

An Explanation of the Athanasian Creed
(Explanatio Symboli Sancti Athanasii)
by
St. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

Hildegard composed this commentary on the Pseudo-Athanasian Creed as part of a series of shorter works written in the early 1170's in response to a letter from her secretary, confidant, and provost, Volmar, expressing on behalf of her community of nuns their anxiety that, as the Visionary Doctor entered her seventies, she would not be long for the earth. The letter (Ep. 195) draws a particularly striking contrast between the vanities of scholastic disputes and the truly divine teaching with which Hildegard had been inspired. Hildegard's response to this letter is preserved in the manuscripts as the preface to her *Explanatio Symboli Athanasii*. She likely chose to write a commentary on this standard liturgical text because its treatment of "the catholic faith" offered her a structure on which to provide her community a summary of her most characteristic thoughts about the relationship between the triune divinity and its work of creation, with humankind at its center.

The treatise falls roughly into three sections. The opening employs Hildegard's familiar visionary formula of theophanic speech (in this case from both Caritas and Sapientia) in order to set the stage of salvation history. As this story of the interaction between divinity and history moves into its final act—the time of the Church and its ultimate battle against the devil and heresy—Hildegard makes the transition to the commentary proper, in light of Athanasius' supposed authorship of the Creed against the errors of Arius. The third section of the work begins with an exhortation to the ministers and teachers of the faith that responds directly to Volmar's charges against the secular masters and their scholastic vanities. Despite her elaborate humility formulas—which here include comparing herself to the "irrational" donkey that spoke to Balaam in Numbers 22:28-30—she forcefully rebukes them for the failures of good catechesis, and proposes in place of their sophisticated disputes a Scripturally-based recapitulation of the story of salvation. This final section has the classic flavor of patristic and monastic exegesis.

The work is especially resonant with Hildegard's final visionary masterpiece, the *Liber Divinorum Operum*, on which she was working at the same time she composed this "Explanation." The parallels between the two treatises are especially evident when Hildegard expands past simple commentary on the creedal text. The opening of the commentary echoes the speeches of Caritas (Divine Love) in LDO I.1 and III.3 as it narrates the grand arc of salvation history and its divine agents (*virtutes*)—Wisdom, Love, and Humility—each pointing to the ultimate irruption of divinity into time: the Incarnation. A final, uniquely Hildegardian characteristic of the commentary are its multiple digressions into theological anthropology. Because humankind is made in the image and likeness of God, the constitution of the Trinity is reflected in the constitution of each human person.

Trans. by Nathaniel M. Campbell, from the text ed. by Christopher P. Evans, in Hildegard's *Opera Minora*, ed. P. Dronke et al., CCCM 226 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 99-133.

Prefatory Letter to her Congregation of Nuns at the Rupertsberg

O my daughters, you followed the footsteps of Christ (1 Peter 2:21) in your love of chastity, and in the humility of obedient submission and for the exaltation of heaven you chose me as your mother, despite the fact that I am but a poor little thing. I speak to you not of my own accord but from the revelation of the divine through a mother's womb.¹ Through the will of God in the sacrifice of praise (Ps. 49[50]:14), I found this place wondrously revealed where the remains of Blessed Rupert the Confessor, under whose patronage you have taken refuge, found their repose; and with the permission of my superiors I came to this place and with divine help gladly made it a home for myself and for all those who followed me.

Later, however, at God's instruction I returned to the monastery on the mount of Blessed Disibod, from which I had with permission withdrawn, to make my petition before all who dwelt there: that our foundation and all of the estates and their revenues endowed to it as alms should not be kept bound to their jurisdiction but freed therefrom.² This I sought as a useful advantage both for the salvation of our souls and out of a careful keeping of the strictness of our Rule. And according to that which I perceived in true vision, I spoke to the Abbot Father of that place: "The Serene Light says: You are supposed to be a Father of this community and of the salvation of the souls of its mystical garden, who are my daughters.³ Their alms belong not to you nor to your brethren, though your house should be a place of refuge for them. But if you wish to continue baring your teeth against us in your words of opposition, you will be like the Amalekites⁴ and Antiochus, of whom it is written that he despoiled the Temple of the Lord.⁵ And if others among you should with ill-will say, 'We intend to diminish your holdings,' then I Who Am (Ex. 3:14) declare that you are the worst sort of thieves. Moreover, if you are tempted to take away from them their pastor and his spiritual medicine,⁶ then again I declare that you are like the sons of

¹ "from the revelation of the divine through a mother's womb": *ex divina ostensione per materna viscera*; Baird and Ehrman translate this as: "according to a divine revelation through my motherly affection for you" (Letter 195r in *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, Vol. 2 [Oxford, 1998]). It is likely that Hildegard invoked both meanings, as she consciously understood her role as *magistra* of a house of virgins in parallel to the maternal offices of both the Virgin Mary and the Virgin Church.

² Most of the women who joined the community that grew around Jutta and Hildegard in the 1120's and 1130's came with dowries, usually donations of land or the rights to the rents and other income therefrom, as "alms" to the monastery at the Disibodenberg. When Hildegard moved the community the Rupertsberg between 1147 and 1152, she demanded the transfer of these holding to her new foundation—but Kuno, the Abbot of Disibodenberg until his death in 1155, fought to keep them with his monastery, to which they had originally been given. Eventually, Kuno's successor, Helengar, struck a deal, which was confirmed by Archbishop Arnold of Mainz in May, 1158. The Rupertsberg was guaranteed all gifts that it had received since the community's move, together with a few of the Disibodenberg's estates near Bingen, as well as autonomy and the services of spiritual care by a monk of the Disibodenberg; the male monastery, meanwhile, retained the originally endowed estates. See John Van Engen, "Abbess: 'Mother and Teacher,'" in *Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and Her World*, ed. Barbara Newman (Univ. of California Press, 1998), pp. 30-51, esp. pp. 37-40.

³ Hildegard identifies the community of religious women that gathered around her and Jutta with the garden of the Disibodenberg, which they likely were in charge of keeping.

⁴ "the Amalekites": cf. 1 Kings (1 Samuel) 30:1-2: "the Amalekites had made a raid upon the Negeb...and taken captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great; they killed no one, but carried them off, and went their way."

⁵ "Antiochus...despoiled the Temple of the Lord": Cf. 1 Maccabees 1:21-24.

⁶ As part of the fight over the land holdings of Hildegard's nuns, Kuno (Abbot of the Disibodenberg) may at one point have threatened to recall Volmar, who had moved with Hildegard and her community to serve as the provost of their new house on the Rupertsberg. One of his principal duties was the celebration of the Eucharist, their "spiritual medicine".

Belial, for in this matter you do not look to the justice of God—and for that, the justice of God will destroy you (cf. Ps. 51:7).”⁷

When I, a poor little form, sought with these words the liberty of our foundation and the holdings of my daughters from that abbot and his brethren, they all guaranteed it with the promise of a written charter.⁸ Moreover, as everyone from greatest to least saw, heard, and perceived these things, they received them with the greatest goodwill, so that everything was confirmed in writing according to God’s will. Wherefore let the faithful learn of these things, and affirm, perfect, and defend them, so that they might secure that blessing that God gave to Jacob and to Israel.⁹

Yet, O how great will be the lament of my daughters after the death of their mother! For they will no more nurse at their mother’s breasts (cf. Sg. of Sgs. 8:1), and thus for a long time, with tears and sighs of grief they will say, “Alas, alas! Once we freely nursed at the breasts of our mother—if only we could have her here again, present with us!” It is for this reason, O daughters of God, that I now admonish you to keep love amongst yourselves, just I your mother have admonished you from my childhood.¹⁰ May you be the brightest light with the angels because of your goodwill, and may you be strong in your powers, as your father Benedict has taught you. May the Holy Spirit grant you his gifts, for after my end you will no longer hear my voice—still, let my voice, which has so often rung out amongst you in love, never be forgotten in your midst.

My daughters’ hearts now glow red because of their sadness for me as they sigh and pant for heavenly things. But afterwards, they shall gleam in a bright and shining red light as the grace of God transforms them into the strongest soldiers in his house. If anyone should wish to sow discord in this band of my daughters and division in their community and spiritual discipline, may the gift of the Holy Spirit turn such thoughts away from his heart. But if he should scorn God and do such a thing anyway, the hand of the Lord shall slay him before every people, for he is worthy of nothing but to be confounded. Therefore, O daughters, dwell with all devotion and stability in this place that you have chosen for your soldier’s service to God (cf. 2 Tim. 1:3-4), so that in it you may obtain the rewards of heaven.

An Explanation of the Athanasian Creed (*Quicumque*)

And so Divine Love speaks in Wisdom: “I was ordained from of old (cf. Prov. 8:23), and I was present in the formation of the first human, when he was molded by God.” For God wisely created heaven and earth and all other created things on account of humankind, so that they should be sustained and fed by them. For this reason, Wisdom is rightly called, “artisan” (cf. Wis. 7:21), for she has encircled heaven and earth and measured them out in equal weight (cf. Eccclus./Sirach 24:8). Moreover, human flesh was fully infused with the animate spirit in its veins

⁷ “sons of Belial”: cf. Deut. 13:13; Judges 19:22; 1 Kings (1 Samuel) 2:12 and 10:27; and 3 (1) Kings 21:20. This epithet is often used in the Hebrew Scriptures for “base” or “worthless” men who are idolators or otherwise curse God. In Hildegard’s symbolic vocabulary, such Old Testament figures become types that continue to exist within the life of Church around her, their presence prophetically revealed in Scripture and awaiting the censure of the voice of the Living Light.

⁸ “a written charter”: *codicis* (trans. Baird and Ehrmann).

⁹ “that blessing...to Jacob and to Israel”: cf. Gen. 27:27-29 and 32:26-29.

¹⁰ “to keep love amongst yourselves”: cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-4; Col. 3:14; 1 Peter 4:8.

and in its marrow, so that the flesh is always roused by the animate spirit.¹¹ Because humans recognize other creatures through their animate spirits, they hold them in joy and gladness. For just as Wisdom and Divine Love are one, so humankind is lovely in flesh and animate spirit because of mercy and charity.

Through these two virtues of Wisdom and Divine Love, both angels and humans were obedient to God in Humility, for Humility most often tends towards the honor of God, and so she gathers all virtues to herself. Thus God molded humankind in these virtues, lest they should perish completely—similarly, not all of the angels perished, for many remained with God while others fell with the ancient serpent. For in Wisdom God created humankind; in Divine Love he vivified them; and in Humility and obedience he directed them, so that they could understand how they ought to live. The first angel did not want to understand this, nor was he of the same mind as God; rather, he wanted to exist all on his own, which is not something he could do, for there is only one Life that exists on its own, from which all living things exist. This is why he fell away from life and withered, just as happens sometimes among creatures like trees or plants or other created things, for when something falls from them, it withers because it can no longer taste of the moisture of sap.¹² Indeed, while an angel lives because of God, humankind is the full work of God, for God is always at work in them. The evidence of this a person can understand within themselves, because as long as they live in this life, they cannot stop thinking about or doing each thing individually, one part at a time. But when they have come to the end of this life, they live unendingly in another life. For when a person does good works, they are made like the good angels; but when they do not recognize the great honor of how God formed them, and when they flee from rightful obedience and do not act in humility but wish to exist all on their own, they are made like the wicked angels—they fall away from life like Satan and wither. But you, O human, want to hold God accountable for this, so he will answer you thus: “Did you create yourself? No. Is it therefore more fitting that you should serve yourself more than him who created you? And what reward could you prepare for yourself, since you did not create yourself? Nothing but the punishment of fire!”

So angels and humans and all the rest of God’s creation are divided into these two parts, as was also done when God marked out humankind in circumcision. For the first deceiver falsely duped the first human, so that the latter was made disobedient to God and consented to the seducer’s words—and through that disobedience he did just what he had been warned against. Yet, that same disobedience was cut away through circumcision as commanded by God, when Abraham obeyed God with a good will and did as it was commanded him (cf. Gen. 17:23). At that point, the deceiver seethed within his own deceit and sowed his evil among certain humans, convincing them that it was not possible to believe in a God that they could not see or hear or touch. In this way, he raved within that people that had been marked through obedience, relishing the memory of how he had deceived that first human when he said, “You will be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). He cast again his foul puff of breath upon them, telling them that the only way they could recognize God was in some concrete form, since humankind also exists in a concrete form—after all, if God did create humankind, why would he himself be hidden in such a way that humankind could neither see nor hear nor comprehend him?

¹¹ “animate spirit”: *anima*.

¹² Cf. Hildegard’s *Liber Divinorum Operum* III.3.2, ed. A. Derolez and P. Dronke, CCCM 92 (Brepols, 1996), p. 381.

Yet, despite the whole of the Old Law, that people who bore the true mark could not overcome this ancient deceiver and his band of errant humans, nor can they do so even now—but God will overwhelm them before the Last Day and conquer them in the sight of every people. In this way the Old Law accompanied all of these—both those who observed the circumcision and those who fell into the error described above—until the birth of Christ, when that True Sun of justice appeared in truth. Indeed, that Sun, which was seen and heard in its humanity, gave great brightness through its teaching, for the prophets had run before it like the planets that are above the sun—this God had foreseen when he established the firmament with its ornaments.¹³ But to the sun, together with the moon and stars, God joined the water, and to make the clouds move he placed them with storms, for the clouds are bored by the lightning and then rent by the sound of the thunder. For just as God established creation for the service of humankind, so also he prefigured his Son through it, as foretold by the prophets, for the service of their prophecy touched upon his humanity, just as the planets uphold the sun by serving it.¹⁴ For example, the prophecy that said, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive,” (Is. 7:14), touches upon his humanity, for the Virgin’s purity conceived, not by the heat of the flesh, but by the heat of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, the sun transfixes something with its rays to warm it with its complete heat, but not to consume it. For the Sun of justice came forth from an untouched Virgin and enlightened the entire world (John 1:9), just as the sun in the firmament enlightens the entire world, yet remains intact and whole. Thus the Virgin bore a Son whose name was Emmanuel (Is. 7:14 and Matt. 1:23), for in purity she conceived him, and he then came forth from her in that same purity, as the sun shines in the firmament without either [the sun or the firmament] suffering division. Thus “God is with us,” for in the Incarnation that arose in the womb of the Virgin by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), the holy divinity existed wholly pure and undivided—for the power of divinity, like the sun in the firmament, transcends the heavens and the depths and all created things—and still, the Son of God was with us then through his holy humanity. Indeed, he is with us now and will continue to be with us through the sacrifice of his body and through his teaching, until such time as we may see him openly again (cf. 1 John 3:2). The waters also aid that Sun of justice with the moon and the stars—that is, he sent his disciples throughout the entire globe to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). Everything that the prophets foretold of him he fulfilled in himself, just as at the creation of the world, God rested on the seventh day from his every work (Gen. 2:2). As God then made every creature subject to the service of humankind, so now, after his Ascension, the Son of God has commissioned his disciples to carry out the works of his Incarnation as they preach the Gospel to every creature according to his command. Indeed, they have revealed the right faith of the Son of God to humankind, just as when they lived with him, they had seen and known his miracles like the sun shining in the firmament.

As a numberless band of peoples received this faith, the Church was ordained, as when the moon was established with the stars in the firmament. At the same time, the Holy Spirit inspired these peoples to establish among themselves various masters and prelates to uphold the whole Church, as illustrated by the firmament with the sun, the moon, and the stars. But then lightning and thunder were raised up against unfaithful humans and cruel tyrants, for upon the faithful of the Lord, who blazed in faith like the sun shining in its strength, these fell as wolves

¹³ The “planets above the sun” are Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars—see Hildegard’s *Liber Divinorum Operum* I.2.31 and 33, CCCM 92, pp. 92-3 and 99-100.

¹⁴ This description of the constitution of the universe and its significance in salvation history owes much to Hildegard’s detailed visionary description thereof in *Liber Divinorum Operum* I.2.

and poured out their blood (Ezek. 22:27), so that none was left to bury them (Ps. 78[79]:3). The thunder that cracked in Satan's primal fall when he was plunged into hell rose up against the sins of God's enemies, for they would not stop their sinning; and lightning appeared against the many Christians who brought division to the faith in their unfaithfulness—lightning that consumed even many Catholics, as for example with Arius, whom Athanasius trod completely underfoot with the strength of John the Evangelist, who drank in from the breast of Jesus that which flew on high when he proclaimed the Gospel in the mystical breath of divinity.¹⁵ Likewise, Athanasius later wrote about the unity of the divinity as he fortified the Church, so that every person “who should want to be saved should hold the faith whole and undefiled” (cf. *Quicumque* 1-2), believing perfectly in God lest they be condemned and plunged into Gehenna.¹⁶

“But the true faith is this: that one God in a Trinity of persons and the Trinity in one God ought to be gloriously honored without any confusion or division of the unity, for there is one God inseparably in one substance of divinity” (cf. *Quicumque* 3-4). For the Father is not different in substance, nor is the Son different, nor is the Holy Spirit different, nor are they separated from another in the substance of divinity; rather, “in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit there is one divinity” of a single substance in the glory of majesty (cf. *Quicumque* 6). Yet, “there is one person of the Father,” which is neither of the Son nor of the Holy Spirit; “and another of the Son,” which is neither of the Father nor of Holy Spirit; “and another of the Holy Spirit,” which is neither of the Father nor of the Son (cf. *Quicumque* 5); and of these persons there is a substance single and indivisible, an honor equal and fixed, a power coeternal and invincible (cf. *Quicumque* 6). “For what the Father is” in divinity but not in person, “such is the Son” in divinity but not in person, “and such also is the Holy Spirit” in divinity but not in person (cf. *Quicumque* 7), for in the distinction of persons, the Father is one, the Son another, and the Holy Spirit another; but in the substance of divinity, the Father is not different, nor is the Son different, nor is the Holy Spirit different. And how are these persons to be understood? God indeed exists and lives rationally in his Word, and God created the world—especially humankind—with all of his own glory. God held always in eternity that which ought to exist, and only God, without whom there is nothing, could do this. Indeed, is there anyone who can bring something that does not exist into being? Not at all! God made all things in his Word, as affirmed by John, who reclined upon breast of Christ (John 13:23).¹⁷

¹⁵ Cf. Hildegard's description of the mystical experience that precipitated the writing of the *Liber Divinorum Operum*, in an autobiographical passage in *Vita S. Hildegardis*, II.16 (ed. Monika Klaes, *Vita Sanctae Hildegardis—Leben der heiligen Hildegard* [Fontes Christiani, Bd. 29; Herder, 1998], p. 172; trans. Anna Silvas in *Jutta & Hildegard: The Biographical Sources* [Brepols, 1998; Pennsylvania State Pres, 1999] p. 179). The description of John (“the beloved disciple”) draws from John 7:37-8 and 13:23.

¹⁶ Citations to the Pseudo-Athanasian *Symbolum “Quicumque”* are to the edition in Denzinger, nos. 75-76 (*Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 36th ed. [1976], pp. 40-2); for an easily accessible online text, see <http://www.creeds.net/ancient/Quicumque.html>.

¹⁷ Hildegard enunciates here a key principal of her neoplatonic ontology, that God foreknew from eternity everything that exists. Thus, she does not actually ascribe to the notion of creation *ex nihilo*, as she understands the idea behind everything to have already existed within God's foreknowledge before time, and then to have been brought forth through the Word within time. Cf. *Liber Divinorum Operum* III.3, in CCCM 92, pp. 379-385 (trans. Nathaniel Campbell, available online: https://www.academia.edu/5545465/Hildegard_of_Bingen_Book_of_Divine_Works_Part_III_Vision_3)

Moreover, God is fire, and in this fire lies hidden a flame, and this flame is dynamic life.¹⁸ Yet in this fire there is no division except the distinction of persons. Furthermore, material and visible fire is the color of gold, and in this fire flashes a flame that blazes in a powerful breeze (cf. Acts 2:2-3). Indeed, this fire would not flash unless it had the property of flame, and it would not be dynamic except because of the breeze. Thus there are three terms within this fire: for the flame is from the fire, and the fire flashes from the flame, and it is not dynamic except because of the powerful breeze. Fire also burns hot with the flame, and this heat equally and wholly pervades and blows upon the fire and the flame. And if the heat were not in the fire, it would not be fire, nor would it have the thunder of flame.

The soul is also fire, and its fire pervades the entire body in which it exists—blood vessels with blood, bones with marrow, flesh with its color—and it is inextinguishable.¹⁹ The fire of the soul has its heat in rationality, which is the faculty by which it utters language.²⁰ But if the soul were not fiery, it could not thaw the stiffness of cold, nor could it fortify the body with the blood vessels. Because the soul is light and breezy in rationality, moreover, it distributes its heat properly through every part of the body, so that its uneven concentration would not scorch the body. Furthermore, when the soul extracts itself from the body, the body fails, just as torches cannot burn when they lack the heat of a fire. Humankind is rational because of God, and human rationality resounds with fire in a breeze.²¹ For rationality is a powerful force, fiery and undivided; if it were not fiery, it would not be breezy, and if it were not breezy, it would not resound.

God created all things, and besides him alone, no one ever made anything living—although humans craft things with their own skill, they cannot cause them to live, for humankind is a creature with a beginning. By contrast, he who created all things was not created (cf. *Quicumque* 8), for there was no beginning before him, and he himself is without beginning—all things exist in him, for by him all things were made (John 1:3).

From some of these things humankind flees so as not to be injured by them—and because of these, humankind looks to God with trust and calls out to him to come to their aid and keep them in the rest of peace. Many other things exist on account of and within humankind; with these humans do their work, for they assist humankind gently and fittingly, to teach them to have love for God. For if a person knew nothing except what is light and pleasant, they would not actually know what a thing is or what to call it. The most complete form of knowledge comes from the full weight of hardship and injury—only thus does a person both recognize what is good and what is evil, and know things as they were given names by Adam (cf. Gen. 2:19). For if a person knew only one thing among many, the work of God could not be perfected in them—they would see something but not understand it, hear something and not be able to know what it is. Such a person would be empty and burned out, like a thing that has been turned to char after being burned up by fire.

¹⁸ In *Scivias* II.2.6, Hildegard compared the Trinity to three properties of a flame: its brilliant light (*splendida claritas*), scarlet verdure (*pupureus viror*), and fiery heat (*igneus ardor*).

¹⁹ Cf. *Liber Divinorum Operum* I.4.103, in CCCM 92, p. 245; for the properties of the human body in microcosmic relation to the structure of the universe and its moral signification, see also *Liber Divinorum Operum* I.3, in CCCM 92, pp. 114-36.

²⁰ “which is the faculty by which it utters language”: *qua verbum sonat*. Another of Hildegard’s metaphors for the Trinity in *Scivias* II.2.7 invokes the properties of a word—its sound (*sonus*), force or meaning (*virtus*), and breath (*flatus*).

²¹ Cf. *Liber Divinorum Operum* I.4.105, in CCCM 92, p. 251.

Thus, as already stated above, “the Father is uncreated, the Son is also uncreated, so also the Holy Spirit is uncreated,” (*Quicumque* 8), for these three persons are one God, and all things created were created through this God, but without him nothing was made (John 1:3). Indeed, he willed that the beginning that was made at the beginning of creation would have a likeness of him, who is without beginning—it could not have happened in any other way, for nothing would then exist. In God exist both life and truth (cf. John 14:6)—but in the fallen angel and likewise in fallen humanity there is an emptiness that is puffed up by pride, through which the wind simply passes. That which was made by God and in God is life in him (John 1:4)—but God crushed the head of that one who first grasped after those evils (cf. Gen. 3:15), so that he who is without life was cast into hell (cf. Is. 14:15).

“The Father is also immeasurable” (*Quicumque* 9), for he cannot be comprehended within any capacity, nor can he be delimited by any number, for anything that can be so delimited was made in the beginning. For God held all things in his foreknowledge—yet, he did not create everything all at once.²² Rather, there are certain intervals between creatures, as can be understood in the example of a human person, who exists as an infant, and then a child, an adolescent, an adult, and in old age. Moreover, the Son and Holy Spirit are also to be understood as immeasurable, because they too cannot be comprehended by any capacity or numeration.

“The Father is also eternal” (*Quicumque* 10) within that eternity that has no beginning, as seen in the likeness of a rotating wheel in which there is neither beginning nor end.²³ For God is spirit (John 4:24), and every spirit is indeed incomprehensible and indivisible. For eternity has no property of change, as it is said, “The eternal is what was and is and will remain.” Thus in the property of eternity nothing is like God, for eternity is singular, and all of God’s creation was made through it.

Coeternal to the Father in divinity, the Son was clothed by a creature in the garment that is humanity. Divinity revealed this garment like a ray affixed to the sun; though the sun emits its light upon the earth, it is not thereby increased or decreased. Likewise, when the Son of God came into the world, he was neither increased nor lessened in divinity, for he put on his garment in the same way as God clothed Adam from a frail creature, lest his nudity be seen (cf. Gen. 3:21). Indeed, humankind could not possibly see eternity except in humanity, for divinity lay hid within humanity, so that through the garment of humanity the Son was known, just as a person wearing armor is recognized even though they may not be seen because they are hidden beneath the armor.

“The Holy Spirit is also eternal” (*Quicumque* 10) and coeternal to the Father and the Son. It was present at every creature’s beginning, and by breathing upon each one, it gave it mobility. There is only one eternity in God, however, not three eternities (cf. *Quicumque* 11) like the three little bits into which Arius divided it as if he were chopping up a person’s limbs. Rather, divinity exists as a single eternity that human reason cannot define with any single name because its works are so powerful. Indeed, because a human person has a beginning and will end in ashes, they are unable to describe things that are before beginning and after ending. But in keeping the one faith (cf. *Quicumque* 1) in their soul, a person can speak of the substance of God, which is spiritual. For the soul is a breath from God, and so it both grasps many invisible things and

²² Cf. “O quam mirabilis,” in Hildegard of Bingen, *Symphonia*, ed. B. Newman (Cornell University Press, 1988, 2nd ed. 1998), p. 100; and *Liber Divinorum Operum* III.1.2, in CCCM 92, p. 346.

²³ Cf. *Liber Divinorum Operum* III.5.2, in CCCM 92, pp. 406-7.

perceives the unity of divinity in “the right faith” (*Quicumque* 30). For “there are not three uncreated gods, nor three immeasurable ones,” but one God both “uncreated and immeasurable,” (*Quicumque* 12), divided neither into three modes nor into three parts.

“The Father is also omnipotent,” and created all things through his Word, which is his “omnipotent Son;” and “the omnipotent Holy Spirit” (*Quicumque* 13), which is life, pervades all those things, burning like the heat of fire and flame. “Yet there are not three omnipotent beings,” but God in three persons “is one omnipotent God” (*Quicumque* 14). It would not be proper or fitting if a human person, who is a single human with a rational soul (cf. *Quicumque* 37), were divided into three parts, for then they would not be a whole life but a dead and lifeless body. Thus, how would it be possible for singular Life, in which there is no death, no beginning, no change, to be divided? Moreover, “God is the Father,” who is powerful; “God is the Son,” who is the power of the Father; and “God is the Holy Spirit,” who is the life through which all life comes forth (*Quicumque* 15). “Yet there are not three gods,” (*Quicumque* 16), but a single Godhead without any division, whose strong and mighty power is described by individual terms. “Thus the Father is Lord” because he governs; “the Son is Lord” because he does work; and “the Holy Spirit is Lord” because it gives life (*Quicumque* 17). These are a whole and integral divinity with three names, just as God designed his entire work in a single power of divinity. “There are not three Lords” (*Quicumque* 18a) who govern individually, however. Rather, with a complete and perfect unity the divinity exists in the three powers of the three persons—governing, working, and giving life to all creatures and moving them each according to his own office. “And thus there is one Lord” (*Quicumque* 18b).

This Lord made two works: the angels, and humankind together with all creation. While the angels are spirits, humans were made “in the image and likeness of God” (Gen. 1:26) to work with the five senses of their bodies. These five senses do not create division, however; rather, through them a person is wise and both knows and understands how to carry out their tasks. The rationality of the human soul was God’s sign of these three faculties—wisdom, knowing, and understanding—in humankind; the rational soul causes the body to move in its operation, and in it are fully executed the five senses of the human body. For through vision humans recognize other creatures; through hearing, their true rationality explains to them what it is that they are hearing; through smell they determine what things are appropriate or inappropriate for their use; through taste they recognize what types of things to eat; through touch they execute works both good and evil; and with all five senses, they direct all their works. These five senses are joined into one in a human person in such a way that any one cannot lack any of the others; and though they all exist in a single human person, that human is not divided into two or three humans. Rather, the human person accomplishes all of their works with these five senses, while still being a single human. Moreover, humans come to know creation through the faculties of wisdom, knowing, and understanding; likewise, through creation and through his magnificent works, which they can scarcely comprehend even with the five senses, they come to know God, whom they cannot see except in faith (cf. Rom. 1:20). Thus, through their five senses, humans come to know and comprehend all things in creation, for through sight they love what they taste; through hearing they discern what they choose is fitting for them to smell; and through touch they accomplish what pleases them—and this reveals that God, who created all creatures, is their exemplar. Moreover, through that which constitutes wisdom, humans wisely sense what is pleasing or harmful for them; through that which constitutes knowing, they command and constrain creation and subdue it for their service, and also gather what they want and flee from what they do not want; and through that which constitutes understanding, they know what befits

each and every part of creation according to its office. With these three powers and their appurtenances, humans are rational in their soul, which cannot at all be divided, such that if any of a person's limbs is cut off by some diabolical inducement, the rational soul is not on account of this divided in any way. On the other hand, the body is the edifice of the soul and operates with it according to its sensibility, just as a mill-wheel is turned by water.

Therefore all peoples that have been anointed with chrism are compelled in the right faith to confess, not that there is any division in the unity, but that the three persons are one, true, and strong divinity (cf. *Quicumque* 19). Since there are not three souls but one soul in a single rational soul, even though it has three faculties, how could there be any separation or division in the unity of divinity, even though all things were created by God? Therefore, "it must not be said that there are three gods or three lords" (*Quicumque* 20); rather, there is said to be one God who created all things, and one Lord upon whom all creatures call as their Lord, and whose own are all things (cf. John 10:12). Thus, it must be forbidden to hold that there is any divided individuality within the unity of the divinity, for God is one.

"And the Father was not made by anyone," for before him none had appeared by whom he could have been "begotten or created" (*Quicumque* 21), for he is eternal and without beginning. Furthermore, "the Son is of the Father alone" without any separation, "not made" in the beginning "nor created" in his members, "but begotten" (*Quicumque* 22) as the light is within the sun without any separation. He took up flesh from the Virgin Mary, yet the brightness of divinity did not retreat from him—he existed eternally in divinity with the Father, even though he existed within time to put on his garment of flesh from his Virgin Mother (cf. *Quicumque* 31). Moreover, the Holy Spirit is the life that moves all breaths within creatures. Yet "it was not made" life through any breath, nor "created" by any nor "begotten" of any—rather, it exists coeternal and coequal to the Father and to the Son in divinity (cf. *Quicumque* 23 and 26). Indeed, it was present at the first creation of the world, for "the Spirit of God was borne above the waters" (Gen. 1:2) and illumined the circuit of the entire sphere when the Word of God said, "Let there be!" (Gen. 1:3).

And "proceeding from the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit" (*Quicumque* 23) in the truth of prophecy made the prophets to prophesy—yet very often, though they wrote it down as text, they hid the depth of their prophecy, speaking sometimes in figures as in shadow or in the vision of night (Dan. 7:12). As it came down upon the apostles in tongues of fire, it filled them entirely (Acts 2:3-4) and made them different people from who they had once been, so that they could see those tongues and feel that touch of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the Spirit had never appeared to any person in this way before Christ's birth, nor shall it appear again thereafter, for Christ is the only-begotten of God. But it did appear to them in tongues of fire, and this happened because the Virgin Mary conceived the Son of God in the Spirit's fiery heat—and thus it proceeds from the Father and from the Son.²⁴ Moreover, because the apostles saw the Spirit in fire, they spoke openly with wisdom and understanding. But because the Son of God was conceived in the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit remained and remains in him and is always with him, nor are they ever separated from each other. Therefore the pure and whole faith (cf. *Quicumque* 1-2) is that "the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son," as already said. Moreover, when the Son said, "He proceeds from the Father" (John 15:26), he

²⁴ Hildegard's justification for the double procession of the Holy Spirit springs from its role in the Incarnation. This also appears to be the reason for her suggestion that the physical appearance of the Holy Spirit in tongues of fire at Pentecost was, like the Incarnation, an historically unique event.

was speaking in honor of the Father and noting that his own Incarnation took place in time, even though the Father's divinity does not experience time.²⁵

And so “there is one Father and not three fathers” (*Quicumque* 24a)—one in power, because if he were not powerful, he could not have begotten the Son, and if the Son had not been begotten, the world could not have been created. “There is also one Son and not three sons” (*Quicumque* 24b)—one, through whom all things were made (John 1:3), who is “consubstantial with the Father” (*Nicene Creed*). “And there is one Holy Spirit and not three holy spirits” (*Quicumque* 24c)—one, giving life and moving all things. For every root has within itself the viridity from which its fruit comes forth, and although this process is thought to be irregular, yet they are still in one. How then could the Creator of all things not exist in a trinity of persons? For the person of the Father is understood by the root, the person of the Son by the fruit, and the person of the Spirit through the viridity—and they are not separated the one from the other, but exist as one God.²⁶

And “in this unity of Trinity” there is “nothing prior” in antecedence, “nothing after” in subsequence, “nothing greater” in magnificence, “nothing lesser” in power (*Quicumque* 25); but “the entire persons” of this Trinity join themselves together as one without any gaps or emptiness. In eternity they exist in equality, “coeternal and coequal to each other” (*Quicumque* 26), so that in these persons there can be nothing of which according to the divinity it could be said, “one is and one was not,” or, “one is great and one is small”—for God lacks beginning and ending and receives neither increase nor decrease, for he is unchangeable. The work of God in creation, however, is at first unformed and only later appears as formed and passes through time as it increases and becomes greater and then contracts and becomes lesser. Three persons, therefore, “are to be worshipped in unity” (cf. *Quicumque* 27) and one God in three persons, for he created all things and is the life through which all living things come forth. Every faithful person should thus accept this without any doubt.

It is also necessary for the faithful person, lest they separate themselves from the catholic faith, to believe that the Incarnation of the Son of God is true (cf. *Quicumque* 29). They ought also to consider themselves—how they were created and how their laboring body is one with their rational soul (cf. *Quicumque* 37). For before time God foresaw the human form in which he would assume flesh, and whoever doubts this fact denies their very self and does not believe that humankind is one in two natures (of the soul and of the body) according to the three modes of which they are constituted (soul, body, and rationality)—for if one of these three were missing, they would not in fact be human. For humankind is rational in the soul that executes any action whatsoever in the body with the sound of words—and the rest of creation assists humankind just like the branches assist a tree, for humankind was not created without the rest of creation, just as a tree does not exist without its branches. In truth, therefore, the right faith is that Christ, the Son of God begotten before time, is God, and he is also a true human through the putting on of flesh. And so “he is God, begotten of the substance of the Father before time” (*Quicumque* 31a), for outside of time he is coeternal and coequal to the Father, and “all things were made through him”

²⁵ This is Hildegard's explanation for why Jesus, in speaking of the coming of the Paraclete in John 15, does not mention the double procession.

²⁶ For Hildegard's identification of the Spirit with her powerful concept of “viridity” (*viriditas*)—the green essence of verdant, fertile, effulgent life—see her sequence for the Holy Spirit, *O ignis Spiritus Paracliti*; and Nathaniel M. Campbell, “*Imago expandit splendorem suum*: Hildegard of Bingen's Visio-Theological Designs in the Rupertsberg Scivias Manuscript,” *Eikón / Imago* 4 (2013, Vol. 2, No. 2), pp. 1-68, esp. pp. 44-5.

(John 1:3). But according to his humanity, which possesses temporality, “he is human of the substance of his mother” (*Quicumque* 31b). He is indeed fully God in the wholeness of eternity, and fully human with a rational soul and pure flesh (cf. *Quicumque* 32) and without the male sexual commingling of human nature.²⁷ He is coequal to the Father in the eternity of divinity, but lesser than him in his humanity, which possesses temporality (cf. *Quicumque* 33). As God and human, he is not divided into two—rather, he is one Christ, not by changing his divinity into flesh, but by assuming the flesh that divinity joined to itself (cf. *Quicumque* 34-5) and thus flooded with its brightness as a ray of the sun shines in the sun. Yet on this account neither the substance of divinity nor the substance of the flesh was mixed together in any confusion with the other, but in a true unity of person is Christ one, the true Son of God (cf. *Quicumque* 36). For as there is no change in the rational soul on account of human flesh—indeed, the rational breath is itself of God and pervades the entire human body and sets in motion all the works of the person who labors at them—and “as the rational soul and flesh are a single human person” (*Quicumque* 37a), so without any doubt the Son of God, born before time and then clothed fully with flesh taken from a Virgin, as was said above, “is one Christ, God and human” (*Quicumque* 37b)—for he is indeed called “Christ” on account of the anointing of God’s grace. In his holy humanity, he was wounded by the piercing of nails and the lance on account of the first human’s single wound that the latter had inflicted upon his entire offspring (cf. Rom. 5:12)—to cleanse that wound with the bruising of his blood (cf. Is. 53:5), to flood it with the anointing of the oil of grace, and to bind it up through penitence, for humankind ought to grieve the fact that they have sinned (cf. *Quicumque* 38a). Wounded, “he descended” in the spirit into the muck of the hellish deep (cf. *Quicumque* 38b), and there he drew to himself as many as possible—that is to say, he bore the first human away from that Hell, as well as all those who had ever touched upon God in the morality of human honor, and took them all to that place of delight and joy that had been lost because of their primal parent.²⁸ But “on the third day he rose from the death” of the sleeping body (*Quicumque* 38c), and this signified the three persons of the Godhead. “Ascending” with that very same body, “he went to Heaven,” and there “he sits” to rule “at the right hand of the Father” (*Quicumque* 39a-b), which is the salvation of the people that believes, for he grants life to those whom he redeemed by his blood.

And all of those were foreknown before the beginnings of every age, for the Word of the Father by which all things were made (John 1:3) put on flesh, so that he might redeem that humankind whom he had formed. Moreover, that Son of God “shall come” as a righteous Judge at the end of time “to judge the living and the dead” (*Quicumque* 39c)—the living are those who, doing the work of faith, are found in that good deed; but the dead are those engaged by unbelief only in the deeds of death. At the calling voice of the singing trumpet, humankind shall submit to the Son of God for judgment like a footstool, for as he gazes upon each person, he shall recognize who is worthy. For “at the coming” of this Judge and by that call, the dead “shall rise again with their bodies” (*Quicumque* 40a), just as at the sound of the Word of God every created thing came forth. All shall answer their Judge for the individual deeds they did in their mortal body (cf. *Quicumque* 40b), and no one will be able to make excuses for themselves, for at that time, each and every person shall see and recognize openly the deeds they once had done, though

²⁷ “without the male sexual commingling of human nature”: *absque ulla uirili commixtione humane nature*. This is Hildegard’s circumlocution to indicate that no male semen was “commingled” with Mary’s virgin flesh in Christ’s conception, as it would have been in the normal course of human procreation. Cf. *Liber Divinorum Operum* I.1.2: Caritas declares, “For I am life, pure and whole, which (...) did not take root from man’s sexual power.”

²⁸ “first human...primal parent”: sc. Adam.

before they alone knew of them, because they will wear their deeds like clothes, and these will follow them everywhere. Those who did just and upright works shall enter into the brilliance of life greater than what the sun shines upon this world, and their souls shall be illumined by the grace of God. For this the angels praise God, since these have done such great works that the angels are gloriously enveloped within them like a person wrapped and clothed within a precious garment. The Son of Man shall also lift up in his blood the countless multitude of those persons who before their end or at their end carried out perfect penance and confessed their sins to God, and to each he shall render their reward in life according to their deeds. But the wicked will have no excuses for their unjust deeds and will not know what to say; those who worshipped idols because of the devil's artifice and performed endless wicked deeds with the devil's cohort shall be clothed with the confusion of their works and descend with the devil into the muck of that Hell where he took up residence when he wished to be like God (cf. Is. 14:14).

It is to be believed, therefore, faithfully and in truth that there is one divinity in three persons and three persons in one divinity—the one life of eternity. Those who do not thus believe shall be rooted out on the day of salvation.

O masters and teachers of the people, why are you blind and mute in regards to the inner knowledge of the Scriptures that God has committed to you, just as he established the sun, the moon, and the stars so that rational humankind might recognize and discern the times and seasons? Knowledge of the Scriptures has been set before you so that in them, as if in a sunbeam, you might recognize each and every danger, and so that through your teaching, you might shine upon the unbelief of wandering humans like the moon shining in the shadows of the night. These and many others, like Saducees and heretics, err in the faith—and they are enclosed even among you, and many of you know exactly who they are—and they are like cattle and beasts (cf. Eccles. 3:18), with their faces turned downward. For they neither see nor wish to know that because of the breath of life (Gen. 2:7), they are rational. They do not lift up their heads to him who created them and rules them through the five senses that he granted to them. Why, therefore, is there in a rational person this likeness of a hunched-over animal—roused by a puff of air that at its last it again breathes out and dies, it has no other knowledge than what it senses and its fear of the predator, and it does nothing for itself except that to which it is instinctually driven? How is it fitting that a human should live in the company of cattle, when the herd is subject in service to humankind, to feed them and be ruled and governed by them, since the herd is not rational?²⁹

This is why the highest Father said to his Son, as written through the Holy Spirit: “You shall rule them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel” (Ps. 2:9). Which is to say: “Those who resist you, ‘you shall rule’ and chastise ‘with a rod of iron,’ which is hard, ‘and dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel,’ which is made from mud, because they also are of the earth.” For they shall not enter by faith the gate of uprightness (cf. John 10:1-9), nor shall they leave it by the reputation of good works, for they are thieves who slaughter according to the peculiar whims of their own will and lay waste on the pretense of what they wish—they are hypocrites who pervert the law for their own destruction.

But you, who are like the moon and stars in the master's task of teaching to those who listen to you—yet to them, you ruminate upon Scripture more for the honor and riches of the world than for God—listen and understand that much more is necessary in order to dispel the nighttime shadows of wandering, unfaithful human beings, and to draw to you by faith those

²⁹ Cf. *Liber Divinorum Operum* I.1.8.

who do not know in what way to walk. Govern them now through true admonition, showing to them that in the beginning, God created heaven and earth and the rest of creation because of humankind; that he placed humankind amid the delights of paradise and gave them the commandment that was broken, for which they were cast out into the shadows of this exile (cf. Gen. 1-3). Moreover, in this transgression is shown how great was the crime when they obeyed not their Creator but the one who seduced them, for it is more righteous to obey the Lord than to obey that treacherous slave who pretended to be the Lord. Indeed, with such words fill up their hearts “with a rod of iron,” so that they understand not to turn away from the Creator—and that if they should fall away from him in unfaithfulness, they may fall into the tomb of Hell with him whom they have imitated. For those who persevere in unfaithfulness “shall be dashed to pieces like a potter’s vessel,” because they seem to the Potter unworthy and unsuitable. Because they did not do the works of faith, they shall not be able to enter into eternal life, for the potter’s defective vessel is not repaired but shattered.

You who rule the people, understand these things and look to the invisible God whom no one can conquer nor see with the eyes of the flesh. Pay attention to how you govern your estates, which you have received from him, for in his name you have been glorified with great honor. Govern the people in this way, lest before him at the Day of Judgment you are ashamed of your governance. Beware also that you are not so influenced and weakened by the desire of the flesh and the delights of the world that you can scarcely open a single eye to see the teaching of heaven.

These are indeed hard words for you, for he who diligently attends to the heavenly among the matters that he governs wounds his entire body as he draws away from himself the desires of the flesh. Therefore, because of the fear of God who is life and truth, do not despise this person who writes these things in a female form, who is unlearned in the teaching of Scripture and has remained feeble from her childhood even until her seventieth year. She did not see or hear this writing with a person’s external eyes and ears—rather, she saw and heard it only in the inner knowledge of her soul. Do not therefore exalt your mind on high to scorn her, for God made even an irrational animal to speak as he willed.³⁰ Yet this vision, in which I, a poor little form, have seen these things, has never left my soul from my childhood even until my present age. The foregoing matters I have written in that place that, after being destroyed by certain tyrannical men, remained deserted for a very long time—that same place where rest the relics of blessed Rupert, a nobleman as reckoned according to the dignity of this present world, whom God gloriously gathered to himself at the age of twenty.³¹ Now at last, after all those years of desolation, this place has been restored by the grace and miracles of God. For the Lord was mindful in this matter of those words to his saint, which he spoke to his disciples, saying: “‘All the hairs of your head have been numbered’ (Luke 12:7)—he does not wish [the number] to be disregarded, but rather that it should reveal him.”

For of the merits of the saints it must be written that a good and upright reputation resounds in the ears of the faithful, just as creation also sounds praises to God because it was created by him. God is indeed eternal and his work was made to praise his name, for if there were no soul in the human body, the human could not be alive, nor could the soul operate with

³⁰ A reference to Balaam’s ass in Num. 22:28-30.

³¹ See Hildegard’s “Life of St. Rupert,” in Hildegard of Bingen, *Two Hagiographies: Vita sancti Rupperti confessoris, Vita Sancti Dysibodi episcopi*, trans. Hugh Feiss (Dallas Medieval Texts and Translations, 11; Peeters, 2010), pp. 44-85.

the flesh. In God the angel is praise, and in God the human is work. So may praise be to him in all his wonders and in the merits of the saints—he is true eternity, creating all things and renewing both heaven and earth at the last day. No other can fathom his height and depth, nor can any comprehend the breadth of his knowledge.

And so these things have been written to be heard and understood by the faithful: O how glorious is the divinity that revealed himself in his work of creation, as he did with the three children whom he so infused that in the furnace of fire they praised him even without having seen any Scriptures or having received any human teaching (cf. Dan. 3:51-90). For as the happy soul, stripped of its flesh, desires to taste and know nothing but God, so these three blessed children, though still living in the flesh, imitated the nature of the soul in their ardent desire for God. God the Father also willed that his Son be declared by the unbelief of ignorance in the person of Nebuchadnezzar (cf. Dan. 3:92), in the same way that even the wicked spirits know him, though they do not confess him, for God often reveals his wonders to all. He also showed his omnipotence in the person of powerful Samson, who overcame lions and wild beasts with his strength (cf. Judges 14:6)—though he was deceived by his wife, just as Adam was deceived by Eve, yet he still regained his powers and overcame that woman and the rest of his enemies (cf. Judges 16), just as Christ laid waste to the power of his enemies when he despoiled Hell. Moreover, in the most difficult battle of David against Goliath (cf. 1 Kings [1 Samuel] 17:41-50), God prefigured that he would bind up the ancient serpent through the humanity of his Son. On the other hand, he also granted such strength to the gentle female sensibility that a woman freed the people of Israel after slaying Holofernes in the night (cf. Judith 13)—and in this, God presignified his Son's mother, through whom his faithful people was to be freed.

Indeed, in the ancient saints, God made a contract of the prefigured covenant through the prophecy of the prophets and the burnt offering of rams and bulls, because he established in advance that he would join the Church to his Son in the union of betrothal (cf. Eph. 5:31-32). For through the putting on of the Son of God's humanity, the Church clings to that Son of God, who dowered her in his blood to receive his inheritance,³² so that through baptism she might rebirth to life the progeny that Eve bore unto death.³³ For Christ betrothed the Church to himself in his blood as by the oath that Abraham's servant swore upon his master's thigh (cf. Gen. 24:2)—that is, by this oath he prefigured the betrothal of the Church to Christ. But when Lucifer and his companions realized that God the Father had openly made this marriage for his Son, he seethed within himself; and just as Cain struck against the blood of Abel (cf. Gen. 4:8), so Lucifer entered the hearts of unbelievers and tyrants so that they would seize the righteous, the good, and the elect of God, and wound and slay them. For this reason Christ told his disciples the parable of the human king who sent his servants to those who were invited to the marriage—but when they refused to come, he sent more servants to them to get them to come, for the feast had already been prepared. But they neglected still and seized his servants and, after abusing them, killed them (Matt. 22:1-15)—for the Jews and other disbelieving people gathered in great merriment to destroy from the earth the saints of old, whom God first sent, and then the apostles, who were sent thereafter.

³² Cf. Hildegard's antiphon for the Church, *O virgo Ecclesia* (in *Symphonia*, ed. Newman, p. 250): Sed o quam preciosus est sanguis Salvatoris, qui in vexillo regis Ecclesiam ipsi desponsavit ("But O, how precious is the Savior's blood that with the royal banner sealed his bridegroom's promise to the Church").

³³ Cf. *Scivias* II.3 and II.5; and several of Hildegard's compositions to the Virgin, including the sequence, *O virga ac diadema* (*Symphonia*, pp. 128-130); the responsory, *O clarissima mater* (*Symphonia* p. 112); and the verses of *O magna res* (*Symphonia*, p. 264).

But God was mindful of the oath he made by the rainbow that he placed in the clouds of the sky (cf. Gen. 9:13-17) when he willed his Son—signified by the rainbow—to be born of untainted virginal nature. He overcame all of his enemies with a powerful assault, as those humans were destroyed by the water of the flood (cf. Gen. 7)—but to a new age of humankind, restored by the water of baptism, Christ appeared like a rainbow in the clouds to reign within the Church. Indeed, the Church of God was joined to the Son of God as circumcision was to the law, whose keeping was a forerunner and prefiguration of the Church. But the new age, gilded by the Church’s ornament, shall never be chided for any fault at all. Moreover, like the rainbow it will never fade from the sky, and when it will be suppressed with fear to the point that it can scarcely see through a single eye, it will again be restored in the Son of God, just as it will also be restored at the time of the son of perdition (II Thess. 2:3). The various colors of the rainbow also signify the powers and virtues of the thousands of saints—in fire’s heat chastity and continence, in purple the martyrs’ martyrdom, in hyacinth-blue the teaching of our ancestors, and in green the virtues of the saints’ good works, which come forth as beams breathed forth by the Son of God like rays from the sun.

And that king mentioned above—“he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city” (Matt. 22:7), for when the foregoing sufferings both old and new had passed, Almighty God in his anger brought enemy against enemy when the Roman emperors tore down and completely destroyed Jerusalem, the city that had been drenched by the blood of the True Lamb and the blood of the other saints, and laid waste to the laws and customs of those who lived in it by killing them or selling them into slavery.³⁴ From that time the Church was built again in its place, just as “the holy city, the New Jerusalem, comes down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Apoc. 21:2), for the Lamb of God gathers to himself people of all ages—suckling infants, children, young adults, the middle-aged, and the elderly—for whom he has adorned the Church in the newness of good works and the humility of virtues coming down from heaven. As each of them brings their good and holy works, prepared by the Spirit like a bride is adorned for her husband, to completion when they burn in the Spirit’s love, so also the Church was joined to Christ in her elect, especially the blessed Rupert. God made him, infused him completely in his childhood, and brought him to a good end; he was distinguished by birth and worldly wealth, and he was dear to God according to the liberty of God’s blessing.³⁵

³⁴ A reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple by Titus in A.D. 70, an event commonly thought to fulfill the blood curse of Matt. 27:25.

³⁵ This closing reference to St. Rupert aligns with Hildegard’s prefatory letter to the treatise, addressed to her congregation at the Rupertsberg, and its focus on legitimating their move to its foundation. Moreover, it is an indication that she composed this Commentary in concert with the *Vita S. Rupperti* (which immediately follows the *Explanatio* in the manuscripts), thus suggesting that this doctrinal document is complemented by a hagiographical one in providing comfort and guidance to a community anxious about her advanced age and possible death.