from the system or science of medicine, for the Holy Spirit is an intellectual existence, with a subsistence and being of its own, whereas medicine is nothing of the sort.

4. We must now turn to the Gospel passage itself, where it is written that “God is spirit” (Jn 4:24), and must show that this is to be understood in a sense agreeing with what we have just said. Let us ask when our Savior spoke these words, and to whom, and in what connection. We find undoubtedly that he uttered them when speaking to the woman of Samaria, who thought that men ought to worship God in Mount Gerizim according to the belief of the Samaritans. “God,” he told her, “is spirit.” The woman of Samaria, supposing him to be an ordinary Jew, was asking him whether men ought to worship God “in Jerusalem” or “in this mountain.” These were her words: “All our fathers worshipped in this mountain, but ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship” (Jn 4:20). It was this belief of the woman, who thought that God would be worshipped rightly or wrongly by Jews in Jerusalem or by Samaritans in Mount Gerizim because of some special privilege attaching to the material places, that the Savior contradicts by saying that the man who desires to seek for God must abandon all idea of material places. These are his words: “The hour cometh, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father neither in Jerusalem nor in this mountain. God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth” (cf. Jn 4:21, 23, 24). See, too, how appropriately he associated truth with spirit, calling God spirit to distinguish him from bodies, and truth to distinguish him from a shadow or an image. For those who worshipped in Jerusalem, “serving a shadow and image of heavenly things” (Heb 8:5), worshipped neither in truth nor in spirit, and the same is true of those who worshipped in Mount Gerizim.

5. Having then refuted, to the best of our ability, every interpretation which suggests that we should attribute to God any material characteristics, we assert that in truth he is in-comprehensible and immeasurable. For whatever may be

the knowledge which we have been able to obtain about God, whether by perception or by reflection, we must of necessity believe that he is far and away better than our thoughts about him. For if we see a man who can scarcely look at a glimmer or the light of the smallest lamp, and if we wish to teach such a one, whose eyesight is not strong enough to receive more light than we have said, about the brightness and splendor of the sun, shall we not have to tell him that the splendor of the sun is unspeakably and immeasurably better and more glorious than all this light he can see? In the same way our mind is shut up within bars of flesh and blood and rendered duller and feebler by reason of its association with such material substances; and although it is regarded as far more excellent when compared with the natural body, yet when it strains after incorporeal things and seeks to gain a sight of them it has scarcely the power of a glimmer of light or a tiny lamp. And among all intellectual, that is, incorporeal things, what is there so universally surpassing, so unspeakably and immeasurably excelling, as God, whose nature certainly the vision of the human mind, however pure or clear to the very utmost that mind may be, cannot gaze at or behold?

6. But it will not appear out of place if to make the matter clearer still we use yet another illustration. Sometimes our eyes cannot look upon the light itself, that is, the actual sun, but when we see the brightness and rays of the sun as they pour into our windows, it may be, or into any small openings for light, we are able to infer from these how great is the source and fountain of physical light. So, too, the works of divine providence and the plan of this universe are as it were rays of God's nature in contrast to his real substance and being, and because our mind is of itself unable to behold God as he is, it understands the parent of the universe from the beauty of his works and the comeliness of his creatures.



God therefore must not be thought to be any kind of body, nor to exist in a body, but to be a simple intellectual existence, admitting in himself of no addition whatever, so that he cannot be believed to have in himself a more or a less, but is Unity, or if I may so say, Oneness<sup>2</sup> throughout, and the mind and fount from which originates all intellectual existence or mind. Now mind does not need physical space in which to move and operate, nor does it need a magnitude discernible by the senses, nor bodily shape or color, nor anything else whatever like these, which are suitable to bodies and matter. Accordingly that simple and wholly mental existence can admit no delay or hesitation in any of its movements or operations; for if it did so, the simplicity of its divine nature would appear to be in some degree limited and impeded by such an addition, and that which is the first principle of all things would be found to be composite and diverse, and would be many and not one; since only the species of deity, if I may so call it, has the privilege of existing apart from all material intermixture.

That mind needs no space in which to move according to its own nature is certain even from the evidence of our own mind. For if this abides in its own proper sphere and nothing occurs from any cause to enfeeble it, it will never be at all retarded by reason of differences of place from acting in conformity with its own movements; nor on the other hand will it gain any increase or accession of speed from the peculiar nature of any place. And if it be objected, for example, that when men are travelling by sea and tossed by the waves, their mind is somewhat less vigorous than it is wont to be on land, we must believe this experience to be due not to the difference of place but to the movement and disturbance of the body with which the mind is joined or intermingled. For it seems almost against nature for the human body to live on the sea,

and on this account the body, as if unequal to its task, appears to sustain the mind's movements in irregular and disordered manner, giving feebler assistance to its keen flashes, precisely as happens even with men on land when they are in the grip of a fever; in whose case it is certain that, if the mind fulfills its functions less effectively through the strength of the fever, the cause is to be found not in any defect of locality but in the disease of the body, which renders it disturbed and confused and altogether unable to bestow its customary services on the mind under the well-known and natural conditions. For we men are animals, formed by a union of body and soul, and thus alone did it become possible for us to live on the earth. But God, who is the beginning of all things, must not be regarded as a composite being, lest perchance we find that the elements, out of which everything that is called composite has been composed, are prior to the first principle himself.

Nor does the mind need physical magnitude in order to perform any act or movement, as an eye does when in looking at large bodies it expands and at small ones narrows and contracts for the purpose of seeing. Mind certainly needs intellectual magnitude, because it grows in an intellectual and not in a physical sense. For mind does not increase by physical additions at the same time as the body does until the twentieth or thirtieth year of its age, but by the employment of instructions and exercises a sharpening of the natural faculties is effected and the powers implanted within are roused to intelligence. Thus the capacity of the intellect is enlarged not by being increased with physical additions, but by being cultivated through exercises in learning. These it cannot receive immediately from birth or boyhood because the structure of the bodily parts which the mind uses as instruments for its own exercise is as yet weak and feeble, being neither able to

endure the force of the mind's working nor sufficiently developed to display a capacity for receiving instruction.

7. But if there are any who consider the mind itself and the soul to be a body, I should like them to tell me how it can take in reasons and arguments relating to questions of great importance, full of difficulty and subtlety. Whence comes it that the power of memory, the contemplation of invisible things, yes, and the perception of incorporeal things reside in a body? How does a bodily nature investigate the teachings of the arts and the meanings and reasons of things? And divine doctrines, which are obviously incorporeal, how can it discern and understand them? One might perhaps think that, just as the bodily form and shape of the ears or eyes contributes something to hearing or to seeing, and as the various parts of our body, which have been formed by God, each possess some special capacity, due to their particular form, for doing the work for which they were by nature designed, so too, the soul or mind must be supposed to have an outward shape fitly and suitably formed, as it were, for the purpose of perceiving and understanding individual things and of being set in motion by vital movements. But what sort of appearance the mind could have, seeing that it is a mind and moves in an intellectual way, I do not know who could describe or tell us.

In further confirmation and explanation of what we have said about the mind or soul, as being superior to all bodily nature, the following remarks may be added. Each of the bodily senses is appropriately connected with a material substance towards which the particular sense is directed. For instance, sight is connected with color, shape and size; hearing with the voice and sound; smelling with vapors pleasant and unpleasant; taste with flavors; touch with things hot or cold, hard or soft, rough or smooth. But it is clear to all that the sense of mind is far superior to the senses above

mentioned. Does it not then appear absurd that these inferior senses should have substances connected with them, as objects towards which their activities are directed, whereas this faculty, the sense of mind, which is superior to them, should have no substance whatever connected with it, and that this faculty of an intellectual nature should be a mere accident arising out of bodies?<sup>3</sup> Those who assert this are undoubtedly speaking in disparaging terms of that substance which is the better part of their own nature; nay more, they do wrong even to God himself in supposing that he can be understood through a bodily nature, since according to them that which can be understood or perceived through a body is itself a body; and they are unwilling to have it understood that there is a certain affinity between the mind and God, of whom the mind is an intellectual image, and that by reason of this fact the mind, especially if it is purified and separated from bodily matter, is able to have some perception of the divine nature.

8. But these assertions may perhaps seem to be less authoritative to those who desire to be instructed in divine things from the holy scriptures and who seek to have it proved to them from that source how God's nature surpasses the nature of bodies. See then, whether the apostle, too, does not say the same thing when he speaks as follows about Christ: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (Col 1:15). It is not, as some suppose, that God's nature is visible to one and invisible to others; for the apostle did not say "the image of God who is invisible" to men or "invisible" to sinners, but he makes an absolutely unvarying declaration about God's very nature in these words, "image of the invisible God." And John, too, when he says in the gospel, "No one hath seen God at any time" (Jn 1:18), plainly declares to all who are capable of understanding, that there is no existence to which God is visible; not as if he were one who is visible

by nature and yet eludes and escapes the gaze of his creatures because of their frailty, but that he is in his nature impossible to be seen.

And if you should ask me what is my belief about the Only-begotten himself, whether I would say that God's nature, which is naturally invisible, is not even visible to him, do not immediately think this question to be impious or absurd, because we shall give it a logical answer. (For as it is incongruous to say that the Son can see the Father, so it is unbecoming to believe that the Holy Spirit can see the Son).<sup>4</sup> It is one thing to see, another to know. To see and to be seen is a property of bodies; to know and to be known is an attribute of intellectual existence. Whatever therefore is proper to bodies must not be believed either of the Father or of the Son, the relations between whom are such as pertain to the nature of deity. And finally, Christ in the gospel did not say, "No one seeth the Father except the Son, nor the Son except the Father," but "no one knoweth the Son except the Father, nor doth anyone know the Father except the Son" (Mt 11:27). This clearly shows that what is called "seeing" and "being seen" in the case of bodily existences is with the Father and the Son called "knowing" and "being known," through the faculty of knowledge and not through our frail sense of sight. It is, therefore, because the expressions "to see" and "to be seen" cannot suitably be applied to incorporeal and invisible existence that in the gospel the Father is not said to be seen by the Son nor the Son by the Father, but to be known.

9. But if the question is put to us why it was said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8), I answer that in my opinion our argument will be much more firmly established by this passage. For what else is "to see God in the heart" but to understand and know him with the mind, just as we have explained above? For the names of the organs of

sense are often applied to the soul, so that we speak of seeing with the eyes of the heart, that is, of drawing some intellectual conclusion by means of the faculty of intelligence. So too we speak of hearing with the ears when we discern the deeper meaning of some statement. So too we speak of the soul as being able to use teeth, when it eats and consumes the bread of life who comes down from heaven. In a similar way we speak of it as using all the other bodily organs, which are transferred from their corporeal significance and applied to the faculties of the soul; as Solomon says, "You will find a divine sense" (Prv 2:5).<sup>5</sup> For he knew that there were in us two kinds of senses, the one being mortal, corruptible and human, and the other immortal and intellectual, which here he calls "divine." By this divine sense, therefore, not of the eyes but of a pure heart, that is, the mind, God can be seen by those who are worthy. That heart is used for mind, that is for the intellectual faculty, you will certainly find over and over again in all the scriptures, both the New and the Old.

Having thus investigated the nature of God, though in a manner far from worthy by reason of the weakness of our human understanding, let us now see what meaning is to be given to the name Christ.