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Irenaeus On The Incarnation

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April 07, 2010

Irenaeus On The Incarnation

[Irenaeus](#) of Lyons

6. This also does likewise meet [the case] of those who maintain that HE suffered only in appearance. For if He did not truly suffer, no thanks to Him, since there was no suffering at all; and when we shall actually begin to suffer, He will seem as leading us astray, exhorting us to endure buffeting, and to turn the other cheek, if He did not Himself before us in reality suffer the same; and as He misled them by seeming to them what He was not, so does He also mislead us, be exhorting us to endure what He did not endure Himself. [In that case] we shall be even above the Master, because we suffer and sustain what our Master never bore or endured. But as our Lord is alone truly Master, so the Son of God is truly good and patient, the Word of God the Father having been made the Son of man. For He fought and conquered; for He was man contending for the fathers, and through obedience doing away with disobedience completely: For He bound the strong man, and set free the weak, and endowed His own handiwork with salvation, by destroying sin. For He is a most holy and merciful Lord, and loves the human race.

7. Therefore, as I have already said, He caused man (human nature) to cleave to and to become one with God. For unless man had overcome the enemy of man, the enemy would not have been legitimately vanquished. And again: unless it had been God who had freely given salvation, we could never have possessed it securely. And unless man had been joined to God, he could never have become a partaker of incorruptibility. For it was incumbent upon the Mediator between God and men, by His relationship to both, to bring both to friendship and concord, and present man to God, while He revealed God to man. For, in what way could we be partakers of the adoption of sons, unless we had received from Him through the Son that fellowship which refers to Himself, unless His Word, having been made flesh, had entered into communion with us? Wherefore also He passed through every stage of life, restoring to all communion with God. Those, therefore, who assert that He appeared putatively, and was neither born in the flesh nor truly made man, are as yet under the old condemnation, holding out patronage to sin; for, by their showing, death has not been vanquished, which "reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." But the law coming, which was given by Moses, and testifying of sin that it is a sinner, did truly take away his (death's) kingdom, showing that he was no king, but a robber; and it revealed him as a murderer. It laid, however, a weighty burden upon man, who had sin in himself, showing that he was liable to death. For as the law was spiritual, it merely made sin to stand out in relief, but did not destroy it. For sin had no dominion over the spirit, but over man. For it behoved Him who was to destroy sin, and redeem man under the power of death, that He should Himself be made that very same thing which he was, that is, man; who had been drawn by sin into bondage, but was held by death, so that sin should be destroyed by man, and

man should go forth from death. For as by the disobedience of the one man who was originally moulded from virgin soil, the many were made sinners, and forfeited life; so was it necessary that, by the obedience of one man, who was originally born from a virgin, many should be justified and receive salvation. Thus, then, was the Word of God made man, as also Moses says: "God, true are His works." But if, not having been made flesh, He did appear as if flesh, His work was not a true one. But what He did appear, that He also was: God recapitulated in Himself the ancient formation of man, that He might kill sin, deprive death of its power, and vivify man; and therefore His works are true.

([Irenaeus](#), [Against Heresies](#), Book 3, 18.6-7.)

Posted by [John W. Reeve](#) on April 07, 2010 | [Permalink](#)

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Things that would be useful: A general button where I could say "I like it!" If such a button existed, I would click it right now.

Since I can't, I'll just go ahead and use up this comment box to say that I find it revealing how Irenaeus is using logic to extrapolate the plain sayings of Scripture to construct a reason for why his position must be correct. That's to be expected, I suppose. But we seem to be in danger when we start arguing with each other in the realm of the logical constructions on top of Scripture.

Posted by: Kessia Reyne | [April 09, 2010 at 05:03 PM](#)

You are right in separating what Scripture is saying from what logical constructions are argued. When the argument is over Scripture remains true while the logical constructions must be tested for usefulness in illustrating the truth of Scripture. The syllogisms are only true in as far as they reflect the truth from Scripture.

Posted by: [John W Reeve](#) | [April 09, 2010 at 10:08 PM](#)

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