

# Explaining the Death of Jesus

Osher Institute

Vanderbilt University

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J. Patout Burns

# Arius of Alexandria (256- 336)

- Only one God; Word is not divine
- The Word is the first and greatest of the creatures
  - Word is changeable
  - Word must have freedom of choice between good and evil to be savior
- The Word takes a human body and enters the bodily world to bring salvation to humans
  - Attacked the powers of evil and defeated them by fidelity to God (martyr)
  - Weakened demonic power in world
  - Taught and demonstrated the true form of life required by God.

# Arius: Savior

- Savior gains higher status by fidelity to God in the earthly realm.
  - Made unchangeable and incorruptible by God
  - Given divine power for forgiveness and judgment
  - Uses Phil. 2.6-11 for guidance and proof
- Savior weakens the power of evil
  - Christians can overcome evil and live well
  - Thereby earning a heavenly reward of permanent goodness
  - God makes the creature stable in their chosen direction
  - Confirms a voluntary decision made by creature
- God can make creatures stable in the goodness they have freely chosen.
  - Contradicts Origen's system

# Athanasius of Alexandria (296-373)

- God alone is unchangeable
- God cannot make an unchanging creature
  - A created savior remains in danger of falling into sin
  - A created savior cannot extend stability and security to other creatures
- Only a divine savior is immune to failure
- Creature can become unchanging only by union with God
  - In body for immortality
  - In mind and will for knowledge and goodness

# Athanasius: Salvation

- The divine Word of God unites to a human
  - Transforms humanity in that union
    - Stable in willing of goodness and obedience to God
    - Knows all truth—even historical future
    - Capable of avoiding or recovering from death
- Savior dies to fulfill the punishment of bodily death imposed for sin
  - Transforms his own flesh to full immortality, with freedom from distracting appetite and passion
- Savior reveals the divine in sensible form
  - Restores human knowledge of God
  - Enables human commitment to goodness
- By resurrection in union with Christ, Christians attain stability of mind and body

# Gregory of Nyssa (335-395)

- God created humans with three energies
  - Uniting all of universe in one being
  - Mind: cumulative knowledge and love of Truth
  - Body: developing, sustaining and reproducing itself
  - Psyche: protecting self and satisfying bodily appetite or mental desire.
- Humans voluntarily experienced and misjudged bodily appetites; turned psyche and mind to fulfilling them.
- Mind and body must be purified and redirected.
  - Body through dissolution and reconstitution
  - Mind separated from body and directed toward Truth

# Nyssa: Work of Christ

- Christ purifies the human body
  - Teaches discipline of appetites and passions
  - Separates mind and dissolves the body through death
    - Removes appetite and passion
  - Reconstitutes the human body in a form subject to mind
    - Christ's carries human flesh through the process of death and resurrection
    - The body is then inseparable from and lives by the soul/mind.
- Christ purifies the human mind and draws it to God
  - Separated from bodily satisfactions, the mind eventually abandons appetites and turns passions toward mental desire
  - Teaching ignites and develops the mind's love of Truth
  - Growth in knowledge is cumulative and accelerating
- Christ reunites purified body to stabilized mind.

# Nyssa: Death of Jesus

- Christ inaugurates the process of dissolution, purification, and reconstitution
  - His own flesh is transformed by indwelling divine life
  - Through his own body, he extends that power into other humans.
    - Baptism and Eucharist begin the process in Christians
    - Reverses the destructive process that began in Adam
- Christ liberates humanity from dominion of Satan
  - Satan agrees to trade all captured for the free one who is most excellent and powerful
  - Humans freed but Satan cannot hold and control Christ
  - Deceiver is deceived and has opportunity to improve

# Cyril of Alexandria + 444

- The joining of divine to human in Christ begins the transformation of humanity.
  - Jesus himself develops into perfect humanity
  - Reverses the disobedience of Adam in his death
  - Restores humanity to its freedom from passion
  - Makes the human body immortal in himself
- Christ communicates his perfect humanity
  - Baptism inaugurates develop of Christians
  - Eucharist unites Christ's humanity to that of Christians
  - Christians must cooperate in voluntary development
  - Resurrection brings immortal life.