

# THE SAVIOUR

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST

The fundamental Doctrine concerning the whole work of Salvation, which Christ achieved for man, is that He is God Incarnated.<sup>1</sup> The Lord Jesus Christ was not only simply a perfect Man Who came to Save men, but the Son of God, perfect God and the Only Begotten Son of God Who was born before all Eternity from the Father.<sup>2</sup> As God He surpasses all creatures in Heaven and on earth<sup>3</sup> and His Appearance on earth consists of the greatest of all Miracles in human history. As the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of David<sup>4</sup> and Son of Man,<sup>5</sup> is the preeminently anointed Prophet,<sup>6</sup> King and High Priest<sup>7</sup> Who was spoken of in the Old Testament by all the Prophets.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 125-126. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 4:12; 13:23. Ephes. 5:23. Phil. 3:20. 1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; 4:10. Tit. 1:3, 4; 2:10; 3:4, 6. 2 Peter 1:1, 11; 2:20; 3:18. 1 John 4:14. Jude 25.

<sup>3</sup> Ephes. 1:21.

<sup>4</sup> Matth. 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9. Mark 10:47, 48; 12:35. Luke 18:38; 20:41. Kefalas, *Christology*, pp. 292-294.

<sup>5</sup> Matth. 13:37; 16:13, 27, 28; 17:9, 12, 22; 18:11; 19:28; 20:18, 28; 24:30, 44; 25:13, 31; 26:2, 24. Mark 2:10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21, 41. Luke 5:24; 6:5, 22; 7:34; 9:22, 26, 44, 56, 58; 12:8, 10, 40; 19:10; 21:27, 36; 22:22, 48, 69; 24:7. John 1:52; 3:13, 14, 16; 4:27; 6:27, 62; 8:28; 12:23, 34.

<sup>6</sup> Deut. 18:15, 18-19. Matth. 16:16. Mark 8:29. Luke 4:18.

<sup>7</sup> Heb. 5:6, 10; 7:16-17, 21; 9:11. Psalm 109(110):4.

<sup>8</sup> Deut. 18:15-22. Is. 42:1-4. Acts 3:22-24.

When God the Father addresses the Son, He calls Him “*Son*”<sup>9</sup> being born from Him “...*before the rising star...*” and to whom He will give as heritage all the nations.<sup>10</sup> He invites Him to sit on His right hand<sup>11</sup> until He makes His enemies His “*footstool.*”<sup>12</sup> The Messiah, being the Eternal High Priest<sup>13</sup> according to the Prophets, having the Priesthood without successor,<sup>14</sup> appears to be Anointed by God Himself,<sup>15</sup> being called “*God*” by King David and Whose Name “...*is called the Messenger of Great Counsel...*” and “...*His Peace [has] no end;*”<sup>16</sup> Who will be the Son of the Virgin as foreseen by the Prophet Isaiah who said: “*Behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a son, and thou shall call His Name Emmanuel.*”<sup>17</sup> But generally all the Prophets emphasized the Messiah’s Divine descent and important Work of the Salvation of all men, which He fulfilled as the Lord, the Angel of the New Testament and the Son of Man.

In the New Testament Jesus Christ is witnessed by the Father as His beloved Son,<sup>18</sup> Who is above Moses and Elias and all the Prophets<sup>19</sup> and even above all the Angelic

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<sup>9</sup> Heb. 5:5. Psalm 2:7

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 2:8.

<sup>11</sup> Mark 16:19.

<sup>12</sup> Matth. 22:44. Psalm 109(110):1.

<sup>13</sup> Heb. 2:17; 3:1

<sup>14</sup> Heb. 4:14-15; 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:17, 21. Psalm 109(110):4.

<sup>15</sup> Is. 61:1-3.

<sup>16</sup> Is. 9:6, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Is. 7:14.

<sup>18</sup> Matth. 3:17; 12:18. Mark 1:11. Luke 3:22; 9:35. Ephes. 1:6.

<sup>19</sup> Matth. 13:16-17.

Hosts<sup>20</sup> and Who has the Power to forgive sins<sup>21</sup> and which Authority He passed down to His Holy Disciples.<sup>22</sup> Similarly the Father assures us that the Son is not only a son, but the Son of God Who knows the Father and Who has only been known by the Father.<sup>23</sup> He announced that He would come again, sitting on the right hand of God the Father<sup>24</sup> and He gave instructions that all His Disciples were to be Baptised<sup>25</sup> “...in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>26</sup> He is the “...Only Begotten Son Who is in the Bosom of Father...”<sup>27</sup> Who “...came down from Heaven to the earth...” although at the same time being in Heaven.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, “...before Abraham was born...” He was<sup>29</sup> and He, together with the Father is one.<sup>30</sup> And as St John the Apostle, Evangelist and Theologian stated, before the world was created, He existed together with the Father and is Co-eternal<sup>31</sup> as the A and Ω (*Alpha* and *Omega*), “*the Beginning and the End*” of all.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ephes. 1:21. Phil. 2:9-11.

<sup>21</sup> Matth. 9:6. Mark 2:10.

<sup>22</sup> Matth. 16:19; 18:18. John 20:22-23.

<sup>23</sup> Matth. 11:27. John 10:15.

<sup>24</sup> Matth. 25:31; 26:64. Mark 13:26. Acts 1:11; 7:55-56. Dan. 7:14.

<sup>25</sup> Mark 16:16. Luke 24:47.

<sup>26</sup> Matth. 28:19.

<sup>27</sup> John 1:18.

<sup>28</sup> John 3:13

<sup>29</sup> John 8:58.

<sup>30</sup> John 10:30.

<sup>31</sup> John 1:1-2.

<sup>32</sup> Rev. 1:8, 11, 17; 21:6; 22:13.

St Paul characterised Christ as “...*the God of all...*”<sup>33</sup> and as the “*First born*”<sup>34</sup> Who was born of the Father before all Creation. Being in the Form of God, the Son emptied Himself in order to take the form of a bondservant,<sup>35</sup> thereby Redeeming the Church with His own Blood,<sup>36</sup> being the Blood of God<sup>37</sup> through Whom all things were made.<sup>38</sup> Even the Angels in the Heavenly Places and all things are sustained in Him. Christ is the Brightness of the Glory and the Character of the Hypostasis of the Father.<sup>39</sup>

The Truth concerning Jesus Christ as the Only Begotten Son of God is based on His own Conscience, which was expressed by His own Testimony<sup>40</sup> and proclaimed by all the God-inspired authors of the New Testament. This Truth was inherited by the Orthodox Church since the first century and is continuously proclaimed by the Apostolic Fathers and all the Holy Fathers and Ecclesiastic Scholars to this very day.

One understands the importance and clarity of the Teachings of the Apostolic Fathers concerning Christ, when one considers that St Clement of Rome used the

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<sup>33</sup> Rom. 9:5.

<sup>34</sup> Rom. 8:29. Col. 1:15, 18. Rev. 1:5.

<sup>35</sup> Phil. 2:6-8.

<sup>36</sup> Rom. 3:25; 5:9. Gal. 3:13; 4:5. Ephes. 1:7; 2:13. Col. 1:14, 20. Heb. 9:12, 14; 10:19-20. 1 Peter 1:19. 1 John 1:7. Rev. 1:5; 5:9; 7:14; 12:11.

<sup>37</sup> Acts 20:28

<sup>38</sup> John 1:3.

<sup>39</sup> Heb. 1:3.

<sup>40</sup> Matth. 26:64. John 4:26; 5:18; 9:35; 10:36.

Name “*Lord*” irrespective of whether referring to Christ or God the Father, calling Christ “...*the Son and Brightness of the Majesty...*” of God whereas St Ignatius of Antioch referred fifteen times to Christ as God “...*Who was made in flesh...*” and “...*existing before the ages with the Father...*” being “...*united to the Father.*” St Polycarp of Smyrna called Christ “*Lord*” to Whom the Father gave “...*Glory on His right...*” and Who is “...*the Eternal Archpriest, the Son of God...*” “...*Who will come to Judge the living and the dead.*” The Epistle of St Barnabas presents Him as “...*the Lord of all the world, about Whom God had said...*” as the Creator “...*before the creation of the world: ‘Let Us make man in Our image.’*” Furthermore, the *Didache* also assures us that the Lord will come upon the clouds and that He Commands that Baptism must be done “...*in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*” and the Epistle to Diognetos presents Christ as the “...*Only Begotten Son of God...*” “...*Artist and Creator of all...*” being the Consular of the Father in Creation.

Similar Confessions are used by the Apologists, although they wrote Confessions of Faith to the idolaters in order to refute the false accusations against Christianity but they did not conduct systematic reports on the Christian Faith. The Ecclesiastic Scholars after the Apologists, especially St Irenaeos and Tertullian, supported the Teachings concerning the Divinity of the Incarnated Son and Word of God against the heretics, Gnostics, Ebionites, Cerinthos, Marcion, Basilides and others, who completely rejected the Divinity of Jesus Christ. St Hippolytos and Tertullian opposed the

Monarchians and Patropaschites who renounced the Trinity.

Origen accepted the Holy Trinity and Christ as God and the Son of God. Origen must have been the first to use the terms "...*from the same Essence*" ("Ομοούσιος" – "*Homoousios*" i.e. "*Consubstantial*") and "*God-Man*." Thus the entire ancient Church before the 1<sup>st</sup> Ecumenical Synod confessed and proclaimed Jesus Christ to be the Only Begotten Son of God, being Consubstantial with and Co-eternal to the Father.

## **1. The Messiah According to the Prophecies of the Old Testament.**

The Person Who made the Promises to Abraham and the nation is referred to in Holy Scripture as "*Messiah*" or "*the Christ*,"<sup>41</sup> being the most Anointed Prophet, High Priest and King<sup>42</sup> Who shepherds Israel<sup>43</sup> and Who contains within His Personality the threefold Offices. These Offices are found separately in different people of the Old Testament who were Anointed by special Blessed Oil and who were called "...*the Anointed of the Lord*."<sup>44</sup> The Lord, however, was not Anointed with material ointment made by the hands of men.<sup>45</sup> He was Anointed by God through the Holy Spirit Who was poured upon

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<sup>41</sup> John 1:41. Kefalas, *Christology*, pp. 294-298.

<sup>42</sup> Zach. 9:9. Heb. 1:9.

<sup>43</sup> Ez. 34:23-24. Is. 40:11. Mich. 5:4.

<sup>44</sup> Deut. 18:15, 18. Psalm 109(110):4 and Psalms 2, 44(45), 109(110).

<sup>45</sup> St. Ecumenius, *To Hebrews*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 119, 288.

Him.<sup>46</sup> He was Anointed “...not as the rest of the high men...” “...and not by partial Anointment, as in the case of the spiritual men.”<sup>47</sup> Thus “...under the Name Christ is implied the One Who anoints and Who has been Anointed and the Ointment through which He was Anointed. And the Father Anoints, the Son is Anointed in the Holy Spirit, which is the Ointment.”<sup>48</sup>

In the Old Testament the Messiah appears to be the Son of God. This term is also referred to the Angels, the Just, the whole of Israel, the Kings and Judges. However, with regard to the Messiah Who is mentioned in the second Psalm,<sup>49</sup> firstly His victory is described over the kings and rulers of the earth who had gathered “...against the Lord and against His Anointed...” and secondly, it refers to Him saying: “Thou art My Son, today I have Begotten Thee.”<sup>50</sup> Thus the Messiah is presented not only as an invincible King Whose Kingdom is extended throughout the world but also as the Son of God Who is born of the Father. Under the scrutiny of the New Testament one sees in this verse the Son of God Who is born of the Father and Who has inherited “...the Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in Heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should Confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the

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<sup>46</sup> Psalm 2:2. Acts 4:26-27. Heb. 1:9.

<sup>47</sup> Theophylactus of Bulgaria, *To Hebrews*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 125, 200.

<sup>48</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book III, ch. 18, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 934.

<sup>49</sup> Psalm 2:2.

<sup>50</sup> Psalm 2:7.

*Glory of God the Father.*”<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, in Psalm 109(110) the Messiah is presented as being superior to King David who acknowledges Him as his “*Lord*” Who is vested with an Office that surpasses this world and Who is manifested by the invitation of God: “*Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool...*”<sup>52</sup> and Who has Eternal Priesthood “*...according to the Order of Melchizedek.*”<sup>53</sup> “*For this Melchizedek, King of Salem, Priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham having a tenth part of all, first being translated “King of Righteousness,” and then also King of Salem, meaning “King of Peace,” without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a Priest continually.*”<sup>54</sup>

The mysterious figure of Melchizedek represents an entirely different kind of Priesthood. He appears in Genesis long before the establishment of the Levitical Priesthood. He is given no genealogy and nothing is said of his death. He received tithes from Abraham, implying his superiority to Abraham – and by extension - superiority to Abraham’s descendants, the Levites as well. Melchizedek is not only a Priest but a King too. In this dual Office he is able to reconcile the Justice of God (the work of a King) with His Mercy (the work of a Priest). His name means “*King of Righteousness*” while his title

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<sup>51</sup> Phil. 2:9-11. Matth. 22:43, 45. Mark 12:35, 37. Luke 20:44.

<sup>52</sup> Psalm 109(110):1. Matth. 22:44. Mark 12:36. Luke 21:42-43.

<sup>53</sup> Psalm 109(110):4. Heb. 5:6, 10.

<sup>54</sup> Heb. 7:1-3. Gen. 14:18-20.

“*King of Salem*” means “*King of Peace*.” He may be a Theophany – a pre-Incarnation Appearance of Christ. At the very least he is a type of Christ, as the author of the Hebrews explains in detail.

The Priesthood of Melchizedek was without earthly genealogy, so is Christ by virtue of His virginal Birth. He is God Incarnate, Immortal and Sinless, therefore His Priesthood is able to transform humanity. The Power given at Ordination is strong and effective. The Power of Christ’s Priesthood is Perfect and draws us near to God. His Sacrifice is offered once for all. Since Christ is Immortal, the Priesthood of Melchizedek needs only one Eternal Priest. Jesus Christ is more than a mere man, He is the Son of God, the God-Man

In Psalm 44(45) it is written: “*Thy Throne, O God, is forever and ever; a Sceptre of Righteousness is the Sceptre of Thy Kingdom. Thou lovest Righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the Oil of Gladness more than Thy companions.*”<sup>55</sup> This Psalm announces the Divinity of the Messiah King sitting upon His Eternal Throne having been Anointed by God as He, too, is God.

Isaiah proclaimed the virginal Birth of the Messiah from the Ever-Virgin Mary, the Theotokos (“*God-bearer*”) whose Name would be “*Emmanuel*”<sup>56</sup> meaning “*God with us.*”<sup>57</sup> And again the Prophet said: “*For a*

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<sup>55</sup> Psalm 44(45):6-7.

<sup>56</sup> Is. 7:14.

<sup>57</sup> Matth. 1:23.

*Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us, Whose government is upon His Shoulder: and His Name is called 'the Messenger of Great Counsel': for I will bring peace upon the princes, and health to him. His Government shall be great, and of His Peace there is no end: it shall be upon the Throne of David, and upon His Kingdom, to establish it, and to support it with Judgement and with Righteousness, from henceforth and for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall perform this.*"<sup>58</sup> According to Isaiah the "...people shall see the Glory of the Lord and the Majesty of God."<sup>59</sup> God "...will come and save us..."<sup>60</sup> and "...all flesh shall see the Salvation of God."<sup>61</sup> According to the Prophet Ezekiel: "I will be to them a God, and they shall be My people. And the nations shall know that I Am the Lord Who Sanctifies them, when My Sanctuary is in the midst of them for ever."<sup>62</sup> And the Prophet Zachariah spoke in the Spirit saying: "Thus said the Lord Almighty: Behold, I will save My people from the east country, and the west country; and I will bring them in, and cause them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be to Me a people, and I will be to them a God, in Truth and in Righteousness."<sup>63</sup>

In the Apocrypha (Second Canonical) Book of Baruch it is written: "This is our God, and there shall be none other accounted of in comparison of Him. He has

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<sup>58</sup> Is. 9:6-7.

<sup>59</sup> Is. 35:2.

<sup>60</sup> Is. 35:4.

<sup>61</sup> Is. 40:5.

<sup>62</sup> Ez. 37:27-28. Zach. 2:10.

<sup>63</sup> Zach. 8:7-8.

*found out all the way of knowledge, and has given it unto Jacob His servant, and to Israel His beloved. Afterward did He show Himself upon earth, and conversed with men.*”<sup>64</sup> And Micah prophesied on the one hand the coming of the human origin of the Messiah from “...*the house of Ephratha...*” “...*to be a Ruler of Israel...*” and His Divine Origin is characterised in the words: “...*and His goings forth were from the beginning, even from eternity.*”<sup>65</sup> In Malachi is prescribed “...*the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ...*”<sup>66</sup> and the Mission of God’s “*Messenger*” “...*and the Lord, Whom you seek, shall suddenly come into His Temple, even the Angel of the Covenant.*”<sup>67</sup> It is obvious that in these prophetic words “...*the Lord...*” and “...*the Angel of the Covenant...*” refers to one and the same Person.

All the Prophecies previously mentioned as well as those of the Old Testament characterising the Messiah, find their harmonious union in the God-Man, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of all mankind.<sup>68</sup>

## **2. The New Testament Testimonies Concerning the Divinity of Jesus Christ.**

We distinguish the Testimonies of the New Testament concerning the Divinity of our Lord and

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<sup>64</sup> Baruch 3:35-37. Gen. 9:27.

<sup>65</sup> Mich. 5:2.

<sup>66</sup> Mark 1:1.

<sup>67</sup> Mal. 3:1-3.

<sup>68</sup> Kefalas, *Christology*, pp. 311-314, 326-329.

Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, into three categories:

- a) those of the Synoptics,
- b) those of St John the Apostle, Evangelist and Theologian and
- c) those of the rest of the Holy Apostles.<sup>69</sup>

In the Synoptic Gospels, the Testimony of God the Father first appears during the Baptism of Christ by St John the Forerunner and Baptist, according to which our Lord Jesus is His “...*Beloved Son, in Whom I Am well pleased.*”<sup>70</sup> This Testimony is repeated at the Transfiguration of our Lord on Mount Tabor<sup>71</sup> where His superiority was evident when the two Prophets, Moses and Elias, appeared as His honouring companions,<sup>72</sup> but not having the same brightness as Him nor being witnessed to by the Father. He testified that His Teachings and Mission are superior to those of Solomon and Jonah.<sup>73</sup> He also presented the Testimony of the Prophet and King David who spoke as a humble servant of the Supreme Lord by saying: “*The Lord said to my Lord...*”<sup>74</sup> Christ is superior even to the Angels who ignore His second Coming<sup>75</sup> and with regard to the General Judgement, He explained that

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, *Catechesis*, pp. 258. Fragkopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 126-127. Mitsopoulos, *Themata* p.76

<sup>70</sup> Matth. 3:17. Mark 1:11. Luke 3:22.

<sup>71</sup> Matth. 17:5. Mark 9:7. Luke 9:35.

<sup>72</sup> Matth. 17:3. Mark 9:4. Luke 9:30.

<sup>73</sup> Matth. 12:41-42. Luke. 11:31-32. Jonah 3:5.

<sup>74</sup> Psalm 109(110):1.

<sup>75</sup> Matth. 24:36. Mark 13:32. Acts 1:7. Zach. 14:7.

they would be sent as His servants to gather the Just from the four corners of the earth.<sup>76</sup>

*“Being in the form of God, He did not consider it robbery to be equal with God...”*<sup>77</sup> Therefore Christ sent *“...Prophets, wise men, Scribes...”* and *“...Apostles,”*<sup>78</sup> promising to give them the necessary *“... mouth and wisdom...”*<sup>79</sup> just as God had promised Moses that He would speak through the mouth of Aaron.<sup>80</sup> As God, He appears to be the Law-giver Who fulfils the Law<sup>81</sup> and proclaims to be the Master of the Law concerning the Sabbath<sup>82</sup> as well as divorce.<sup>83</sup> And as the Heavenly Father made a Covenant with Abraham and his descendants, likewise Christ offers His Blood as the Blood of the New Covenant<sup>84</sup> and promised His Disciples that He would *“...bestow upon them a Kingdom, just as His Father bestowed one upon Him, that they may eat and drink at His Table in His Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve Tribes of Israel.”*<sup>85</sup>

Jesus Christ, as Lord and God, demands that the faith of His Disciples in Him must be the same as their

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<sup>76</sup> Matth. 13:49; 16:27; 24:31; 25:31. Mark 8:38; 13:32. Luke 9:26. Dan. 7:10.

<sup>77</sup> Phil. 2:6.

<sup>78</sup> Matth. 23:34. Luke 11:49.

<sup>79</sup> Luke 21:15.

<sup>80</sup> Ex. 4:10-17.

<sup>81</sup> Matth. 5:17.

<sup>82</sup> Matth. 12:8.

<sup>83</sup> Matth. 5:32.

<sup>84</sup> Matth. 26:28. Mark 14:24. Luke 22:20.

<sup>85</sup> Luke 22:30.

faith in God, steadfast and faithful until the end, even if they have to offer their lives for His Name's sake.<sup>86</sup> He also demands that the love of His Faithful for Him must be greater than that of their most beloved ones.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, all those who confess Him before men, will also be confessed by Him before His Father and those who deny Him in this life, will be denied by Him before His Father.<sup>88</sup>

Jesus Christ claimed the Authority of the forgiveness of sins, an Authority that belongs exclusively to God,<sup>89</sup> and transmitted it to His Holy Apostles and Disciples.<sup>90</sup>

Since Jesus Christ proclaims to be the new Law-giver equal to the Heavenly Father and has with the Authority to forgive sins, it is natural for Him to claim the Office of the Supreme Judge and to foretell that He will return with all His Glory to Judge the world and to reward or punish each man according to their deeds.<sup>91</sup> For "...*all Authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on earth.*"<sup>92</sup>

In the texts of the Synoptic Gospels one finds verses in which the Lord reveals why He believes that He is the Son of God. When speaking of God the Father, our Lord Jesus always distinguishes His relationship as the Son of

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<sup>86</sup> Matth. 10:22. Mark 13:13. Luke 21:17.

<sup>87</sup> Matth. 10:37. Luke 14:26.

<sup>88</sup> Matth. 10:32-33. Luke 12:8-9.

<sup>89</sup> Matth. 9:2, 6. Mark 2:10. Luke 5:20, 24; 7:47-49.

<sup>90</sup> Matth. 16:19; 18:18. John 20:22-23.

<sup>91</sup> Matth. 25:31-46. John 5:22, 30; 8:16, 26; 12:47-48. Daniel 12:2-3. Ez. 37:1-14.

<sup>92</sup> Matth. 28:18. Kefalas, *Christology*, pp. 48-49.

God by Nature from that of the rest of men. In the former, He always uses the term “**My** Father,” whereas in the latter He uses the term “**your** Father.” He also accepts the Confession of Faith by St Peter that was expressed at Caesarea Philippi: “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.*”<sup>93</sup> Through this Confession Christ is placed in a superior position to that of St John the Baptist, St Elias, St Jeremiah and all the Prophets. Consequently He is Confessed as the Son of God, not in a moral meaning as the Prophets and all the Just were called. Our Lord Jesus also proclaimed that: “*All things have been delivered to Me by My Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the One to Whom the Son Wills to reveal Him.*”<sup>94</sup> In this verse everything that the Father has delivered to the Son<sup>95</sup> reveals the equality between the Father and the Son. It also reveals that He (the Son) is beyond any intellectual conception as is the Father Who is known only by the Son. The Infinite Father is known only by Christ, being His Son. No other creature can know the Son besides the Father. This Teaching is expressed in the Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers<sup>96</sup> according to which Christ is the “...*one Son, the Beloved...*” Who is recognised as being “*the Heir*” and Who is killed by the Jews.

When Judged by the High Priests Annas and Caiaphas, Christ was asked and gave witness about

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<sup>93</sup> Matth. 16:16.

<sup>94</sup> Matth. 11:27.

<sup>95</sup> John 16:15.

<sup>96</sup> Matth. 21:33-46. Mark 12:1-9. Luke 20:9-19.

Himself.<sup>97</sup> *“I put Thee under oath by the Living God: Tell us if Thou art the Christ, the Son of God! Jesus said to him, ‘It is you who said it. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the Clouds of Heaven.”*<sup>98</sup> If Christ is not by Nature and Essence the Son of God, was it possible for Him to declare that He would be *“...sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of Heaven?”* The reaction caused by His declaration and the denunciation that followed because they perceived Him to be a self-condemned blasphemer, proves that the Archpriests and members of the High Court understood the term *“Son of God”* according to the special, apocalyptic meaning. The Lord, unwilling to explain further, confirmed through His silence that they had very correctly understood the meaning of His Testimony.

After Christ’s Resurrection He gave instructions to His Apostles and Disciples to *“...go and make disciples of all the nations, Baptising them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”*<sup>99</sup> assuring them that *“...thus it was written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to Rise from the dead on the third day.”*<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Matth. 26:57-68. Mark 14:53-65. Luke 22:54, 63-65. John 18:13-24.

<sup>98</sup> Matth. 26:63-64. Mark 14:61-62. Luke 22:67-69.

<sup>99</sup> Matth. 28:19.

<sup>100</sup> Luke 24:46.

### 3.The Testimony of St John the Apostle and Evangelist.

The fourth Gospel was “...written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have Life in His Name.”<sup>101</sup> St John the Apostle and Evangelist established this belief by hearing the Lord’s Teachings, witnessing Christ’s innumerable Miracles, Divine Life and His Personal Testimonies.<sup>102</sup> St John firmly believed that our Lord Jesus is the Eternal Word of God Who existed from the beginning with the Father, and that “...the Word was God...”<sup>103</sup> through Whom “...all things were made...”<sup>104</sup> Who “...was the True Light which gives Light to every man coming into the world.”<sup>105</sup> When the time came, “...the Word became flesh...” and was Incarnated thereby manifesting “...His Glory, the Glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth”<sup>106</sup> as he stressed at the beginning of his Gospel, in order to convince his readers to believe that our Lord Jesus is the Christ, “the Only Begotten Son Who is in the Bosom of the Father.”<sup>107</sup>

In the Gospel of St John Christ refers more often to God as His Father and calls Himself “*Son of God.*” The quotations are innumerable. To identify Himself Christ used the terms “...the Son of God...” stating “...that

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<sup>101</sup> John 20:31.

<sup>102</sup> 1 John 1:1-3.

<sup>103</sup> John 1:1.

<sup>104</sup> John 1:3.

<sup>105</sup> John 1:9.

<sup>106</sup> John 1:14.

<sup>107</sup> John 1:18.

whoever believes in Him should not perish but have Everlasting Life.”<sup>108</sup> “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the Name of the Only Begotten Son of God.”<sup>109</sup> If one is convinced, that Jesus is the Lord, the Son of God, then “...the Son will make him free, he shall be free indeed”<sup>110</sup>.

The Lord uses the unique title of “*The Son*” that applies specifically to Him and to no other creature. His Sonship differs from that of mankind as evident from His words to St Mary Magdalene following His Resurrection: “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to **My Father**; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I Am ascending to **My Father** and **your Father**, and to **My God** and **your God**.”<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, the Son has the Father by Nature and His Nature is exactly the same as that of the Divine Essence long since before He was Incarnated, having existed with the Father before all time.

God the Father bears witness to Him and has sent Him<sup>112</sup> so “...that of all He has given Him, He should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the Last Day.”<sup>113</sup> Coming “...from Above...” He “...is above all...”<sup>114</sup> and grants to all who believe in Him “Everlasting Life.”<sup>115</sup> He is the

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<sup>108</sup> John 3:16.

<sup>109</sup> John 3:18.

<sup>110</sup> John 8:36.

<sup>111</sup> John 20:17.

<sup>112</sup> John 5:37.

<sup>113</sup> John 6:39.

<sup>114</sup> John 3:31.

<sup>115</sup> John 3:36; 6:47.

*“Bread of Life,”*<sup>116</sup> *“...the Living Bread which came down from Heaven”* and He guarantees us that: *“If anyone eats of this Bread, he will live forever; and the Bread that He shall give is His Flesh, which He shall give for the Life of the world.”*<sup>117</sup> He came from the Father, being Loved by the Father *“...before the foundation of the world.”*<sup>118</sup> Therefore, *“...all should honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father Who sent Him.”*<sup>119</sup>

When St John the Apostle and Evangelist, emphasised the eternal pre-existence of the Incarnated Word by writing: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...”*<sup>120</sup> he based this Testimony upon the assurance of the Lord Jesus Christ Who proclaimed that *“...before Abraham was, I Am....”*<sup>121</sup> In addition to this, the proclamation that *“...the Word was God...”* is based upon the Testimonies through which Christ declared His equality with the Father.<sup>122</sup>

According to the Gospel of St John Christ stated: *“My Father is greater than I...”*<sup>123</sup> However, this refers to His human Nature.

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<sup>116</sup> John 6:48.

<sup>117</sup> John 6:51.

<sup>118</sup> John 17:24.

<sup>119</sup> John 5:23.

<sup>120</sup> John 1:1.

<sup>121</sup> John 8:58.

<sup>122</sup> John 5:18, 23, 26.

<sup>123</sup> John 14:28.

Although the “...Jews sought all the more to kill Him because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God...”<sup>124</sup> and they continued to persecute Him,<sup>125</sup> He continued to proclaim His Work as being from the Father and for this reason He is equal to His Father. “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner....”<sup>126</sup> “For as the Father raises the dead and gives Life to them, even so the Son gives Life to whom He Wills....”<sup>127</sup> “All should honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent Him....”<sup>128</sup> “For as the Father has Life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have Life in Himself.”<sup>129</sup>

Clarifying the equality between Himself and His Father, Jesus Christ proclaimed: “I and the Father are One...”<sup>130</sup> “The ‘One’ declares the sameness of their Divine Essence (Homoousion), while the verb ‘are’ manifests the two Persons of the Trinity.”<sup>131</sup> “One in Essence, one in Principle, one in Opinion, one in Wisdom, but not One in Hypostasis.”<sup>132</sup> In His prayer before His

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<sup>124</sup> John 5:18.

<sup>125</sup> John 5:16.

<sup>126</sup> John 5:19.

<sup>127</sup> John 5:21.

<sup>128</sup> John 5:23.

<sup>129</sup> John 5:26.

<sup>130</sup> John 10:30.

<sup>131</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *To John*, Homily 1, in Migne, P.G., 74, 24.

<sup>132</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Arius and Sabellius*, § 8, in Migne, P.G., 45, 1293.

Passions, Christ did not hesitate to declare that: “*I Am in the Father and the Father in Me...*”<sup>133</sup> and “*...he who has seen Me has seen the Father.*”<sup>134</sup> For this reason He prayed “*...that they may be one as We are One...*”<sup>135</sup> so that the voluntary union of the Disciples becomes “*...the image of the natural Union that applies to the Father and the Son...*”<sup>136</sup> and “*...as the Word Who is by Nature and Essence in His Father, likewise we become some kind of type and seeing Him we become one with one another in soul and the Unity of the Spirit.*”<sup>137</sup>

Jesus Christ also proclaimed to have the Authority to forgive the sins of men, which He passed down to His Disciples after His Glorious Resurrection.<sup>138</sup> He demands faith in Him as one has in God the Father.<sup>139</sup> He assured us that “*...he who believes in Him has Everlasting Life...*”<sup>140</sup> and that He is “*...the Light of the world...*”<sup>141</sup> “*...the Way, the Truth and the Life.*”<sup>142</sup> Exalting His Relationship with His Father, He promised to all who love Him and keep His Commandments that the Father “*...will give them [another] Helper, that He may abide with [them]*

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<sup>133</sup> John 14:10-11; 17:21.

<sup>134</sup> John 14:9.

<sup>135</sup> John 17:11, 21.

<sup>136</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *To John 17:11*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 74, 516.

<sup>137</sup> St. Athanasius the Great, *Against Arians*, III, § 19-20, in Migne, *P.G.*, 26, 364.

<sup>138</sup> John 20:22-23.

<sup>139</sup> John 14:1.

<sup>140</sup> John 5:24; 6:47; 8:52; 11:26.

<sup>141</sup> John 8:12.

<sup>142</sup> John 14:6.

*forever... ”<sup>143</sup> and “...if anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”<sup>144</sup>*

This Testimony of the fourth Evangelist is supported in the other works of St John: his three Catholic Epistles and the Book of Revelation. The Testimony of the latter is important not only because it includes the Evangelist’s belief but it also contains the belief of the seven Churches of Asia Minor, which were under his spiritual guidance.

According to St John, the Lord “...was from the beginning..”<sup>145</sup> the “...Eternal Life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us.”<sup>146</sup> He is “...His Only Begotten Son sent into the world, that we might Live through Him...”<sup>147</sup> because “...He loved us and sent His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins...”<sup>148</sup> and “...Saviour of the world.”<sup>149</sup> “And this is His Commandment: that we should believe in the Name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another.”<sup>150</sup> Because “...this is the Testimony: that God has given us Eternal Life, and this Life is in His Son. He who has the Son has Life.”<sup>151</sup> “...And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know

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<sup>143</sup> John 14:15-16.

<sup>144</sup> John 14:23.

<sup>145</sup> 1 John 1:1.

<sup>146</sup> 1 John 1:2.

<sup>147</sup> 1 John 4:9.

<sup>148</sup> 1 John 4:10.

<sup>149</sup> 1 John 4:14.

<sup>150</sup> 1 John 3:23.

<sup>151</sup> 1 John 5:11-12.

*Him Who is True; and we are in Him Who is True, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the True God and Eternal Life.*”<sup>152</sup>

According to the Book of Revelation, Christ is the “*Alpha and Omega*” (A and Ω), “...*the beginning and the end of all...*”<sup>153</sup> Who has “...*the keys of Hades and of Death...*”<sup>154</sup> He sits upon the Throne and is Blessed by “...*every creature which is in Heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea.*”<sup>155</sup> He is the One Who is “...*coming quickly...*” to reward “...*every one according to his work.*”<sup>156</sup>

#### **4.The Testimonies of St Paul Concerning the Divinity of Christ.**

St Paul the Apostle persecuted Christ as a “*false-messiah*” before he believed in Him, however, after his conversion, he worshipped Him as the True and Perfect God Who existed before all ages and Who was sent in due time by His Father to die for us sinners. Henceforth, Jesus Christ is repeatedly called “*the Eternally Blessed God*”<sup>157</sup> as His Throne is the Throne of God, which is for ever. He is “...*the Firstborn over all Creation...*”<sup>158</sup> but not the

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<sup>152</sup> 1 John 5:20.

<sup>153</sup> Rev. 1:8, 11, 17; 21:6; 22:13.

<sup>154</sup> Rev. 1:18.

<sup>155</sup> Rev. 6:13.

<sup>156</sup> Rev. 22:12.

<sup>157</sup> Rom. 9:5.

<sup>158</sup> Col. 1:15.

First-created. “... *He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*”<sup>159</sup> Thus, St Paul ascribed to Him Divine Attributes, which are ascribed only to God.

St Paul proclaimed that “...*by Him all things were created that are in Heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether Thrones or Dominions or Principalities or Powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.*”<sup>160</sup> He ascribed Almightyness to Christ, by which all things exist and “...*all worlds were made.*”<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, St Paul ascribed Infinite Wisdom and Knowledge to Him “...*in Whom are hidden all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.*”<sup>162</sup> By the expression “...*all Treasures...*” he manifests the Infinity of God and by the words “...*are hidden all...*” reveals all the things that Christ alone knows.<sup>163</sup> Christ is “...*Self-wisdom and Self-knowledge,*”<sup>164</sup> besides which He has the Sameness and the Eternity of God according to the statement: “*Thou art the same, and Thy years will not fail...*”<sup>165</sup> and “...*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*”<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Col. 1:17.

<sup>160</sup> Col. 1:16.

<sup>161</sup> Heb. 1:2.

<sup>162</sup> Col. 2:3.

<sup>163</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *To Colosians*, Homily 5, § 2, in Monfaucon, v. 11, p. 416.

<sup>164</sup> Theophylactus of Bulgaria, *To Colosians*, in Migne, P.G., 124, 1236.

<sup>165</sup> Heb. 1:12.

<sup>166</sup> Heb. 13:8.

Christ is Perfect God “...Who, being in the Form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but 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 death of the Cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in Heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.”<sup>167</sup> “He had permanently secured and had not robbed the Principal (of the Divinity) and for this reason He was not afraid to descend from His Rank.”<sup>168</sup>

Through the Blood of Jesus Christ, which was shed on the Cross,<sup>169</sup> He Sanctified the Church<sup>170</sup> that is called “...the Church of God which He purchased with His own Blood”<sup>171</sup> and by His becoming our Saviour, we “...look for the Blessed Hope and Glorious Appearance of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.”<sup>172</sup>

It is obvious that St Paul proclaimed Christ as the Great God Who has Divinity by Nature. When he referred

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<sup>167</sup> Phil. 2:6-11. St. John Chrysostom, *To Philippians 2:6*, Homily 7, § 1, in Montfaucon, v. 11, p. 282.

<sup>168</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollynarius*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 45, 1164.

<sup>169</sup> Col. 1:14, 20. Rom. 3:25; 5:9. Ephes. 1:7; 2:13. Heb. 9:14.

<sup>170</sup> Heb. 13:12.

<sup>171</sup> Acts 20:28.

<sup>172</sup> Tit. 2:13.

to Him as “*Lord*,” he ascribed to Him the same Name by which God is addressed in the Old Testament such as “*Jehovah*” and “*Adonai*” - in other words, “*Lord*.” In verses where the Name “*Lord*” refers to God, St Paul applied them to Jesus Christ such as in Romans 10:13 when he referred to Joel 2:32. Likewise in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:31 where he referred to Jeremiah 9:23 and 1 Samuel (1 Kings) 2:10; as well as in 1 Corinthians 2:16 where he referred to Isaiah 40:13, and in his Epistle to the Hebrews 1:10 where he referred to Psalm 101(102):26.

Also in numerous other verses Christ is called “*Son of God*” by St. Paul.<sup>173</sup>

## **5. Teachings of the Apostolic Fathers Concerning the Divinity of Jesus Christ.**

The Apostolic Teachings concerning Christ as the Son and Word of God and God Himself, which were cherished in the Books of the New Testament, is also proclaimed in the writings of the successors of the Holy Apostles and Disciples of Christ who are known as “*the Apostolic Fathers*.” What was believed and preached about Christ by His Holy Apostles was preached and worshipped by their disciples as well. The quotations referring to Jesus Christ as “*Lord*,” “*God*” and “*Son of God*,” are innumerable.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Rom. 8:3, 32. Col. 1:13. Gal. 4:4-5. Heb. 1:3-4, 6.

<sup>174</sup> Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 127-129.

St Clement the Bishop of Rome confirmed that “...through the Blood of the Lord Redemption will come to all who believe and hope in God.”<sup>175</sup> “The Majestic Sceptre of God, our Lord Christ Jesus, did not come with the pomp of arrogance or pride (although He could have done so), but in humility, just as the Holy Spirit spoke concerning Him.”<sup>176</sup> “This Declaration of the Blessedness was pronounced upon those who have been chosen by God through Jesus Christ our Lord, to Whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.”<sup>177</sup>

“This is the way, dear friends, in which we found our Salvation, namely Jesus Christ, the High Priest of our Offerings, the Guardian and Helper of our weakness. Through Him let us look steadily into the heights of Heaven; through Him we see as in a mirror His faultless and transcendent Face; through Him the eyes of our hearts have been opened; through Him our foolish and darkened mind springs up into the Light; through Him the Master has willed that we should taste Immortal Knowledge, for ‘He, being the Radiance of His Majesty, is as much superior to Angels as the Name He has inherited is more excellent.’<sup>178</sup> For so it is written: ‘He makes His Angels winds and His Ministers Flames of Fire.’<sup>179</sup> But of His Son, the Master spoke thus: ‘Thou art My Son, today I

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<sup>175</sup> St. Clement of Rome, *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians*, 12, 7, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians*, 16, 2, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 36.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*, *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians*, 50, 7, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 57.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. Heb. 1:3-4.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. Heb. 1:7.

*have Begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the Gentiles for Thine Inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Thy possession.*<sup>180</sup> *And again He says to Him: 'Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy Feet.'*<sup>181</sup> *Who, then, are these enemies? Those who are wicked and resist His Will.*<sup>182</sup>

*"The Apostles received the Gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus the Christ was sent forth from God. So then Christ is from God, and the Apostles are from Christ. Both, therefore, came of the Will of God in good order. Having therefore received their orders and being fully assured by the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and full of the faith in the Word of God, they went forth with the firm assurance that the Holy Spirit gives, preaching the Good News that the Kingdom of God was about to come."*<sup>183</sup>

In the Second Letter to the Corinthians St Clement of Rome commented: *"Brothers, we ought to think of Jesus Christ, as we do of God."*<sup>184</sup>

St Ignatius the Theophoros and Bishop of Antioch, referred to Jesus Christ as *"God"* more than 15 times while in numerous other cases he addressed Him as

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<sup>180</sup> Cf. Heb. 1:5. Psalm 2:7-8.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Heb. 1:13.

<sup>182</sup> St. Clement of Rome, *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians*, 36, 1-6, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 48.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid*, *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians*, 42, 1-3, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 51.

<sup>184</sup> St. Clement of Rome, *2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians*, 1, 1, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 68.

“*Lord.*” According to this Apostolic Father the expression: “*Jesus Christ our Lord*”<sup>185</sup> or “*Jesus Christ our God*”<sup>186</sup> means “...*the Incarnated God...*” “...*Who before the ages was with the Father and appeared at the end of time...*”<sup>187</sup> “...*For our God Jesus Christ is more visible now that He is in the Father.*”<sup>188</sup> He is “...*God Who appeared in human form...*”<sup>189</sup> but as our God Who is in the Father. He is “...*the Eternal, the Invisible, Who for our sake became visible, the Intangible, the Unsuffering, Who for our sake suffered, Who for our sake endured in every way.*”<sup>190</sup> He is “...*the Son of Man and Son of God...*”<sup>191</sup> Who is united with the Father “...*as the Lord did nothing without the Father.*”<sup>192</sup> Dying for us, He shed His Blood for our Salvation. For this reason His Blood is the “*Blood of God*”<sup>193</sup> through which we are Regenerated. His Flesh is “...*(the Flesh of the Lord) and in Love (which*

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<sup>185</sup> St. Ignatius of Antioch, *To Ephesians*, 7, 2, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 88

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid*, *To Romans*, Introduction; *To Polycarp*, 8, 3, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 101, 102, 118. *Ibid*, *To Ephesians*, 20, 2, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 93.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid*, *To Magnesians*, 6, 1, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 94-95.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid*, *To Romans*, 3, 3, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 103.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid*, *To Ephesians*, 19, 3, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 92

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid*, *To Polycarp*, 3, 2, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 116.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid*, *To Ephesians*, 20, 3, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 93

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid*, *To Magnesians*, 7, 1, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 95.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid*, *To Ephesians*, 1, 2; *To Smyrnaeans*, 1, 1; 6, 1; *To Philadelphians*, Introduction, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 86, 110, 112, 106.

is the Blood of Jesus Christ)...”<sup>194</sup> having “...one Eucharist (for there is one Flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ,) and one Cup which leads to unity through His Blood,”<sup>195</sup> which are received in the Holy Eucharist. Thus His Suffering is the “...Suffering of my God.”<sup>196</sup> And He died because “...He suffered all these things for our sakes, in order that we might be Saved; and He truly suffered just as He truly Raised Himself.”<sup>197</sup>

St Polycarp the Bishop of Smyrna, in his letter to the Philippians, repeatedly called Jesus “...our Lord Jesus Christ...”<sup>198</sup> “...Who endured for our sins, facing even death, ‘Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of Hades.’”<sup>199</sup> “We will never be able either to abandon the Christ Who suffered for the Salvation of the whole world of those who are Saved, the blameless on the behalf of sinners, or to worship anyone else.”<sup>200</sup>

In the *Epistle of Barnabas*, Jesus Christ is proclaimed to be the “...Lord of the whole world, to

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid, *To Trallians*, 8, 1, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 99.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid, *To Philadelphians*, 4, 1, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 107.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid, *To Romans*, 6, 3, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 104.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid, *To Smyrnaeans*, 2, 1, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 110.

<sup>198</sup> St. Polycarp, *To Philippians*, 1, 2; 2, 1; 12, 2. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 19, 2; 22,3, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 123, 129, 143, 144.

<sup>199</sup> St. Polycarp, *To Philippians*, 1,2, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 123

<sup>200</sup> *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 17, 2, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 142.

Whom God said at the foundation of the world, 'Let Us make according to Our Image and Likeness...' <sup>201</sup>,<sup>202</sup> "He revealed Himself to be God's Son. For if He had not come in the flesh, men could in no way have been Saved by looking at Him. For when they look at merely the sun they are not able to gaze at its rays, even though it is the work of His hands and will eventually cease to exist. Therefore the Son of God came in the flesh for this reason, that He might complete the full measure of the sins of those who persecuted His Prophets to death."<sup>203</sup> Interpreting the words: "...And He rested on the seventh day..."<sup>204</sup> he explains that "...when His Son comes, He will destroy the time of the lawless one and will Judge the ungodly and will change the sun and the moon and the stars, and then He will truly rest on the seventh day."<sup>205</sup> "...If, therefore, the Son of God, Who is Lord and is destined to Judge the living and the dead, suffered in order that His Wounds might give us Life, let us believe that the Son of God could not suffer except for our sake."<sup>206</sup> "...So for this reason, brothers, He Who is very patient, when He foresaw how the people whom He had prepared in His Beloved would believe in all purity, revealed everything to us in advance, in order that we might not shipwreck ourselves by becoming, as it were, 'proselytes' to their law."<sup>207</sup> "...And

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<sup>201</sup> Cf. Gen. 1:26.

<sup>202</sup> *Barnabas*, 5, 5; 6, 12, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 167, 169.

<sup>203</sup> *Barnabas*, 5, 9-11, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 167-168.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Gen. 2:2.

<sup>205</sup> *Barnabas*, 15, 5, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 182.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid*, 7, 2, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 170.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid*, 3, 6, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 164.

when He chose His own Apostles who were destined to preach His Gospel (who were sinful beyond all measures in order that He might demonstrate, that 'He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners)...<sup>208</sup> <sup>209</sup> "...He was made manifest in order that they might fill up the measure of their sins and we might receive the Covenant through the Lord Jesus Who inherited it, Who was prepared for this purpose, in order that by appearing in person and Redeeming from darkness our hearts, which had already been paid over to death and given over to the lawlessness of error, He might establish a Covenant in us by His Word..<sup>210</sup> "...in our heart, in hope inspired by faith in Him..<sup>211</sup> Who will "...Judge the living and the dead..<sup>212</sup> and "...each person will receive according to what he has done: if he is good, his righteousness will precede him; if he is evil, the wages of doing evil will go before him."<sup>213</sup>

In the *Didache of the Twelve Apostles* Jesus Christ is repeatedly referred to as "*the Lord*"<sup>214</sup> with the assurance that "...in the last days the false prophets and corrupters will abound, and the sheep will be turned into wolves, and love will be turned into hate. For as lawlessness increases, they will hate and persecute and betray one

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<sup>208</sup> Cf. Matth. 9:13.

<sup>209</sup> *Barnabas*, 5, 9, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 167.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid*, 14, 5, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 181.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid*, 4, 8, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 166.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid*, 7, 2, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 170.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid*, 4, 12, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 166.

<sup>214</sup> *Didache*, Introduction; 8, 2; 9, 5; 10, 5; 11, 2, 3; 14, 3; 15, 1, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 149, 153, 154, 155, 157.

another.<sup>215</sup> And then the deceiver of the world will appear as a son of God and ‘will perform signs and wonders,’<sup>216</sup> and the earth will be delivered into his hands, and he will commit abominations the likes of which have never happened before. Then all humankind will come to the Fiery Test, and ‘many will fall away’ and perish; but ‘those who endure’ in their faith ‘will be saved,’<sup>217</sup> by the accursed one himself. And then there will appear the Signs<sup>218</sup> of the Truth: first the Sign of an opening in Heaven, then the Sign of the sound of a Trumpet<sup>219</sup>, and third, the Resurrection of the dead – but not of all; rather, as it has been said, ‘The Lord will come, and all His Saints with Him.’<sup>220</sup> Then the world ‘will see the Lord coming upon the clouds of Heaven.’<sup>221 222</sup> Concerning Baptism the *Didache* instructs: “After you have reviewed all these things, Baptize ‘in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’<sup>223</sup> in running water. But if you have no running water, then Baptize in some other water; and if you are not able to Baptize in cold water, then do so in warm. But if you have neither, then pour water on the head three times ‘in the Name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. And before the Baptism, let the one Baptising and the one who is to be Baptised fast, as well as any others who are able. Also, you must instruct the

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<sup>215</sup> Cf. Matth. 24:10-12.

<sup>216</sup> Cf. Mark 13:22.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. Matth. 24:10, 13.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. Matth. 24:30.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. Matth. 24:31. 1 Corinth. 15:52. 1 Thess. 4:12.

<sup>220</sup> Zech. 14:5. Cf. 1 Thess. 3:13.

<sup>221</sup> Cf. Matth. 24:30.

<sup>222</sup> *Didache*, 16, 7-8, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 158.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. Matth. 28:19.

one who is to be Baptised to fast for one or two days beforehand.”<sup>224</sup>

Finally, the *Epistle to Diognetos* provides us with a short but complete Christology. Truly, according to this Epistle, Jesus Christ is the Only “*Beloved Child*,”<sup>225</sup> “...*the Son of God alone*...”<sup>226</sup> “...*for God loved men, for whose sake He made the world, to whom He subjected everything on earth, to whom He gave reason, to whom He gave mind; them alone He permitted to took up to Heaven, them He created in His own Image, to them He sent His one and only Son, to them He promised the Kingdom in Heaven, which He will give to those who have loved Him.*”<sup>227</sup> “*For God, the Master and Creator of the Universe, Who made all things and arranged them in order, was not only tender-hearted but also very patient. Indeed, so He always was and is and will be, Kind, Good, without anger, and True, and He alone is Good.*”<sup>228</sup> God has sent His Son “...*in gentleness and meekness, as a king might send his son who is a king; He sent Him as God; He sent Him as a Man to men. When He sent Him, He did so as One Who saves by persuasion, not compulsion, for compulsion is no attribute of God.*”<sup>229</sup> “*But when our unrighteousness was fulfilled, and it had been made perfectly clear that its wages – punishment and death –*

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<sup>224</sup> *Didache*, 7, 1-4, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 153.

<sup>225</sup> *Epistle to Diognetos*, 8, 11, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 301.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid*, 9, 4, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 302.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid*, 10, 2, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 303.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid*, 8, 7-8, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 301.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid*, 7, 4, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 301.

were to be expected, then the season arrived during which God had decided to reveal at last His Goodness and Power (oh, the surpassing Kindness and Love of God!). He did not hate us, or reject us, or bear a grudge against us; instead He was Patient and Forebearing; in His Mercy He took upon Himself our sins; He Himself gave up His own Son as a Ransom for us, the Holy One for the lawless, the Guiltless for the guilty, 'the Just for the unjust,'<sup>230</sup>, the Incorruptible for the corruptible, the Immortal for the mortal. For what else but His Righteousness could have covered our sins?"<sup>231</sup> "When He sent Him, He did so as one Calling, not pursuing; when He sent Him, He did so as one Loving, not Judging. For He will send Him as Judge, and who will endure His Coming?"<sup>232</sup>

## **6. Teachings of the Ecclesiastical Scholars Concerning the Divinity of Jesus Christ.**

The writings of the Apologists, although they are addressed to idol worshippers, in order to defend the false accusations against Christianity, are not full reports of the Christian Faith but their Faith in Christ's Divinity continues to be confessed as in the Apostolic and Post-Apostolic periods.

Thus in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, the Apology of Aristides declared that "...the Christians are from the Lord Jesus

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<sup>230</sup> Cf. 1 Peter 3:18.

<sup>231</sup> *Epistle to Diognetus*, 9, 2-3, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 302.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid*, 7, 5-6, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 301.

*Christ, Who is confessed to be the Son of the Most High God, Who in the Holy Spirit came down from Heaven for the Salvation of men; and was born of the Holy Virgin Immaculately and took up flesh.*<sup>233</sup> Aristides proclaims Christ's Sonship and His pre-existence with the Father, as well as His Incarnation in time from the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, while the rest of the Apologists bore witness concerning the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation of the Word of God.

St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr wrote: "We confess God (the Father of Justice and Wisdom) and His Son Who is with Him and taught us..." "...Who was Crucified under Pontius Pilate as the Son of God." He, "...the Son of God and Apostle Jesus Christ, Who is the Word and appeared in the form of Fire..." "...and in other cases in a bodiless Image..." "...to Moses and other Prophets..." "...now born of the Virgin, becoming Man according to the Will of God, suffered for the Salvation of those who will believe." Hence those who believe in Him and are Baptised "...are Reborn in the Name of the Father ... and our Saviour Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit."<sup>234</sup>

Athenagoras believed that "...the Son of God is the Word of God in Image and Energy; for by Him and through Him all things were made."<sup>235</sup> This "Word," "...coming from the Power of the Father..." and having

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<sup>233</sup> Aristides, in Trempeles, *Dogmatique*, v. II, p. 55.

<sup>234</sup> St. Justin, the philosopher and martyr, *I Apology*, 15, 1; 6, 1; 13, 3; 63, 10 and 16; 61, 3, in **B**, v. 3, pp. 147, 164, 167, 196, 194, 178, 187. *Ibid*, *I Apology*, 32 and 50. *Ibid*, *Dialogue*, 40, 54, 111, 134.

<sup>235</sup> Athenagoras, *Deputation*, 10, in **B**, v. 4, p. 288.

been “...born in the beginning, Regenerated our Creation...” and became “...God in the form of Man.”<sup>236</sup> “This Word,” God the Father “...had as Ambassador of men and through Him made all things.” Therefore, “... it is said that He Rules over all things which were created through Him.”<sup>237</sup>

Generally speaking, the Apologists do not clearly explain the Relationship between the Son and His Father although every one of them holds fast to the belief of the Pre-existence and Deity of Christ Whom they characterise as the Word of God Who is related essentially and inseparably to God. He is the Son of God, not as in a mortal or human manner but Supernaturally and Essentially.

Although influenced by the philosophy of their time, all of them believed that the Word is a Divine Person and not the Word of the world, as the Pantheists and the Stoic Philosophers believed. In addition, they believed that the Word was absolutely and only a worldly Principal Who created and governed the Cosmos. They also taught that He was a Person through Whom the perfect Divine Revelation was made known to men and that new relationships were made through Him with the Heavenly Father.

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<sup>236</sup> Tatianus, *Homily to the Greeks*, 5, 13, 21, in **B**, v. 4, pp. 245, 269, 256.

<sup>237</sup> Theophilus of Antioch, *2 Autolytus*, 10 and 22, in **B**, v. 5, pp. 27, 36 and 37.

The “*Word became flesh.*”<sup>238</sup> specifically in order to Save mankind. This Salvation and Redemption was accomplished not only through Divine Knowledge to which the Incarnated Word led mankind through His Divine Teachings and the new moral Law but through the Outpouring of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit that were derived as a consequence of His Death.

The first scholars, after the Apologists, were called to defend the Divinity of the Incarnated Son and Word of God against the heresies of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. *Cerinthos* who was a contemporary of St John the Apostle and Evangelist, the *Ebionites* and different *Gnostics*, are a few of the heretics who are mentioned in their writings,<sup>239</sup> specially those of St Irenaeos,<sup>240</sup> the Church History of Eusebios<sup>241</sup> and those of St Epiphanius.<sup>242</sup>

The Ebionites excluded the Teachings of St John and St Paul from their Christology, as well as those concerning the pre-existence of Christ’s Divinity. While they accused St Paul of Apostasy, they practised circumcision, led a strict Jewish life and worshipped God in Jerusalem.

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<sup>238</sup> John 1:14.

<sup>239</sup> Theodoretus of Cyrus, *Heresies*, book II, chs. 1, 5, 24, in Migne, *P.G.*, 83, 388, 392. Tertullian, *Adversus Marcianem*, I, 11, 14; II, 27; III, 9; IV, 7, in Migne, *P.L.*, 2, 259, 262, 326, 333 and 369.

<sup>240</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book I, ch. 25, § 1; ch. 26, § 2; ch. 27, 2; book III, ch. 11, § 9, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 686-687, 688, 890. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 94, 97, 97-98, 213.

<sup>241</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, III, 27 and 38, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 273

<sup>242</sup> St. Epiphanius, *Heresy*, 27, 28, 41-42, 51, in Migne, *P.G.*, 41, 368, 377, 696, 888.

Cerinthos believed that Jesus Christ was born like the rest of men from St Joseph and St Mary until after His Baptism when the Holy Spirit came down upon Him and He then became the Christ Who remained a spiritual Being without suffering. Then, during His Passion only Jesus [the Man] suffered, whereas Christ [the Son of God] was recalled to Heaven.

The Gnostics and Carpocrates taught that our Lord Jesus was born from St Joseph and was similar to men except that he had a pure soul and that God had sent Divine Power to his soul in order to escape the Angels who created the world.

Marcion separated God the Father from the Creator mentioned in the Old Testament. He taught that God was manifested in our Lord Jesus in order to buy men from the cruel Creator, while he identified the Father as being Jesus Christ.

Finally, the Alogoi, rejected the fourth Gospel as well as the Book of Revelation, denying that the Apostles preached the Word of God. According to St Epiphanius, they did not actually deny the Teaching of our Lord Jesus being the Son of God, because in regard to this, they agreed with the Teachings of the Church.

St Irenaeus defended the Truth against these heresies proclaiming the belief “...in one God the Father Almighty...” “...and in one Jesus Christ, the Son of God Who was Incarnated for our Salvation...” “...and in the

*Holy Spirit...*” as received by the Church from “...*the Apostles and their disciples.*” He also maintained that the Son of God is Truly God, summing up all things in Him, “...*in order that in Christ Jesus our Lord and God and Saviour and King all knees will bow down...*” and that He Who made all things, was made Saviour by “...*the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...*” “...*Who is His Son Who always exists with the Father and Who manifests Him to the Angels.*”<sup>243</sup> Rejecting the teachings of the Gnostics and Cerinthos, St Irenaeos restored the True Faith, calling upon the Testimonies of the two Synoptics, as well as those of St John and St Paul, in conjunction with the Prophecies in Psalms 77(78):5-7, 131(132):2, Isaiah 9:6, Jeremiah 33:15 etc., by stating that it was necessary for the Salvation of man that God be Incarnated. “*For if man was not united with God, he would not be able to partake of Immortality.*” Refuting the teachings of the Gnostic Basilides, (who supported the heresy that the world was made by the Angels), St Irenaeos proclaimed that God, through the Word, made all things and that God is the Father of our Lord Jesus. He stressed that there is no other Father above the Creator, nor is the Begotten Son different from the Word and neither is the Christ different from the Saviour. “*The Apostles did not proclaim a different God; nor that a different Christ suffered and was Raised, or a different One was Raised and remained without suffering, but one and the same God and Saviour and Christ Jesus Who was Risen from the dead.*” St John knew one and the same Word of God, the Only Begotten Who was

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<sup>243</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book I, ch.10, § 1; book II, ch. 30, § 9, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 549, 821, 823. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 64, 178.

Incarnated for our Salvation, Jesus Christ our Lord and the same Truth was proclaimed by St Matthew, St Paul and St Mark as well.<sup>244</sup>

Besides the abovementioned heretics, there were others known as the Monarchians who denied the Holy Trinity and taught that God the Father was Incarnated and had suffered for us. These heretics were also called Patropaschites (Noetus and Praxeas). Other heretics taught that our Lord Jesus suffered before being adopted by God (Theodotus Scyteus). St Hippolytos fought against the heresy of the Monarchians with his writings as mentioned by Eusebius: “...*Against Artemon or Artemas...*” “...*To the heresy of Noeros...*” and the two last Books IX and X of his Book “*Accusations Against All Heresies*” while Tertullian with his writings: “*Adversus Praxeam*” and Novatianos in chapter XVIII-XXIX of his writings “*De Trinitate*” contested their heresies as well.

St Hippolytos proclaimed that God “...*Who is Being, was neither irrational, nor unwise, nor weak, nor without will...*” but instead was “...*of all that were made Leader and Counselor and Worker Who had Begotten the Word, Whom He had within Him.*” “*All things were made through Him... He alone from the Father...*”, “...*becoming the Firstborn...*” “...*for this He was God of God’s Essence.*” “*This Word the Father had sent in latter days...*” “...*to be revealed...*” “...*receiving a body from*

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<sup>244</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book II, ch. 2, § 4 and ch. 19, § 9; book III, ch. 12, § 2; ch. 16, §§ 1, 2-3; and ch. 17-19; ch. 18, § 7; ch. 19, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 919, 937-940. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 113, 150, 214, 230-231, 231-233, 237-245, 242-243, 244.

*the Virgin.” “Thus we see the Incarnated Word.” “Knowing the Economia of the Father, the Word...” “...after His Resurrection gave to His Disciples, saying, ‘Go and make disciples of all nations Baptising them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,’<sup>245</sup> showing that whoever remains out of these, does not believe in God. For through the Holy Trinity the Father is glorified because the Father Wanted, the Son Made and the Spirit Revealed.”<sup>246</sup>*

Tertullian, determining the Christian Faith, observed that we believe in one God, under Whose *Economia* [Dispensation] one God will be His Son and Word, Who came from Him, through Whom all things were made and without Him not even one thing was made. He was sent by the Father to the Virgin and was born from her, Man and God, Son of Man and Son of God and was named Jesus Christ, as we proclaim. Before all things were made God was alone, although even then He was not completely alone for His Word was with Him because the rational God and the Word in Him made everything. This, the Greeks called “*Word*” [“*Logos*”]. God begot the Word. This is similar to the root of a bush, the spring of the river or the brightness of the sun because these projections are of the same essence from which they originate.<sup>247</sup> Elsewhere he proclaimed that God lived

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<sup>245</sup> Cf. Math 28:19

<sup>246</sup> St. Hippolytus, *To the heresy of Noetus*, 10, 11, 12 and 14, in **B**, v. 6, pp. 16, 17 and 18. Ibid, *Heresies*, 10, 33, in **B**, v. 5, pp. 375 and 376.

<sup>247</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Praxeam*, c. 2, 5 and 8, in migne, *P.L.*, 2, 179, 183 and 186.

amongst men in order that they would learn to do whatever is Divine. In relation to man, God came as an equal so that man, likewise, would be able to become godly by Divine Grace. God first appeared as Someone tiny, in order that mankind would become great and if you deny a God like that, then I doubt that you truly believe in God.<sup>248</sup>

Amongst the later Fathers until the 1<sup>st</sup> Ecumenical Synod, we mentioned Origen who believed in the Christian Trinity, which he referred to as the “*Holy Trinity*,” “*Eternal Trinity*,” “*Primary Trinity*,” and “*Worshipped Trinity*.” He believed that the Son of God is called by God “*Second God*,” “*the Word of God*” and “*God the Word*.”<sup>249</sup>

From the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century A.D., as one can see from the inscriptions of Abercios and Pectorios, the symbol of the fish prevailed because the Greek word for fish, “*ΙΧΘΥΣ*” hid a full Confession of Faith concerning the Divinity and Humanity of the Lord. (I = “*Jesus*,” X = “*Christ*,” Θ = “*God’s*,” Y = “*Son*,” Σ = “*Saviour*”), in other words: “*Jesus Christ, God’s Son, the Saviour*.”

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid, *Adversus Marcianem*, II, 27, in Migne, *P.L.*, 2, 345.

<sup>249</sup> Origen, *About Principals*, Introduction I, 1-4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 11, 115-121. Ibid, *Fragments to John*, 36, *To John* book 10, 23, in Migne, *P.G.*, 14, 384. Ibid, *To Matthew*, book 15, 31, in Migne, *P.G.*, 13, 1345. Ibid, *To John*, books 2, 2; 6, 17, in Migne, *P.G.*, 14, 108, 257. Ibid, *Against Celsus*, III, 37; V, 39; VI, 61; VII, 17, in Migne, *P.G.*, 11, 968, 970, 1244, 1392, 1445.

St Athanasios the Great of Alexandria, addressing those who doubt the Divinity of the Incarnated Word observed: “Behold, we transmit this idea from fathers to fathers, but you as young Jews and disciples of Caiphaz, which of your words do you have to show us? But none of the wise you are able say. For all of them turn away from you.”<sup>250</sup>

## **7. Arios and the 1<sup>st</sup> Ecumenical Council of Nicaea<sup>251</sup>**

After the defeat and surrender of Licinius in the autumn of 324 Constantine found the Christians of the East as violently divided as he had found those of Africa in 313. The same drama was staged. The Emperor ordered Hosios of Cordova, his expert in ecclesiastical affairs, to hold an enquiry into the troubles at Alexandria and in Asia Minor, just as he had ordered him on an earlier mission to discover the facts of Donatism at Carthage. Because the problem proved so complex, once again he had to summon a Council.

For some years or possibly only some months (318, or possibly only in July 323) a certain Arios, a Priest of the Church of Alexandria and perhaps a deserter from the Melitian Schism, had shown violent opposition to his Bishop, Alexander. This time, however, the issue was extremely important, being nothing less than the Theology

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<sup>250</sup> St. Athanasius the Great, *Epistle the Synod of Nicene*, § 27, in Migne, *P.G.*, 25, 465.

<sup>251</sup> Daniélou, *The Christian Centuries*, v. 1, pp. 248-253. See also: Feidas, *The 1<sup>st</sup> Ecumenical Council*, Athens, 1974.

of the Holy Trinity. We have seen that the problems raised by this Theology had already excited passionate discussions during earlier generations in the Church of Alexandria as in the rest of the Christian world, notably in the last years of the Episcopate of Dionysios (260-264/5).

In its early stages Arianism took the form of a discussion within the Church of Alexandria between proponents of two opposed Theological tendencies, both of which belonged to its tradition and, paradoxically, seemed to have been found in turn in the thoughts of the aforementioned Dionysios. Arios, as we know from other sources, had been the pupil or at least considered himself the disciple of the Martyr Lucian, a Priest of Antioch, but he seems to have adopted the Subordinationist tendency first shown by Dionysios of Alexandria in his polemic against the Sabellians of Cyrenaica, (for which Dionysios had been severely reprimanded by the Bishop of Rome, also called Dionysios). As a result Arios had shifted his position and finally been led to affirm the opposite point of view: namely, the complete Substantial Equality between the Father and the *Logos*.

A heresy, often as a result of the vehement assertion of an authentic but partial aspect of revelation which, developed unilaterally, soon becomes deformed and compromises the balance of Theology as a whole. Arios seems to have been dominated by an obsession. He was determined to safeguard the originality and privileges of the Father within the Trinity as being “...*the only One to be ‘agenetos...,’ that is to say, not engendered but also not ‘become,’*” (no precise distinction was made between

the two participles derived from *gennao* and *gignomai*) *nor having entered into being. The Father alone is Eternal, He alone is without beginning; in short He alone is True God.*” For – and this is the essential point – *“He is absolutely alone in being ‘arkhé’”* the Principle of all beings. This emphasis led Arios to devalue the Logos to a corresponding degree. The Logos, he declared, *“...is not Eternal, nor Co-eternal with the Father, nor Uncreated like the Father (literally, not-engendered, not-become, like the Father.)”*

Hence arose formulas that Orthodoxy considered as blasphemous, such as *“...He was not before He came to be Engendered.”* Arios probably did not go so far as to expressly declare what his adversaries claimed that he had said: *“There was a time when the Word did not exist.”* He was trying to express an Ontological superiority rather than a chronological priority but he increased his precautions in vain, saying that the generation of the Word took place *“before all time, before all the ages”* and pointing out that even if the Word had been *“created,”* (Pro 8:22, the most important verse for the Arians) He was a perfect Divine Creature incomparable to other created beings. The Subordinationist tendency in Arios was indisputable: Arianism was not a invention of his enemies.

Reaction was not long in coming. In the Church of Egypt so firmly kept in hand by the Bishop of Alexandria, no one could attack the Theology professed by its head and remain unscathed. Alexander of Alexandria called a Council of nearly a hundred Bishops from Egypt and Libya, which anathematized the errors of Arios and

excommunicated him together with his partisans who comprised a small group of five other Priests, six Deacons and only two Bishops belonging to the western dependencies of Egypt: Theonas of Marmarica and Secundos of Ptolemais in Cyrenaica. The matter was not confined to Egypt. Arios, who did not accept this condemnation, had already sought support in Palestine (as Origen had formerly done in similar circumstances) from the erudite Eusebios of Caesarea, Origen's apologist and heir. Arios had also sought assistance in the rest of the East and Asia Minor from those who, like himself, had been pupils and disciples of Lucian of Antioch. We still possess the letter in which he called for help from one of these "*Sylloukianists*," Eusebios of Nicomedia. This Eusebios was an influential person if ever there was one – the very type of ambitious, turbulent Prelate in the Late Empire (he had just had himself transferred from his first See, Beirut, to that of the imperial residence; he was to end his days, after a second move, in the new capital Constantinople, which had meanwhile been founded). On their initiative, provincial Synods of Bithynia and Palestine soon opposed the decision taken by the Council at Alexandria and rehabilitated Arios.

This action in turn encountered hostility close at hand. Macarios of Jerusalem took a stand against the Bishop of Caesarea; the friends whom Arios found in Phoenicia and Cilicia were opposed by the Bishops of Tripoli and especially by the Bishops of Antioch, where circa 323-324 the great Eustathios succeeded Philogonios. The Bithynian party grouped around the other Eusebios was answered in Galatia by Marcellos of Ancyra (the

present-day Ankara), whose behaviour soon became suspect. Meanwhile Alexander did not remain idle; he communicated and defended his position in Encyclical or personal letters addressed to the Bishops of the Greek counties and to Sylvester of Rome. The commotion spread. Faced with a situation quickly become so complex, Constantine, understandably enough, was more or less forced to consider a great Council.

Since Constantine was now master of the whole Empire - the pride of all Romans - he ignored the existence of its Sassanid rival and gladly identified with the civilized universe. The Council would be a world Council - the first in history. Nevertheless the three hundred or so Bishops who came together in Nicaea, near Nikomedia, on 20 May 325, were not drawn in equal numbers from the various Provinces. Although the Emperor had given every assistance to the Bishops, in particular granting them the exceptional privilege of *evectio*, the right to use the Imperial Post, material difficulties explain the evident disproportion. More than a hundred of the Bishops came from Asia Minor, about thirty from Syria-Phoenicia and less than twenty from Palestine and Egypt. The Latin West was hardly represented at all: the three or four Bishops who attended may have been at the imperial court for some personal reason as, for example, Hosios of Cordova. Pope Sylvester delegated two Roman Priests to attend in his place. His absence was perhaps only accidental but it created a precedent: as a result in later Ecumenical Councils the See of Rome was regularly represented by Legates.

We can picture the different Theological tendencies in the Council like an open fan. At the extreme left lay the small hard core of the first Arians, supported by their Sylloukianist friends, grouped around Eusebios of Nikomedia. Next was a sort of left centre whose spokesman was Eusebios of Caesarea, grouping the moderate Subordinationists in the tradition of Origen with those who could be called "*conservatives*." These conservatives were composed of uncertain or timid Theologians (a similar tendency will be found more than once in later Councils) more concerned with unity than for precise definitions and hence hostile to all new formulas. They tried to hold on to traditional Teaching expressed in strictly Biblical terms. Further to the right were those who had discovered the danger of Arianism: Alexander of Alexandria (accompanied by his Deacon and future successor, Athanasios) and Hosios of Cordova, who seems to have played an especially active role. They were supported by an extreme right wing whose backing they seemed to consider free of danger: Eustathios of Antioch and especially Marcellos of Ancyra. The latter was all the more violently anti-Arian in that his passionate, one-sided devotion to the principle of Divine "*Monarchy*" led him to veer into the diametrically opposite heresy. His enemies seem to have been correct in attributing to him an acknowledged or implicit Modalism, the old error of Sabellios.

This analysis does not bring out the relative importance of the different parties. In fact, a powerful majority easily took shape to disapprove of the errors of Arios. Disregarding the protests of the "*conservatives*,"

the Council took as its basis the Profession of Faith proposed by Eusebios of Caesarea, but added to his rather vague text certain very precise definitions. Not content with proclaiming the Son “*God of God, Light of Light,*” they expressly stated that He is True God of True God, Engendered and not created, Consubstantial with his Father, *Homoousios*.

The adoption of this word in defence of which severe battles were later to be fought, marks a memorable date in the Doctrinal history of Christianity. By thus inserting in the Profession of Faith a new term that originated no longer in Scripture but in man’s reason, the Council of Nicaea recognized as fruitful the purely Theological attempt at elucidating Revelation, and used its authority to sanction the progress made in rendering explicit the contents of Faith. With this Council the Church resolutely entered on the path that would eventually lead, in modern times, to such solemn “*definitions*” as the Dogmas of the Immaculate Conception, Papal infallibility and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Despite the fact that he was probably not a competent Theologian and whether he acted by persuasion or intimidation, Emperor Constantine certainly helped to bring the debates to a successful and speedy conclusion. In any case, when the result was declared, he supported it with the whole weight of his authority. Only two Bishops, the two first associates of Arius already mentioned, refused to accept the term “*Consubstantial*” and the anathemas that accompanied it. They and Arius himself

were sent into exile. Three months later in the autumn of 325, Eusebios of Nikomedia and two of his neighbours who wished to withdraw their signatures, were also exiled. The Emperor could well be satisfied, for the problem now seemed solved. But in fact it was far from it because the dispute soon flared up again.