



A PLEA FOR THE CHRISTIANS
AND ON THE RESURRECTION



ATHENAGORAS OF ATHENS

A PLEA FOR THE
CHRISTIANS
AND ON THE
RESURRECTION

*Translated from the Greek by B. P. Pratten
From Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 2,
edited by Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D.*

First Edition by the
HOLY NATIVITY PRESS
OTTAWA, ONTARIO

2026

*Receive a daily word from the Church Fathers,
selected from the patristic library of
over eighteen million words.*



holynativitypress.com

First Edition by the Holy Nativity Press, 2026.

The text of *A Plea for the Christians and On the Resurrection* is translated
by B. P. Pratten, from Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff
(1885).

The scripture index and series notes copyright © 2026 by the Holy
Nativity Press, Ottawa, Ontario. All rights reserved.

Scripture references follow the King James Version; Septuagintal
references follow Brenton's English Septuagint.

For bulk orders, please contact
contact@holynativitypress.com

ABOUT THIS SERIES

The *Holy Nativity Patristic Library* presents the foundational texts of the early Christian Fathers in carefully typeset pocket editions. Each volume is drawn from the public-domain English translations of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* and the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* — the thirty-eight-volume collection edited by Philip Schaff and his collaborators between 1886 and 1900, which remains the most comprehensive English-language gathering of the patristic writings ever assembled.

We have undertaken to issue these works one at a time, as portable single-author editions, so that they may travel where the original folio volumes cannot — in a coat pocket, on a long flight, beside a hospital bed. Each volume preserves the Schaff translation and the translator's introduction. The foot-

note apparatus is retained where it serves the text; we have set aside those notes that pertain only to the nineteenth-century volume context, and any commentary at variance with the Orthodox confession of the Fathers themselves. We add a scripture index for the text in hand.

The texts are typeset in IM Fell English, a face cut by John Fell in seventeenth-century Oxford and freely available again through the work of Igino Marini. The Greek is set in Philokalia, designed for the Athonite tradition.

HOLY NATIVITY PRESS

Ottawa, Ontario

CONTENTS

<i>About This Series</i>	vii
--------------------------	-----

A PLEA FOR THE CHRISTIANS AND ON THE RESURRECTION

<i>Introductory Note</i>	3
<i>A Plea for the Christians</i>	13
Ch. I. Injustice Shown Towards the Christians	13
Ch. II. Claim to Be Treated as Others are When Accused	17
Ch. III. Charges Brought Against the Christians	20
Ch. IV. The Christians are Not Atheists, But Acknowledge One Only God	21

Ch. V. Testimony of the Poets to the Unity of God	23
Ch. VI. Opinions of the Philosophers as to the One God	25
Ch. VII. Superiority of the Christian Doc- trine Respecting God	28
Ch. VIII. Absurdities of Polytheism	29
Ch. IX. The Testimony of the Prophets	32
Ch. X. The Christians Worship the Fa- ther, Son, and Holy Ghost	33
Ch. XI. The Moral Teaching of the Chris- tians Repels the Charge Brought Against Them	36
Ch. XII. Consequent Absurdity of the Charge of Atheism	38
Ch. XIII. Why the Christians Do Not Offer Sacrifices	40
Ch. XIV. Inconsistency of Those Who Accuse the Christians	42
Ch. XV. The Christians Distinguish God from Matter	43
Ch. XVI. The Christians Do Not Wor- ship the Universe	45
Ch. XVII. The Names of the Gods and Their Images are But of Recent Date	47
Ch. XVIII. The Gods Themselves Have Been Created, as the Poets Confess	50

Ch. XIX. The Philosophers Agree with the Poets Respecting the Gods	54
Ch. XX. Absurd Representations of the Gods	56
Ch. XXI. Impure Loves Ascribed to the Gods	58
Ch. XXII. Pretended Symbolical Explanations	64
Ch. XXIII. Opinions of Thales and Plato	69
Ch. XXIV. Concerning the Angels and Giants	73
Ch. XXV. The Poets and Philosophers Have Denied a Divine Providence	76
Ch. XXVI. The Demons Allure Men to the Worship of Images	80
Ch. XXVII. Artifices of the Demons	82
Ch. XXVIII. The Heathen Gods Were Simply Men	83
Ch. XXIX. Proof of the Same from the Poets	88
Ch. XXX. Reasons Why Divinity Has Been Ascribed to Men	90
Ch. XXXI. Confutation of the Other Charges Brought Against the Christians	93
Ch. XXXII. Elevated Morality of the Christians	95

Ch. XXXIII. Chastity of the Christians with Respect to Marriage	98
Ch. XXXIV. The Vast Difference in Morals Between the Christians and Their Accusers	100
Ch. XXXV. The Christians Condemn and Detest All Cruelty	101
Ch. XXXVI. Bearing of the Doctrine of the Resurrection on the Practices of the Christians	104
Ch. XXXVII. Entreaty to Be Fairly Judged	106
<i>On the Resurrection of the Dead</i>	109
Ch. I. Defence of the Truth Should Pre- cede Discussions Regarding It	109
Ch. II. A Resurrection is Not Impossible	112
Ch. III. He Who Could Create, Can Also Raise Up the Dead	115
Ch. IV. Objection from the Fact that Some Human Bodies Have Become Part of Others	117
Ch. V. Reference to the Processes of Di- gestion and Nutrition	119
Ch. VI. Everything that is Useless or Hurtful is Rejected	121
Ch. VII. The Resurrection-Body Differ- ent from the Present	124

Ch. VIII. Human Flesh Not the Proper or Natural Food of Men	126
Ch. IX. Absurdity of Arguing from Man's Impotency	128
Ch. X. It Cannot Be Shown that God Does Not Will a Resurrection	130
Ch. XI. Recapitulation	132
Ch. XII. Argument for the Resurrection from the Purpose Contemplated in Man's Creation	135
Ch. XIII. Continuation of the Argument	140
Ch. XIV. The Resurrection Does Not Rest Solely on the Fact of a Future Judgment	142
Ch. XV. Argument for the Resurrection from the Nature of Man	145
Ch. XVI. Analogy of Death and Sleep, and Consequent Argument for the Resurrection	148
Ch. XVII. The Series of Changes We Can Now Trace in Man Renders a Res- urrection Probable	151
Ch. XVIII. Judgment Must Have Refer- ence Both to Soul and Body: There Will Therefore Be a Resurrection	153

Ch. XIX. Man Would Be More Un- favourably Situated Than the Beasts If There Were No Resur- rection	157
Ch. XX. Man Must Be Possessed Both of a Body and Soul Hereafter, that the Judgment Passed Upon Him May Be Just	160
Ch. XXI. Continuation of the Argument	161
Ch. XXII. Continuation of the Argument	164
Ch. XXIII. Continuation of the Argument	166
Ch. XXIV. Argument for the Resurrec- tion from the Chief End of Man	168
Ch. XXV. Argument Continued and Con- cluded	170
<i>Index of Scripture References</i>	173
<i>A Note to the Reader</i>	175
<i>Also from Holy Nativity Press</i>	179

A PLEA FOR THE CHRISTIANS
AND ON THE RESURRECTION

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

[Translated by the Rev. B. P. Pratten.]

[A.D. 177.] In placing Athenagoras here, somewhat out of the order usually accepted, I commit no appreciable violence against chronology, and I gain a great advantage for the reader. To some extent we must recognise, in collocation, the principles of affinity and historic growth. Closing up the bright succession of the earlier Apologists, this favourite author affords also a fitting introduction to the great founder of the Alexandrian School, who comes next into view. His work opens the way for Clement's elaboration of Justin's claim, that the whole of philosophy is embraced in Christianity. It is charming to find the primal fountains of Christian thought uniting here, to flow on for ever in the widening

and deepening channel of Catholic orthodoxy, as it gathers into itself all human culture, and enriches the world with products of regenerated mind, harvested from its overflow into the fields of philosophy and poetry and art and science. More of this when we come to Clement, that man of genius who introduced Christianity to itself, as reflected in the burnished mirror of his intellect. Shackles are falling from the persecuted and imprisoned faculties of the faithful, and soon the Faith is to speak out, no more in tones of apology, but as mistress of the human mind, and its pilot to new worlds of discovery and broad domains of conquest. All hail the freedom with which, henceforth, Christians are to assume the overthrow of heathenism as a foregone conclusion. The distasteful exposure of heresies was the inevitable task after the first victory. It was the chase and following-up of the adversary in his limping and cowardly retreat, "the scattering of the rear of darkness." With Athenagoras, we touch upon tokens of things to come; we see philosophy yoked to the chariot of Messiah; we begin to realize that sibylline surrender of outworn Paganism, and its forecast of an era of light:—