

CHAPTER THREE

THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD

The *Incarnation*,¹ *Epiphany* or *Theophany* is the Incarnation of the second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son and Word of God, **Who** “...became flesh...” taking **up human** nature. Hence Divine Nature **was** united **with human** nature. This **Work** was the Work of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. In the Incarnation, the Father **having** conceded to send His Son into the world, the Son came down and was **Incarnated when** the Holy Spirit **Sanctified** the Ever-Virgin Mary, giving her the **Power** to bring forth the **Only Begotten Son** of God.²

The question: “*Why did the second Person of the Holy Trinity have to be Incarnated³ instead of one of the other two Divine Persons?*” remains an unapproachable and unsearchable **Mystery** to the human mind. The main explanation given by the **Holy Fathers** of the Orthodox Church is **that the** Word was **Incarnated** in order that the hypostatic **Attributes** of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity **would** remain unmovable. **It was not intended** for the Father to become **the** “*Son of Man*,” **rather than** the Word **Who** has the attribute of being “*the Son*” **in the Trinity**. Christ’s Incarnation is already an **Act of Salvation**. By **assuming** our broken humanity into Himself, Christ restores it **to its former condition**.⁴

The Word **Who had** formed man from the dust of the earth and **Who** is the living **Image** of the Father, was being shown in order to reform man **for** adoption, **completely** raising in him the wounded “*image*” since everything was made through the Son. In Him everything is renewed. He is the Light of the world **Who knows** the Father. He is the only **One Who can** manifest the Father to us **and bring** us into a new **Creation**.

The condescension of the Son in the Incarnation was not enforced on Him because of some need. **Instead** it was an absolutely free Act, which is described by Holy Scripture as **the** “...*good pleasure of His Will*.”⁵ It reveals not only the infinite Love of God **towards fallen** man, but the infinite Divine **Wisdom** and **Power that** worked out the **Supernatural, Mysterious** and effective **Way** through which the Justice and Holiness of God was satisfied and **so that** man, who was led by death, would rise and be restored into the **Blessed Life**. God became Man in order to deify **humanity who in turn** becomes “...*by Grace*...” whatever God is “...*by Nature*.”⁶

In addition, the union of the **Unapproachable Divine Nature** with the limited human nature was characterised as a **Mystery of Divine Power**, which shines upon all the other beneficial results for man. The importance and necessity of the Incarnation of **the** Word of God is manifested in the infinite **Power of Salvation** offered by Christ on the Cross - a **Sacrifice without which** mankind cannot be reconciled to God.

¹ Lossky, *Theology*, pp. 90-94.

² Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, pp. 112-115. Dositheus, *Confession*, ch. 7, p. 31. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, p.74 Kefalas, *Catechesis*, pp.71-72

³ Cf. Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, pp. 189-193.

⁴ Ware, *Way*, p. 103.

⁵ Luke 2:14; 10:21. Matth. 11:26. Ephes. 1:5, 9. Phil. 2:13.

⁶ Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, p. 127.

1. Definition of the Incarnation

The Incarnation of the Word of God can be defined as an Act of the complete Holy Trinity. Through this Act, God the Word "...took up from the beginning our nature, not in that it existed by itself and became a person, but in that it existed in His own hypostasis." From the Holy Spirit and in the Holy Virgin, God the Word was conceived and His human nature was formed from her blood. On the other hand, the Incarnation can be defined as the permanent and Eternal Union of God the Word with human nature, in which "...the hypostasis of God the Word became hypostasis in the flesh without any change..." whereas His human nature was not absorbed by His Divine Nature and each nature remained unchanged, preserving their own attributes.⁷ In other words: the Incarnation is the unmixed and undivided union of human nature with Divine Nature in the Hypostasis of God the Word in one Person. Thus, because of the real and full union of the two natures in the God-Man Christ, He says: "I and My Father are one."⁸ He never said: "I and the Word are one" because it is the human revelation of the Word.⁹ The Incarnation, it was said, is an Act of identification and sharing. God saves us by identifying Himself with us, by knowing our human experience from within His own experience.¹⁰

Similar terms of the meaning of the Incarnation used by the Holy Fathers are: "manifestation,"¹¹ "appearance,"¹² "coming into the world,"¹³ "taking the form of a bond-servant,"¹⁴ "Epiphany" and "Theophany."¹⁵ In the West, the term "Incarnation" prevailed according to the use of the terms "flesh"¹⁶ and "flesh and blood"¹⁷ to manifest the whole man. St John the Apostle, Evangelist and Theologian proclaimed "...And the Word became flesh..."¹⁸ and renounced all those who do not confess that "...Jesus Christ came in the flesh."¹⁹

St Irenaeus used the term "Carnation"²⁰ whereas St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr used the phrase: "Jesus became flesh."²¹

⁷ St. John of Damascus, *Exposition, About the difference between union and incarnation*, III, 55, in Migne, P.G., 94, 1024.

⁸ John 10:30.

⁹ Martensen, *Dogmatique*, p. 408.

¹⁰ Ware, *Way*, p. 104.

¹¹ 1 Tim. 3:16. 1 John 1:2, 8.

¹² 2 Tim. 1:10. Titus 2:11; 3:4.

¹³ Heb. 10:5. Origen, *Against Celsus*, I, 43; II, 38; VI, 78, in Migne, P.G., 11, 741, 860, 1417. St. Basil the Great, *To Psalm 29(30)*, in Migne, P.G., 29, 305. Tertullian, *De carne Christi*, c. VI, in Migne, P.G., 2, 809.

¹⁴ Phil. 2:7. St. John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the divine Economia*, III, 45, in Migne, P.G., 94, 981. St. Athanasius the Great, *About the incarnation of the Word*, § 46, in Migne, P.G., 25, 177.

¹⁵ St. Athanasius the Great, *About the incarnation of the Word*, §§ 1, 46 and 47, in Migne, P.G., 25, 97, 177 and 180. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Homily 38*, § 3, in Migne, P.G., 36, 313.

¹⁶ Luke 3:6. John 17:2. Acts 2:17. Joel 2:28. 1 Peter 1:24. 1 John 3:2-3.

¹⁷ Matth. 16:17. Gal. 1:16. Ephes. 6:12. 1 Corinth. 15:50.

¹⁸ John 1:14.

¹⁹ 1 John 4:3.

²⁰ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book III, ch. 11, §§ 3-4, in Migne, P.G., 7, 939. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 209-210.

²¹ St. Justin, the philosopher and martyr, *1 Apology*, § 66, 2, in *B*, v. 3, p. 197.

The term “*Incarinate*” was incorporated in the Nicene Creed but to avoid any misinterpretation that favoured the heresy of Apollinarios, (according to which Christ did not have a mind or intellectual soul,) after the phrase “...*And was Incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary...*” the phrase “...*and was made man...*” was added.

2. The Son was Incarnated According to the One Will and Action of the Deity

In the Holy Trinity “...*there is one Divine Brightness and Action, simple and undivided...*” and the Son “...*does not have a different Energy from the Father...*” “...*for in the Trinity there is one Essence, one Goodness, one Power, one Will, one Energy, not three similar to one another, but one and the same Movement of the three Hypostases.*”²² Consequently, concerning the Incarnation of the Word, although “...*under no circumstances the Father and the Holy Spirit participated in the Incarnation of God the Word,*”²³ that Creation that the Virgin conceived and brought forth, although referring only to the Son, was made possible by all three Persons of the Holy Trinity since their Works are always united and inseparable.

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, proclaimed that He was sent into the world by the Father.²⁴ St Paul referring to the fullness of the time, assured us that “...*when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.*”²⁵ And St John the Evangelist observed that “...*in this the Love of God was manifested towards us, that God has sent His Only Begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.*”²⁶ According to St Justin the Theophorus “...*through and in accordance to the Will of God the Word was made man for the human race...*” He emphasised also that “...*the Father wanted and the Son acted.*” The Father did not remain out of the Act and Will of Incarnation because “*everything is common to the Father and the Son.*”²⁷

Whatever applies to the Father concerning the Incarnation also applies to the Holy Spirit because “...*by the good pleasure of God the Father the Only Begotten Son and Word of God came down from Heaven...*” and “...*became flesh from the Holy Spirit and Mary the Holy Ever-virgin and Theotokos...*” “...*being conceived in her womb of the Holy Spirit...*”²⁸ Who “...*came down upon the Holy Virgin cleansing her and giving her the Power to bring forth...*” in order that in her that which is taken up by the Word “...*becomes the beginning of nature not by seed, but by the Creative Power through the Holy Spirit.*”²⁹

Eugenius Boulgareos observed: “...*only the Son took up humanity, although it was the Work of the whole Trinity... as an Action it was perfected outside of the*

²² St. John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the Holy Trinity*, book I, ch, 8, §§ 13, 14 and book III, ch. 6, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 828, 856, 860, 1005. Kefalas, *Christology*, pp. 256-261.

²³ St. Augustine, in Migne, *P.L.*, 40, 252.

²⁴ John 4:34; 5:23-24, 30, 37; 6:38, 44; 7:29, 33; 8:18; 11:42; 12:44-45, 49; 13:20; 17:8, 21, 23, 24.

²⁵ Gal. 4:4.

²⁶ 1 John 4:9.

²⁷ St. Justin, the philosopher and martyr, *I Apology*, 63, §§ 10 and 16, in *B*, v. 3, p. 196.

²⁸ St. John Chrysostom, *To Ephesians*, Homily 1, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 62, 15.

²⁹ St. John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the way of the conception of the Word and His divine incarnation*, book III, ch. 46, §§ 1 and 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 984 and 985.

*Deity; because the Father co-acted, in that He made the body, according to the Psalm; and the Son emptied Himself taking the form of a bond-servant³⁰ and the Holy Spirit acted according to the 'the Holy Spirit will come upon you.'³¹ Thus the Incarnation was only on the Son; therefore the Son and not the Father or the Holy Spirit was Incarnated.*³²

One must never forget that **being the God-Man**, in Christ "...dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily..."³³ In other words, God dwells essentially within Jesus Christ.³⁴ The actual Nature of God dwelled in the nature of man, as the soul dwells in the body, so that what was seen was united with the Only Begotten Son's Deity **but it** was not an **Energy** of God ruling over the body.³⁵ We confess that God is "...one **Principle**, simple, without synthesis, one **Essence**, one **Deity**" while the Son is "...perfect **Hypostasis**, inseparable from the **Hypostasis** of the Father..." as the Holy Spirit "...exists in its own **Hypostasis**, but is inseparable from the Father and the Son."³⁶ It is obvious that only the Word became man, "...but all the perfect **Nature** of the **Deity** being united in the one **Hypostasis** was united in the human nature..." and "...the whole **Deity** partook in us through the one **Hypostasis**." For we confess that "...in each one of the **Hypostases** is all the perfect **Nature** of the **Deity**."³⁷

3. An Incomprehensible Mystery

The Incarnation of Christ **is a Mystery** that surpasses all human understanding. It is not an enigma, but a **Divine Mystery** "...which from the beginning of ages has been hidden in God."³⁸ This **Mystery** is admired even by the **Angelic Hosts** and amongst men **It is** "...confidential, unspeakable and beyond understanding."³⁹ The Incarnation of the Word is in reality the "...most new of all news, the only **[thing]** new under the sun..."⁴⁰ and even before it **occurred it was unknown**, not only amongst men but **also** amongst Angels.

A **Mystery** also remains: "Why did the Son become **Man** and not **either** of the other two Persons?" The Word became **Man** in order that the **Hypostatic Attribute** of each Person **would** remain **immovable**. **With regard to the Deity**, the Father is **essentially** "the Father," not born of another father as **it is** among men, **remaining forever** Father. Likewise the Son is **essentially** "the Son," **never** becoming a father as **do the sons of men who, in their adulthood** when married, become fathers. **Thus in respect of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity** the Father **is forever** "the Father"

³⁰ Phil. 2:7.

³¹ Cf. Luke 1:35.

³² Boulgareos, *Theologicon*, p. 437.

³³ Col. 2:9.

³⁴ St. Isedorus of Pelusion, book IV, epistle 166, in Migne, *P.G.*, 78, 1256.

³⁵ St. John Chrysostom, *To Colossians*, Homily 6, § 2, in Montfaucon, v. 11, p. 422.

³⁶ Theodoretus of Cyrus, *To Colossians* 2:9, in Migne, *P.G.*, 82, 608-609.

³⁷ St. John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the Holy Trinity*, book I, ch. 8, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 809, 821; *Ibid, Exposition. That all the divine nature in one hypostases was united to all the human nature, and not part*, book III, ch. 50, § 6, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1004-1005.

³⁸ Eph. 3:9.

³⁹ See decisions of the 3rd Ecumenical Synod.

⁴⁰ St. John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the way of the conception of the Word and His divine incarnation*, book III, ch. 46, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 984.

while the Son is forever “the Son” although in the Incarnation only the Son of God becomes “the Son of Man.” Thus the Hypostatic Attribute of the Son remains immovable and as Man, the Word remains forever Son. On the other hand, how could the Attribute remain immovable if it was moving and changing, since the Father from Father would have become the Son of Man?⁴¹

Clement the Alexandrian and Origen supported the opinion that Christ, Who as the Word created man from dust, showed fallen man the way of Regeneration into sonship, in order to fulfill the Will of God when He said: “Let Us make man in Our image and likeness.” Christ “...is the beginning of those who became the Image of God.” He is on the one hand, the Image of the Father whereas, on the other hand, He is the image according to which men were created.⁴²

Only through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Who came into the world, was it possible for the Image of God to be Restored. For it was impossible for men to accomplish this, although “...they were also made in the Image...” because they had defiled it through the Fall. Neither could this Restoration be accomplished by the Angels “...for they are not in the Image...”⁴³ Therefore, He Who “...gave us His Image and we did not keep it, partakes in our weak nature, in order to make us once again partakers of His Divinity.”⁴⁴ Through this Recreation, from deplorable servants, we become sons of God through adoption by Grace. But, who else could free us from such slavery, raising us to the Rank of the sons of God besides Him Who is by Nature from the same Essence as the Father - the Son Who is born from all Eternity, assuring us: “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”⁴⁵

St Cyril of Alexandria commented that “...everything is worked through the Son.” And as “...all things were made through Him...”⁴⁶ likewise our Restoration through the Son will be accomplished “...and it will be impossible in the future for us to be partakers of the Father except only through the Son...”⁴⁷ Who “...when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him Who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.”⁴⁸

Since man was corrupted after his creation, “...he was in need of being recalled...” and Restored in order to manifest again “...God the Word...” “Who had made in the beginning from nothingness all things...” and with them man.⁴⁹ “For in no one else our life should be founded...” except only in the Lord “...through Whom

⁴¹ St. Athanasius the Great, *Against Arians*, I, § 21, in Migne, *P.G.*, 26, 55. St. John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the descent to Hades*, book IV, ch. 73, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1108.

⁴² Clement the Alexandrian, *Pedagogus*, I, 12, in *B*, v. 7, p. 125. Origen, *To John*, v. 1, ch. 17, in *B*, v. 11, p. 262.

⁴³ St. Athanasius the Great, *About the incarnation of the Word*, § 13, in Migne, *P.G.*, 25, 120.

⁴⁴ St. John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the holy and precious mysteries of the Lord*, book IV, ch. 86, § 13, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1137.

⁴⁵ John 8:36.

⁴⁶ John 1:3.

⁴⁷ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Homily 29*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 75, 434.

⁴⁸ 1 Corinth. 15:28.

⁴⁹ St. Athanasius the Great, *About the incarnation of the Word*, § 7, in Migne, *P.G.*, 25, 108.

also He made the world,⁵⁰ in order that we might also inherit the Life, which exists only in Him.”⁵¹

According to St Irenaeos He is the **One Who** will ‘...gather up all things in one...’⁵² including man, in Him. Thus the **Invisible** had to become visible and the **Unconceivable** to become conceivable and the **Immortal** to become mortal and the **Word** to become **Man**, in order that all things, even fallen man, would be summed up in Him in such a way that, as the **Word of God** is the **Lord of the Heavenly**, spiritual and invisible things, likewise in the visible and bodily He **would** be the **Ruler**.⁵³ And St Irenaeos continued saying that it would not have been possible **for** the **Lord** to gather up in **Himself** everything, if He had not become flesh and blood, **Saving** in **Himself** that which was lost in the beginning in Adam.⁵⁴

The Regeneration of mankind was taken up by the Son in order that He, through Whom “...all things were made...” “...and without [**Whom**] nothing was made that was made...”⁵⁵ **Who** “...breathed upon his face the **Breath of Life**...”⁵⁶ **would** restore to the first **Rank** our fallen nature and would **Recreate** whatever He had created. The Son of God as the **Eternal Word**, is the presupposition of the **Creation**, through **Whom** all things were made; likewise in the **Incarnation**, in which He is manifested in time as the **Christ**, **He** is the **Purpose of Creation**, **Who** through all things, as the **supreme Head**, **would** unite all things and reconcile everything under His **Command**.⁵⁷

The **Word of God** “...was the true **Light** which gives **Light** to every man coming into the world.”⁵⁸ If our **Teacher**, the **Word**, did not become **Man**, it would be impossible to learn those things **of God**.⁵⁹ “The **Word of God** vested **Himself with human nature**, in order that as **Man [he could]** speak to men, as the **Word and Wisdom of God [he could]** teach men to believe in the one and true **God** and to live according to the **Law**, which He gave.”⁶⁰ No one else could make **the Father** known, **except** the **Word Himself**.⁶¹ It remained **dependent** only on the **Word** through Whom “...all things were made...”⁶² and **Who** is called “*the Wisdom*” by all the **Prophets**. He is the only “...**Teacher of all men, the Advisor of God, Who foreknows everything**.”⁶³ He “...from the beginning of the world ‘at various times and in

⁵⁰ Heb. 1:2.

⁵¹ St. Athanasius the Great, *Against Arians*, II, 77, in Migne, *P.G.*, 26, 309.

⁵² Ephes. 1:10.

⁵³ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book III, ch. 16, § 6, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 925. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 234-235.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, *Heresies*, book V, ch. 14, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 925. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, p. 226.

⁵⁵ John 1:3.

⁵⁶ Gen. 2:7.

⁵⁷ Martensen, *Dogmatique*, p. 407.

⁵⁸ John 1:9.

⁵⁹ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book V, ch. 1, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 1120. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, p. 362.

⁶⁰ Gennadius, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. I, p. 366.

⁶¹ John 14:6-7.

⁶² John 1:3

⁶³ Clement the Alexandrian, VI, 7, in *B*, v. 8, p. 199.

various ways,⁶⁴ *prepared and perfected everything.*⁶⁵ He is the Light, which in the beginning **shone** in the darkness “...and the darkness did not comprehend it.”⁶⁶

All the seeds of Divine Truth, which are scattered **throughout** the entire world by the **Hand** of the Son of God, were spread in the souls of men. The Word had to appear in the **restricted** and approachable form of **Man** to reveal God Whose **unapproachable Divine Splendour** is impossible **for mortal** man to see. In Christ, the Incarnated Word of God, man could understand the fullness of the Deity **within** the **limited ability** of human nature and to see the **Attributes** of the **Divine Nature**, **although** not in their **Infinite Power** but according to man’s capability. Thus in the Incarnated Christ, instead of the All-presence of God, we meet the **Living, Acting** and real **Presence** of God, which enabled Christ to proclaim: “*He Who has seen Me has seen the Father.*”⁶⁷ Instead of the Divine All-knowing **God**, we have in our midst the **Wisdom** of the God-Man **Who** explains the **Mysteries** of the **Heavenly Kingdom** to men who ignore them. And the **Creative Almighty**ness becomes in Him the **Supreme Power**, which rules all the energies of nature and **perfects** them. The All-powerful **Holy Love** can proclaim that: “*All Authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on earth.*”⁶⁸ For all the **Powers** in **Heaven** and on earth, all the **Powers** of nature and man’s history are in the Lord and Saviour and cooperate with Him in the preparation of the **Heavenly Kingdom**, the Church of which He is the Head.⁶⁹

4. The Nature of the Incarnation

With regard to the **Nature** of the Incarnation, we must first remember the God-inspired words of the Epistle to the Hebrews: “*For it was fitting for Him, for Whom are all things and by Whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through sufferings.*”⁷⁰ The Incarnation and the sufferings of the Incarnated Word are characterised **by Holy Scripture** as “...fitting for Him.” The Incarnation was not forced as a **necessity** upon the **Deity** but as the **Creation** was a free **Act** of God’s **Goodness, Power** and **Wisdom**, which can be characterised as “...fitting for God...” likewise the Incarnation **was** a free **Act** “...fitting for God.” Without any doubt it was an excellent **Manifestation** of the **Divine Perfections**. In other words, that of God’s **Goodness, Wisdom** and **Power**, which responded to the needs and desires **of human** nature. Thus it appears as the most “...fitting for God.”

The Incarnation of the Word of God is a free **Act**, an expression of **Divine Pleasure**, which did not occur because God had any need of it or **because it was forced** upon Him. It is the **Divine Condescension** **that** manifests the **Divine Attributes** of God’s **Goodness, Wisdom** and **Power**. On the contrary, the Incarnation was necessary for **humanity’s sake** **because** if **Divine Justice** demanded a **Ransom**, man would **have** been unable to **pay** it and thus it would have been impossible for him to be **Saved**.

⁶⁴ Cf. Heb. 1:1.

⁶⁵ Martensen, *Dogmatique*, pp. 368, 398 and 409.

⁶⁶ John 1:5.

⁶⁷ John 14:9. 12:45.

⁶⁸ Matth. 28:18; 11:27.

⁶⁹ Ephes. 5:23.

⁷⁰ Heb. 2:10.

The fact that the Incarnation was a free Act of God is characterised by Holy Scripture as being His “good *Pleasure*” or “*Goodwill*.” At the Birth of Christ in Bethlehem, the Angels sang: “*Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, Goodwill towards men...*”⁷¹ confirming that the Peace offered by our Saviour derives from the good Will of God.⁷² St Paul proclaimed the Revelation of the Mystery of the *Divine Economia* as being fulfilled by God because of His “*Goodwill*,” “...for by Grace you have been Saved through Faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the Gift of God.”⁷³

According to the above, God conceived the Plan of our Salvation and realised it not because of any need. God showed Mercy to mankind because He wants and loves His Creation.

Also the Will of God concerning the Salvation of man was a free Act. God had the Power to save man without sending His Only Begotten Son into the world, for nothing is impossible for God. He could have Commanded and everything would have been restored.⁷⁴ “*It was not impossible for Him Who holds in His Almightyness the Power to Save man.*”⁷⁵ “*Nor did the Word of God have the need of a body, for He is needless. He could have achieved our Salvation only by Commanding.*”⁷⁶ However, God the Word became Man, not because He could not have Saved man otherwise, but because He considered this way to be the most perfect.⁷⁷

5. The Glorification of Divine Attributes

St Gregory of Nyssa commented on the Manifestation of the Divine Attributes revealed at the Incarnation of the Word of God as follows: “*It has revealed the Goodness, the Wisdom, the Justice, the Power, the Immortality; everything was shown because of our Economia.*” And the Goodness is revealed “...in that God wanted...” to Save the lost. “*The Wisdom and the Justice were shown in the way of our Salvation...*” while the Power was proved “...in the making...” of the Infinite Word “...in the image of man according to our humble nature...” “...and being made He worked...” the Salvation of men.⁷⁸

Concerning the Goodness, Kindness and Love of God, one must remember the words of St Paul: “*God demonstrates His own Love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*”⁷⁹ and “...when we were still without strength, in due

⁷¹ Luke 2:14.

⁷² Origen, *To Luke 2:14*, Homily 13.

⁷³ Ephes. 2:8.

⁷⁴ St. Athanasius the Great, *About the incarnation of the Word*, § 6, in Migne, P.G., 25, 105-108. Ibid, *Against Arians*, II, § 68, in Migne, P.G., 26, 292. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Homily 19*, § 13, in Migne, P.G., 35, 1060. *Epistle 101*, in Migne, P.G., 37, 183. Theodoretus of Cyrus, *Homily IV*, in Migne, P.G., 83, (?).

⁷⁵ St. John of Damascus, *Exposition. About wills and free-wills*, book III, ch. 62, § 18, in Migne, P.G., 94, 1072.

⁷⁶ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *About the incarnation of the Lord*, 18, in Migne, P.G., 75, 1448.

⁷⁷ Kritopoulods, ch. III, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 518.

⁷⁸ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechesis*, § 24, in Migne, P.G., 45, 64.

⁷⁹ Rom. 5:8.

time Christ died for the ungodly.”⁸⁰ St John **remarked on this Love of God by pointing out** that “He first Loved us.”⁸¹ “In this the Love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His Only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is Love, not that we loved God, but that He Loved us and sent His Son to be the **Propitiation for our sins.**”⁸² “For God so Loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not **perish** but have **Everlasting Life.** For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be Saved.”⁸³ **In addition,** St Paul proclaimed **once** again that the Son of God “...made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”⁸⁴

St John Chrysostom **commented:** “Think how much Love God has, that He did ‘not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all’⁸⁵ who are worthless, ungrateful, enemies and blasphemers.”⁸⁶ We were far from God, “...alienated from the **Life of God...**”⁸⁷ and “...having no hope and without God in the world.”⁸⁸ “As the human race was fleeing from Him...” God “...pursued and captured, only because His **Philanthropia, Love and Guardianship realised this.**”⁸⁹ **God really did pursue** the human race in order to **Save it and this is evident** in that “...man did not **ascend to Heaven, but ... He descended to our negligible and worthless nature.**”⁹⁰

Divine Wisdom is apparent in that God “...found the most beautiful solution for the poor...” man.⁹¹ For after the Fall of man, one of the following **consequences had to occur:** “...either God [**had**] to make everyone truthful...” by surrendering **them** to death according to the warning **that** accompanied the Law, “...or [**by**] showing love towards man...” to paralyze “the Decision” and to prove it inoperative by not realising the threat.⁹² “But see God’s Wisdom. For He kept the Truth of the decision and acted the Love towards man. Christ took upon the Cross the sins...” and suffered the consequences of man’s **Offence**, in order that he might be **Saved.**⁹³ “Christ took up the punishments of the first **Offence, in order to free us from the Curse.**” “He takes up the **Way of our Restoration as Good and Wise.**”⁹⁴ God’s Wisdom found the way to satisfy His **Divine Justice** and simultaneously to **Save Fallen man.**

Justice appears in many ways.

⁸⁰ Rom. 5:6.

⁸¹ 1 John 4:19.

⁸² 1 John 4:9-10.

⁸³ John 3:16-17.

⁸⁴ Phil. 2:7-8.

⁸⁵ Cf. Rom. 8:32.

⁸⁶ St. John Chrysostom, *To Romans*, Homily 15, § 2, in Montfaucon, v. 9, p. 659.

⁸⁷ Ephes. 4:18.

⁸⁸ Ephes. 2:12.

⁸⁹ St. John Chrysostom, *To Hebrews*, Homily 5, § 1, in Migne, P.G., 63, 46.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, *To John*, Homily 18, § 2, in Migne, P.G., 59, 115.

⁹¹ St. John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the way of the conception of the Word and His divine incarnation*, III, 46, 1, in Migne, P.G., 94, 984.

⁹² St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XIII, § 33, in Migne, P.G., 33, 813.

⁹³ St. John of Damascus, *About the two wills*, 44, in Migne, P.G., 94, 185.

⁹⁴ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechesis*, ch. 22, in Migne, P.G., 45, 60.

1) It stresses that God's Justice appeared **so** that men would not be under the tyranny of Satan. God could have detached man from the Devil's **enslaving** sinful desires but this would **have been** by force and not a **Just Way of Restoration**, **which was to pay** a Ransom **for** the enslaved in order **to release them from** the tyranny of the Devil.⁹⁵

2) St Irenaeus supported another opinion, according to which the enemy, **having** gained victory over man in the Garden of Delight, "...*would not have been justly defeated, if man had not defeated...*" him. **Therefore the Word** "...*took up our first nature, in order that through all virtues...*" He would defeat Satan by "...*wrestling the opponent...*" and "...*reveal Himself*" as an "*Invincible Athlete.*" Then, as "*the Fall of the forefather became a common Fall...*" likewise "...*the victory of our Saviour...*" became "...*our victory.*"⁹⁶ Consequently, we "...*as victorious in Christ against sin, will remove the mortality and escape death.*" Since Christ gained victory over the Devil and lived a sinless life, **He** "...*made none other victorious over the tyrant...*" but through human nature, which He united with Himself, made **the fallen man victorious.**⁹⁷

3) Finally, **there** is the opinion of the satisfaction of Divine Justice. Through Adam's Offence mankind **insulted** Divine Justice and was condemned to alienation from God, which **immediately caused** spiritual and then bodily death. "*The Saviour dies for us and Offers to the Father a Sacrifice...*" and "...*being the One Who Offers and the One Who is being Offered, in order to cleanse man from all stain, He took up...*" a Body, satisfying Divine Justice "...*through the proper Offering.*"⁹⁸ Through this satisfaction "...*He destroyed death for all who are like Him...*" "...*as all died in Him...*" because "...*instead of all, He gave Himself as an Offering to the Father.*"⁹⁹

The Incarnation of God the Word was an admirable and Supernatural Act of God. The Truth is that healthy human nature, born from the **Ever Blessed** Virgin, was able to be united with Divine Nature because "...*neither the logic, or the intellect, or any other such thing of human nature is opposite to virtue...*" **nor did it present any obstacles that prevented God from touching "human nature"** uncorrupted by sin. God the Word at the Incarnation did not become a rock, or a plant or some kind of irrational being, but "*flesh*" - a man, a rational and moral being.¹⁰⁰

Man was not only made in the Image of God but was **also** created to be united with God, becoming His Temple, which is only achieved in the union of the two natures. The two special Attributes of self-conscience and freedom, which are found perfectly in God, are also found in man and made human nature receptive **to the Divine Nature**, for Divine Power is natural **for the performance of Wonders.**

⁹⁵ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechesis*, ch. 22 and 23, in Migne, *P.G.*, 45, 60 and 61.

⁹⁶ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book III, ch. 18, § 7, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 937. Cf. *Ibid.*, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 242-243.

⁹⁷ St. John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the way of the conception of the Word and His divine incarnation*, book III, ch. 46, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 984.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, *Catechesis*, book III, ch. 27, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1096.

⁹⁹ St. Athanasius the Great, *About the incarnation of the Word*, §§ 8 and 9, in Migne, *P.G.*, 25, 109 and 112.

¹⁰⁰ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechesis*, ch. 15 and 24, in Migne, *P.G.*, 45, 49 and 64. St. Basil the Great, *To Psalm 44*, § 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 29, 400; *About the Holy Spirit*, ch. 8, in Migne, *P.G.*, 32, 100.

Nevertheless, for the unapproachable God to descend to the humble creature, proves unlimited Power.

6. The Necessity of the Incarnation

From the human point of view the Incarnation was necessary, especially if Divine Justice demanded satisfaction from sinful man for the Offence. And it is true that God could have only Commanded in order for man to be instantly Restored and for Him not to have been Incarnated in order to remove the Curse. But in that case, if God had Commanded the Curse to be expunged, for it was certainly possible for Him to do so, then His Power would have been manifest, but mankind would have become the same as Adam before the Offence, receiving Grace from without and not united within the body.¹⁰¹ As a consequence, man would face the danger of falling again, but even into a condition far worse than before, having already experienced the first Fall. Thus, it would be necessary once again for God to loosen the Curse and no real progress would have been achieved.

St Cyril of Alexandria stated: “God the Word did not have the need for a body...” because “...He could have worked our Salvation through His Command alone...” “...but He wanted to have something [in common] with us in order to achieve Communion.”¹⁰²

The Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church proclaim that it was necessary for the Incarnate Word to die so as to Save mankind by paying a ransom equal in value to the price of all men. For what help could man have offered to his fellow men, since all needed the same Help? How could the Curse be loosened since everyone was held under the same bondage and all needed a Saviour? The Saviour had to be absolutely sinless and unrestricted by death. Which man had the ability to offer a Ransom to God even for his own sins? How could anyone have had the capacity for making such an offering for others? What can anyone find in this world or this age that would be sufficient in return for his soul? We were all enslaved and we all needed a Ransom to be paid for our freedom. And consequently none of us could have saved ourselves so how then was it possible to save others?

Not even the Angels could have saved mankind, because they receive their holiness from their Communion with the Holy Spirit. How then would it have been possible to free men from all guilt and to bestow Sanctification upon them since they are not the Source of Holiness? How could it be possible for a creature to loosen the Commandment of God and to forgive sins, since this is the Work of God alone?¹⁰³

St Augustine remarked that “...men were able to sell themselves as slaves to sin, but were unable to free themselves from sin.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ St. Athanasius the Great, *Against Arians*, II, § 68, in Migne, *P.G.*, 26, 292.

¹⁰² St. Cyril of Alexandria, *About the incarnation of the Word*, ch. 18, in Migne, *P.G.*, 75, 1448.

¹⁰³ St. Basil the Great, *To Psalm 48 (49)*, §§ 3 and 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 29, 440 and 441. St. Athanasius the Great, *Against Arians*, II, § 69, in Migne, *P.G.*, 26, 289. St. John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the divine economia*, book III, ch. 45, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 981.

¹⁰⁴ St. Augustine, *Psalm 95*, 5, in Migne, *P.L.*, 37, 1251.

This theory was clarified by Anselmus of Canterbury, according to whom the Offence as an act of man is temporary (“*offense Dei active*”); but as an Offence against the Infinite God (“*offense Dei passiva*”) consisted of an Eternal Guilt. To reconcile this it was necessary for a Ransom and Redemption of infinite value, and accordingly the simple man was unable to offer it. The Salvation of man consequently had to be achieved by the God-Man as the representative of all mankind and the only One capable of offering a Ransom of infinite value.¹⁰⁵ But according to this theory, the Incarnation of the Word of God appears as something absolutely necessary although it presents God as a cruel and not a Loving and Merciful Judge, Who seeks absolute satisfaction of His Justice, being bound by His own Attribute of Saving man. St Augustine’s opinion, however, according to which God, through His Almightyness could have Saved and Restored human nature through different ways, seems more correct.

¹⁰⁵ Cur Deus homo I, 12 and 13; II, 4, in Trempeles, *Dogmatique*, v. II, p. 38.