

**The Coptic Orthodox Church
and
The Dogmas**

GOD

1994

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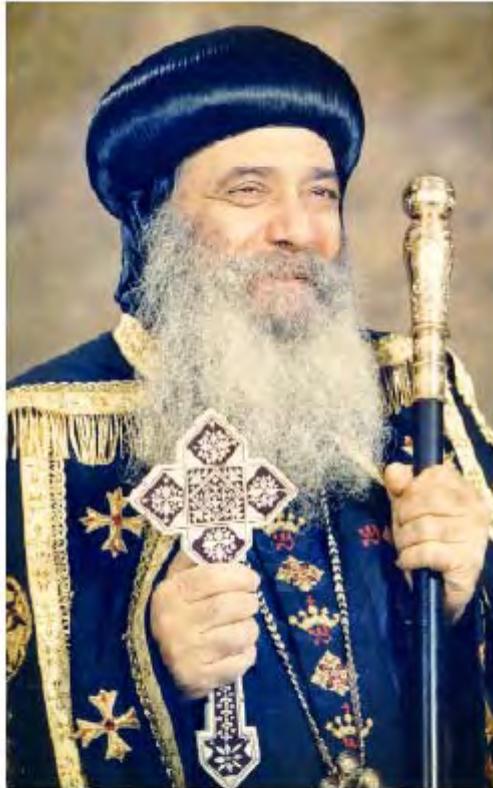
Reverend Father Tadros Y. Malaty has kindly permitted that his books be published in the COeRL. He has requested that we convey that any suggestions or amendments regarding their translation are welcome, and should be forwarded to:
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Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, King of Kings and
Lord of lords



**THE BEHOLDER OF GOD
MARK THE EVANGELIST
SAINT AND MARTYR**



*H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of
Alexandria and the See of St. Mark*



**His Grace Bishop Daniel
Bishop of Sydney and Affiliated Regions**

GOD

"God is love" (1 John 4:8). God is neither an idea that we believe in, nor a Supreme Being who is far away in the heavens and isolated from our world. He is not a solid Being, but the Lover of mankind who grants His divine knowledge so that we may enjoy His love and feel His fatherhood. God likes to be very close to humans to unite them with Himself, and to live within their souls, conferring on them the power to participate in His glory.

In other words, God reveals Himself to mankind neither to involve them in theoretical discussions, nor to practice His authority on them. He attracts mankind to Himself as children to their natural father. In our heavenly Father, we find the source of life, immortality, eternal gratification and glorification.

St. Athanasius, in his *Paschal Letters*, wrote, "... the contemplation of God, and the Word which is from Him, suffice to nourish those who hear, and stand to them in place of all food. For the angels are not otherwise sustained than by beholding the face of the Father and of the Savior who is in heaven¹."

REVELATION OF GOD

God created man in His image as the most perfect of His creation on earth. He did not plan to leave man in Paradise alone, but to embrace him as His beloved, and to grant mankind unity with Him. God used to speak with Adam for it was written, "... and they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden." (Gen. 3:8). Similarly, God started a dialogue with the first patriarch, Abraham, to declare to him His divine plan, saying, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing?" (Gen. 18:17). God, who is incomprehensible, reveals Himself, His nature, His mysteries, and His will to His beloved with whom He desires to be in contact.

God speaks to mankind through His creation, as St. Paul states, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). The prophet David says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handy work" (Ps. 19:1). **St. Athanasius** wrote, "*God by His own Word gave the Universe the order it has, in order that since He is by nature invisible, men might be enabled to know Him at any rate by His works. For often the artist, even when not seen, is known by his works*²."

Because mankind refused to hear the voice of natural law which reveals God as the Creator and Lover of mankind, God presented His written Law through Moses, and sent His prophets to prepare the way for the "Word" Himself, the incarnate Son of God who came and revealed to us the divine mysteries. St. Paul states, "God who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son" (Heb. 1:1, 2).

Robert M. Grant writes,

¹St. Athanasius: *Paschal letters* 1:6; "The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers", Second Series, Vol.4, 1979, by Roberts and Donaldson. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan. USA.

²St. Athanasius: *Contra Gentes*; "The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers."

Ultimately, however, all the New Testament writers agree that God is known through His self-revelation, and that this self-revelation is the revelation of Christ. To be sure, in Romans 1:19ff, Paul did not speak explicitly of this revelation, but he did refer to the glory of the imperishable God. We may compare those verses with 2 Cor. 4:6, 'For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'

Creation, redemption, and revelation of the knowledge of God are thus combined in Paul's thought. In Romans 1:19ff, he does not explicitly refer to Christ because such a reference would not be germane to his argument. We conclude that for the theologians of the earliest church, all cosmological statements are ultimately Christological; the knowledge of God that man can infer from the cosmos by itself is inadequate and, apart from God's self-revelation in Christ, is bound to lead to idolatry. To put the point a little differently, there is no real knowledge of God apart from revelation; there is no knowledge of God apart from grace; there is no knowledge of God apart from faith. "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God by wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:21)³."

Origen wrote,

*Our Saviour, therefore, is the image of the invisible God, in as much as compared with the Father Himself He is the truth; and as compared with us, to whom He reveals the Father, He is the image by which we come to the knowledge of the Father, whom no one knows save the Son, and He to whom the Son is pleased to reveal Him*⁴.

*All who believe and are assured that 'grace and truth came through Jesus Christ' (John 1:17), and who know Christ to be the truth, agreeably to His own declaration, 'I am the truth' (John 14:6), derive the knowledge which incites men to a good and happy life from no other source than from the very words and teaching of Christ. And by the words of Christ we do not mean those only which He spoke when He became man and tabernacled in the flesh; for before that time, Christ, the Word of God was in Moses and the prophets*⁵.

St. Clement of Alexandria wrote,

*Receive Christ, receive sight, receive your light; in order that you may know well both God and man. 'Sweet is the Word that gives us light, precious above gold and gems; it is to be desired above honey and the honeycomb' (Ps. 19:10)*⁶.

For each one (of His titles) by itself does not express God; but altogether are indicative of the power of the Omnipotent ...

*It remains that we understand, then, the Unknown, by divine grace, and by the Word alone that proceeds from Him*⁷.

³R. M. Grant: "The Early Christian Doctrine of God", 1966, P. 12-13.

⁴Origen: *De Principiis*, Book 1, Ch. 2, Section 6.

⁵Origen: *De Principiis*, Preface 1; "The Ante-Nicene Fathers", Vol. 4, 1979, by Roberts and Donaldson. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan. USA.

⁶St. Clement: *Exhortation to the Heathen*, Ch.9. "The Ante-Nicene Fathers."

⁷St. Clement: *Stromata*, Book 5, Ch. 12.

Now, God from His own side offered us all the abilities to perceive Him by revealing Himself to us. From our side, it is our responsibility to enjoy this divine knowledge, not only by studying and researching, but also by purifying our souls and hearts, i.e., our internal sight.

Joseph C. McLelland wrote⁸, "Moreover, since 'like knows like' in the Alexandrian world view ... (St. Clement states⁹) 'the way to the Immutable is immutability.'"

St. Athanasius wrote,

But for its knowledge and accurate comprehension, there is need of none other save of ourselves. Neither, as God Himself is above all, is the road to Him afar off outside ourselves, but it is in us, and it is possible to find it from ourselves, in the first instance, as Moses also taught, when he said, 'But the word (of faith) is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart ...' Deut. 30:14. Which very thing the Saviour declared and confirmed, when He said, 'The kingdom of God is within you,' Luke 17:21. For having in ourselves faith, and the kingdom of God, We shall quickly be able to see and perceive the king of the Universe, the saving Word of the Father¹⁰.

Whence also when it gets rid of all the filth of sin which covers it and retains only the likeness of the Image in its purity, then surely this latter being thoroughly brightened, the soul beholds as in a mirror the Image of the Father, even the Word ...¹¹

JEHOVAH: "YHWH, Yahweh"

God told Moses that He had appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as the Almighty One (Ex. 6:3). Moses was the first person to know His name as "Jehovah." He was the first leader of God's people in the Old Testament, so for their benefit God declared to him His name, "Jehovah," meaning "He who is." What does God mean by saying "He who is"? He means that He is present and acting on behalf of His chosen people. In contrast, the Greek religions often looked to God as the Supreme Being who was far removed from mundane life. They did not perceive Him as being active in human affairs, but gave that role to a hierarchy of lesser gods and demigods. Their activities in our world were said to be chaotic, conflicting and capricious, because they did not always pull in the same direction¹².

Christianity realized that the activity of God is unceasing, and extends over the whole range of human life at all times and everywhere. God is ever-present and ever-acting in the world; not just in a single nation.

THEOS

⁸ J.C. McLelland: *God the Anonymous, A study in Alexandrian Philosophical Theology*, 1976, P 64.

⁹ St. Clement: *Stromata*, Book 2, Ch. 11, Section 6.

¹⁰ St. Athanasius: *Contra Gentes*, Part 2, Section 30.

¹¹ *Ibid*, section 34.

¹² Allan Richardsdon: *Creeeds in the making*, SCM, 1979. P 112-113.

G. L. Prestige¹³ states that some Early Church Fathers, including **Clement of Alexandria** and **Dionysius of Alexandria**, followed Herodotus¹⁴ in connecting the Greek word *theos* (God) with *tithemi* (dispose).

St. Clement wrote, "*He has been called God on the ground of institution ~ Is and regulation - as Disposer*¹⁵."

The same Fathers connect the title *theo* ("run"), because God is the source of motion, activity and progress of every kind. According to Aristotle, God is the "First Mover" who moved the world and left it. In contrast, according to our faith, "God is love," eternal love. His movement of love is within Him through the eternal relationship of the Holy Trinity. In creating the world, His love was revealed. His love has been working ever since, and shall never cease until the last coming of Christ. God is the eternal movement of love that embraces the world, especially mankind, taking care of him in this temporal life to the last hair in his head (Matt. 10:30), so that mankind can enjoy eternal glory. The Alexandrian Fathers persisted in confirming the idea that God, who is incomprehensible, cares for man through His unique love and by establishing His heavenly kingdom of love within his soul (Luke 17:21). God's power is that of moving love.

We must confirm that when we speak of God as "love," we do not mean human emotions, but try to express what is divine and incomprehensible, using human language that we can understand.

St. Athanasius stated "*God is self-existent, enclosing all things, and enclosed by none; within all according to His own goodness and power, yet without all in His proper nature*¹⁶."

St. Clement wrote, "*In substance far off (for how can the originate come close to the unoriginate?), but most close in power, in which the universe is embosomed*¹⁷."

GOD IN WHOM WE BELIEVE

Christianity started in Alexandria, Egypt, by a very simple yet deep action. Anianus, a cobbler, cried "O One God," as a needle pierced his hand while repairing St. Mark's shoe. St. Mark, the Apostle and Evangelist, healed his hand in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. He then witnessed to the One God whom Anianus believed in, but did not know. St. Mark told the cobbler about God who heals not only our bodies, but also our human nature through His incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. Anianus was converted to Christianity and was ordained by St. Mark as the first Bishop of Alexandria.

Here we should notice two things:

1. St. Mark did not attack the Egyptian religion of that time, but used instead the words of Anianus, "O One God," as a starting point for preaching the biblical truth. His approach resembles that of St. Paul in Athens, "Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you" (Acts 17:23),

¹³G.L. Prestige: *God in Patristic Thought*, 1936, P 1.

¹⁴Herodotus: *Hist. Book 2, Ch. 52.*

¹⁵St. Clement: *Stromata, Book 1, Ch. 29.*

¹⁶St. Athanasius: *De Decretis, Ch. 3.*

¹⁷St. Clement: *Stromata: 2, circ. init.*

and also "For in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'for we are also His offspring'" (Acts 17:28).

The Alexandrians followed the same steps of St. Mark, for they preached the unchangeable biblical truth to the Egyptians and to those who had a Hellenic culture (in Alexandria) using their own language and teaching. With the simple people, they used simplicity, and with the philosophers they used philosophy.

2. St. Mark, who used the healing of Anianus' wound in the name of Jesus Christ as a starting point to preach the Gospel, did not reveal God as a mere idea he believed in, but as the Savior who redeems mankind. This is the basic principle of Alexandrian theology until today. We know God, not through theoretical discussions, but through His redeeming deeds. God grants us new knowledge, new life and immortality.

Thus, St. Mark truly sowed in our theological soil the seed that has produced fruits along the ages. One of these fruits is the close relation between theological knowledge and salvation. God bestows knowledge that is not isolated from our salvation. This is clear in the theology of **St. Clement of Alexandria** who usually introduces Jesus Christ as the "Tutor." He wrote a book called *Paedagogus* ("The Instructor") in which he speaks of this Divine Paedagogue as the "All-healing physician of mankind¹⁸." In other words, divine knowledge to **St. Clement** cannot be separated from our salvation. He writes, "*It is the will of God that we should attain the knowledge of god, which is the communication of immortality*¹⁹" and "*Word ... became man so that you might learn from man how man may become God*²⁰."

Thus we understand why the Incarnate Word of God neither spoke to us in theological terms nor set a trinitarian formula of faith. He simply reveals to us the Holy Trinity through Their saving deeds. The following are some examples:

1. Jesus reveals the Father as the Lover of mankind, who sent His Only-begotten Son as a sacrifice for the whole world (John 3:16); and asks us to call Him "our Father" (Matt. 6:9) so that we trust in His fatherly love, believing that He grants us more than we ask.

2. When Jesus reveals His relationship to the Father, He does that for our advantage. He said, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life" (John 5:17).

"My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (John 5:17).

"He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say show us the Father?" (John 14:9).

3. Jesus Christ declared His divinity through His actions for our sake. He revealed Himself as the Creator who changed water into wine (John 2:1-12) to grant us spiritual joy. Being the Creator, He bestowed sight onto a man who was born blind (John 9:1-12). He stilled the sea and the wind (Mark 4:35-41), and He cast out demons and evil spirits (Mark 1:23), so His beloved may live in peace.

¹⁸St. Clement: *Paedagogus*, Book 1, Ch. 2. Section 6.

¹⁹*Stromata*: 4:6:27.

²⁰*Protrep*. 1:8:4.

He also revealed Himself as the Forgiver of sins (Mark 9:2-6; Luke 7:48). He introduced Himself to us as the "Life," the "Truth," the "Resurrection," the "Heavenly Bread," the "Way," the "Door," the "Physician," the "Bridegroom," etc., so that we would find in Him all our needs.

4. He introduced the Holy Spirit to us as the "Comforter and Helper" (John 14:26), who abides within us (John 14:17), teaches us all things (John 14:26), convicts the world of sin (John 16:18), and grants power for witnessing to Christ (Acts 1:8).

† † †

MYSTERY OF GOD

Christianity, which enlightens man's heart to conceive the divine truth and elevates his soul to participate in heavenly life without ignoring his actual life on earth, is a "mysterious religion." Some may ask:

- * *What does the word "mystery" mean?*
- * *Does it mean that Christian dogmas are not simple? or that they are not acceptable to the human mind?*
- * *Is there a need for the "Mystery of the Holy Trinity"?*
- * *Why do we not believe in God in simplicity and worship Him without researching His nature?*

1. "Mystery" in Christianity does not mean that a believer has to believe in obscure dogmas without understanding them and that these dogmas are unacceptable to his mind. When we speak of the divine mysteries concerning God's essence, nature and deeds, we mean that He reveals these things to us, rational beings, granting us a divine enlightenment to conceive the divine knowledge which is truly supreme. Our minds are unable to conceive these things naturally without God's grace and revelation. Mystery does not oppose man's mind, but is supreme and inconceivable without God's help.

God created us as rational, not irrational, beings. He reveals Himself and His deeds to us, not to abolish our minds, but to elevate them and for all our human nature to accept Him and acknowledge His mysteries:

"To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God" (Mark 4:11), "... having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposes in Himself" (Eph. 1:9).

God who loves mankind as rational beings "talked with Moses as friend to friend" (Ex. 33:11); He desires to enter in a dialogue with every believer.

Here are some quotes of **St. Clement of Alexandria**, which declare that Christianity elevates man's mind and does not abolish it by faith or by God's revelation, but makes it wise: "...*the soul is raised to God: trained in the true philosophy, it speeds to its kindred above, turning away from the lusts of the body, and besides these, from toil and fear...*"²¹; and "A noble hymn of God is an immortal man, established in righteousness, in whom the oracles of truth are engraved! For where, but in a soul that is wise, can you write truth?"²²

St. Clement explains that human knowledge is necessary for the understanding of the scriptures, but not without God's help²³.

2. Some accuse Christianity of a lack of simplicity, i.e., of complexity, because of its belief in the Three Hypostasis in one divine essence. They look to this dogma as if it were a mystery which may be understood as a kind of polytheism. Those who refuse this dogma, believing in the one absolute God, also believe in many mysteries which the mind cannot conceive by itself. They speak of God's hands, face, throne etc. They believe

²¹Strom. 4:3.

²²Protrop. 10.

²³Strom. 1:9.

that God has no body, but is Simple and is Spirit. These terms also - in their opinion - represent mysteries, which although they accept, they may misunderstand. By the same token we say that we believe in the Holy Trinity as a mystery, which God Himself reveals to mankind and the mind can enjoy by divine grace, and that this belief confirms and explains "monotheism."

MONOTHEISM AND TRINITARIAN FAITH

Our faith in its essence is a call to enjoy the experience of the One God, the Lover of mankind. The Old and the New Testaments confirm the belief in the One God, but the Old Testament deals with this matter in its negative aspect, for its aim was to prevent the believers from worshipping idols, false gods, and from practicing the abominations of the nations that accompanied paganism (2 Kings 21:2; 2 Chron. 28:3). The New Testament witnesses to the One God in a positive aspect, for it does not declare the oneness of God but it deepens our faith in God by revealing the "Trinitarian" faith. In fact, this faith does not oppose "Monotheism," but emphasizes it by revealing some mysteries of the One God and His relationship to mankind. Without the Trinitarian faith, monotheism would have remained obscure.

In the following pages I would like to explain why we accept the Trinitarian faith as biblical dogma that God Himself reveals to us by His Word. This dogma explains the positive aspect of monotheism and solves many problems that absolute monotheism raises. It also has an essential role in our salvation. It touches our actual lives, our eternal future, and our relationship to God. Moreover, it does not oppose the spiritual mind, but rather satisfies it and raises it to contemplate the divine mysteries joyfully.

THE TRINITARIAN DOGMA AND THE BIBLE

The Trinitarian dogma is the first of all biblical dogma²⁴. The Holy Trinity is referred to at Jesus' baptism (John 1:27-33). Our baptism too is performed in the name of the Three Hypostases according to St. Matthew (28:19). St. Paul's benediction enumerates them in 2 Cor. 13:14. The Three are spoken of in John 14:16; Eph. 2:18; 1 Pet. 1:21, 22; etc. The works and the titles of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit declare Their divinity as we will later see. After light was thrown on the nature of God by New Testament revelation, Christians began to see that in the Old Testament there is not much light thrown upon God which points to His tri-hypostases. One of them is the Trisagion (holy, holy, holy) of Isaiah's vision in 6:3, when coupled with the "who will go for us?" in 6:8. Another is the plurality of persons (hypostases), possibly implied in the plural "Elohim" (God), often used, even in the Deuteronomy 6:4 "unity" passage; and certainly suggested in such passages as "let us make man in our image" (Gen. 1:26) and "let us go down, and there confound their language" (Gen. 11:7).

Truly, in the Old Testament, the dogma of the Trinity was not clear, for the Jews were surrounded by many nations who worshipped idols, and they themselves sometimes worshipped the false gods of their neighbors. Certainly if God had revealed this dogma openly they would have misunderstood it and believed in polytheism. Moreover, there was no need to accept this dogma before the Incarnation of the Word of God and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Church.

²⁴C. F. Henery: Basic Christian Doctrines, 1980, p. 36-37.

THE FIRST TRINITARIAN FORMULAS

Before His resurrection, our Lord Jesus Christ, did not declare any Trinitarian Formula. He revealed the divinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit openly and clearly through Their work for our salvation. Before His ascent to heaven, He commanded His disciples to baptize men in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He gave the baptismal formula simply without calling it "*Hypostasis*," for His aim was merely to offer Their grace to the believers through baptism. The catechumens accepted God's fatherhood, membership of Christ's body and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within their inner man.

To the Christian, this baptismal formula means being set free from the worship of creatures, and being baptized into the one Godhead of the Trinity, "not into polytheistic plurality²⁵."

One of the most important statements concerning the Trinitarian dogma in the apostolic age is that of St. Paul: "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor. 13:13). The apostle witnessed to the Holy Trinity in order to reveal divine grace, love and communion, so that believers would accept God not only as if He "is" but also as He "acts" among His believers that they might become partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:3).

It is clear that in the apostolic age, the main theme of the church was to witness, through her worship, that God sent His Word, the Messiah Jesus. He died, rose on the third day, ascended to heaven and will return in glory so that we shall rise with Him and enjoy His Father's Presence. He also sent His Holy Spirit within His church to prepare for His heavenly kingdom and to prepare her for the eternal wedding. In other words, the belief of the apostolic church is purely trinitarian, has its effect on her preaching, worship and behavior, but does not declare this belief in a theological formula in the modern sense.

GOD AND ETERNAL LOVE

Usually religions call God the Creator, the Lover of mankind, the Peace-maker, the Gracious and Merciful God, the Understanding of all things etc. But one may ask, "Are these titles eternal? If God is unchangeable how was He eternally Creator, Lover, and Peace-maker before creating the universe? Was the creation necessary for Him so that we would attribute these titles to Him?"

Some thinkers - who do not believe in the Holy Trinity - reply that God had these titles and characteristics eternally by power and not in action, and after the Creation they became in action. This means that Creation was necessary for God to realize His characteristics of love, peace-making, mercy, etc.

Truly if we accept the Holy Trinity as three Hypostases in one divine essence this problem will be easily solved. For all these characteristics can be concentrated in one, i.e., love. God created heavenly and earthly beings because of His love. He is merciful, a peace-maker, gracious, etc., for He loves man. The Holy Bible states, "God is love" (1 John 4:8), the eternal Love! For the Father loved the Son and there was no time when the Father did not love the Son. Love as a divine characteristic was eternally in power and in

²⁵St. Cyril: Dial Trint. 7 PG 75:1080, Pelikan, p. 217.

action, for "Love" is God Himself who loved eternally, and was not in need of the creation to declare His characteristics. Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke to His eternal Father, saying, "You loved Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).

The relation between the Holy Trinity, which is eternal and absolute, has been declared to us through God's dealings with us, especially through His redeeming action. Before being betrayed, our Lord Jesus Christ prayed to the Father on our behalf, saying, "You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us... And the glory which you gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one... And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me, may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:21-26).

Beside believing in the Holy Trinity, if we say that God loves eternally, we attribute to Him selfishness; God forbid! For that means He loves Himself. It is the same concerning peace. We ask with whom was He eternally in peace? These are questions that have no answers, except by believing in "the Holy Trinity in one divine essence."

Prof. Nikos A. Nissiotis states,

Against any kind of solipsism, Trinity wants to present God in a dynamic relay process. Unbegotten, Begotten and Proceeded denote the non-essential, non-speculative, non-rational approach of the God of philosophies. This is a God in personal relationship with His Logos and His Spirit and, therefore, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob relating origin, promise and fulfillment as a life process of God in history towards the final end: the regathering of all into Himself. It is the Spirit's final operation after Pentecost which opens this final end, which is the purpose and the promise of the Creation. It is the Spirit, therefore, which introduces both to Logos theology as well as to Creation. Only after the pouring of the Spirit can we understand and practice Logos theology and the theology of Creation, i.e., we can conceive God as dynamic, personal and communal Being.

The Scriptures affirm the essence of God as Love which cannot exist without the loving and the beloved persons. Therefore, this essence in itself is a violent movement towards another person as being an affirmation in itself. Essence can be grasped, therefore, as "physis" or nature, and always in personal Being, and only as a common dynamic element between persons in an unbroken, reciprocal relationship. What is particularly different among them serves, necessarily, their co-belongingness. Essence as love is not only a basis of self-identity, but it denotes a deep personal relationship. Essence is becoming reciprocal movement of Being.

In this way, whereby the Trinitarian doctrine is based on the biblical notion of the essence of God as love, God is never alone (*monas*), nor an absolute identity as One in isolation (*monas*). He exists always with and for the other persons in the identity of one essence. We have to make a clear distinction between *monos* (alone) and *eic* (one). The first is the non-Christian philosophical solipsism, or the radical religious monotheism; the second is the Christian concept of a living God as One and Triune. It is monotheism in the direction of Enotheism, i.e., identity in communion: One in essence and Three in personal being.

In this way, the Trinity doctrine speaks neither of God as alone and absolute simplicity of essence nor of three individual beings. God as One is Personal because He is eternally moving in, out, and for a hypostatic union.

THE HOLY TRINITY AND SIMPLICITY OF GOD

Perhaps someone might say that without believing in the Holy Trinity the following problem arises: how can we attribute to God the characteristics which could not be in action before Creation, especially love and peace? If we believe in the Holy Trinity and the eternal relationship between Them, new problems appear, such as: how can we accept the Trinitarian belief while God is Simple? How can we accept that God has a Son? Does this belief not oppose "monotheism"?

Believing in "The Holy Trinity" does not deny the simplicity of God, but on the contrary rejecting this dogma blemishes the simplicity of God, for the following reasons:

1. Many religions believe that the Word of God is eternal, for God was not, even before time, without His Word (John 1:1). Some religions believe that even the words and the letters of the "word of God" are eternal. Without believing in "the Holy Trinity of one divine essence," the eternity of the Word of God means that God was not simple, for He had His Word with Him eternally. But in our belief the Word of God is not "outside" God, but His own eternal Word, begotten from Him as light is begotten of light, and is consubstantial with Him, i.e., one with the Father in the same divine essence (*ousia*).

As many non-Christians believe in the Word of God as eternal with Him and that It was declared to the prophets as a sign of God's love to mankind, this Word which is eternal does not deny the divine simplicity; we can say that this "Word" in fact is not outside God, but One with Him eternally. God is not as man, but He is existing and eternal; therefore, His Word is existing and everlasting with the Father, as radiance of light. **St. Athanasius** said, "*God's Word is one and the same, and as it is written, 'the Word of God endures forever' (Ps. 119:89)*"²⁶.

2. In fact believing in the Holy Trinity does not oppose the simplicity of God, for we do not believe in three divine essences but in only One. To understand this divine mystery, we can say that the divine essence truly exists eternally; this existence or "Being" is eternally rational, that is He has a "Mind," "Wisdom" or "Logos (Word)," begotten from His "Being" but not outside Him, nor as another divine essence. For this reason, when we call the divine "Being" the Father and the divine "Logos" the Son, we confirm that the Son is the Logos of God, so that no one misunderstands the titles as if there are two separate essences, the Father and the Son. Thus we might be understood as if we believe in two gods or in one but not Simple God. Simplicity of God does not mean that He is without His Logos, Mind or Wisdom, for thus He would be irrational; God forbid!

For **Athenagoras**²⁷, God being eternally "*endowed with reason (logikos), had the Logos within Himself eternally,*" and that, therefore, the Son as Logos "*did not come into existence,*" but was eternal.

St. Dionysius of Alexandria states,

²⁶Four Discourses against the Arians 2:35, 36.

²⁷Athenagoras: Supp. 10:2.

This divine Being, or the Father, is eternally alive, has His own 'Life' proceeding from Him and not outside Him. 'Being' is distinguished from 'Life' but not separated nor has two divine essences, for 'Life' is the Being's own. It is important to believe in God who is 'Being, rational and alive,' one essence, eternally simple, for the Three are not separated nor has One existed before the others. They are like the fire which has flame, light and heat at the same time. Thus then we extend the monad indivisibly into the Triad, and conversely gather together the Triad without diminution into the Monad²⁸.

3. God is unique in everything, even when the Holy Scriptures speak of Him as "One God," this does not mean that God is subject to mathematical rules, for He is not limited. In other words, we must not understand "One" here as a number among other numbers, but it means an unspeakable unity. "Monotheism" cannot be tasted nor understood as "numbering," for it makes God as a solid Being subject to numbering. For this reason **Athenagoras**²⁹ argues that God is one, but unlike a human individual who is created and corruptible, composite and divisible (into parts), God is unbegotten, impassable and indivisible, and therefore not composed of parts. **St. Clement** states, "*God is one, and beyond one, and above the Monad itself*³⁰."

4. Usually we are asked, "How can God bring forth a Son?" We answer this question with another question, "Can God not bring forth a Son?" We cannot accept God as a solid Being unable to bring forth! Every energetic essence has to bring forth something. Fire brings forth light and produces heat, the radioactive elements bring forth nuclear energy and the human mind brings forth wise thoughts. God can never be a solid Being, but He eternally brings forth the Son, for He is the "Light" who bring forth "Light." Truly, a light that brings forth no light is darkness³¹.

It is said that Jesus Christ "Who being the brightness of His glory and the expression image of His person ..." (Heb. 1:3) "...is the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), like the Word is the image of the invisible mind.

St. Dionysius of Alexandria said,

But the brightness of light being eternal, certainly He is Himself eternal; for as the light exists always, it is evident that brightness must always exist as well. For it is by the fact of its shining that the existence of light is perceived, and there cannot be light that does not give light... The brightness then lies before Him eternally and ever begotten, shining in His Presence, being that Wisdom which said, 'I was that wherein he rejoiced, and daily I was glad in his presence at all times' (Prov. 8:30). The Father then being eternal, the Son is eternal, being Light of Light³².

St. Athanasius wrote,

But if there be not a Son, how then can you say that God is a Creator? Since all things that come to be are through the Word and in Wisdom, and without this nothing can be, whereas you say He has not that in and through

²⁸On the Opinion of Dionysius 17.

²⁹Supp. 8:2.

³⁰Paedagogos 1:8:71.

³¹H. H. Bishop Pishoy: Article on 'Trinity.'

³²St. Athanasius: De Sentia Dionysii 15.

*which He makes all things. For if the Divine Essence be not fruitful itself but barren, as they hold, as a light that lightens not, and a dry fountain, are they not ashamed to speak of His possessing, framing energy, and whereas they, deny what is by nature, do they not blush to place before it what is by will?*³³

*God... has also His framing Word, not external, but proper to Him; for this must not be repeated. If He has the power of will, and is effective, and His will is effective, and suffices for the consistence of the things that come to be, and His Word is effective, and a Framer, that Word must surely be the living will of the Father, and an essential energy, and a real Word in whom all things are both consistent and excellently governed... God's creating is second to His begetting; for Son implies something proper to Him and truly from that blessed and everlasting Essence; but what is from His will, comes into consistence from without*³⁴.

Origen stated,

*What else are we to suppose the eternal light is, but God the Father? His splendor (Heb. 1:3) was not present with Him? Light without splendor is unthinkable. But if this is true, there is never a time when the Son was not the Son...*³⁵

5. Bringing forth the Son eternally reveals the nature of God as the Loving Being, who in His infinite love brings forth the Son offering to Him His own divine essence being One with Him. It is a unique love that the "Being" grants Himself, His own essence. This infinite love is declared to us; for this reason, **St. Clement of Alexandria** calls God, "the Father and the Creator of the entire cosmos."

6. The Second *Hypostasis* is called the "Son," to confirm that He is consubstantial with the Father, but in order not to understand Him as being separated from the Father, as if they are two essences and two Gods, He is called His Word and His Wisdom. Thus we can conceive His sonship not as a human concept. **St. Athanasius** states,

*As we said above, so now we repeat that the divine generation must not be compared to the nature of men, nor the Son considered to be part of God, nor the generation to imply any passion whatever; God is not as man; for men beget passibly, having a transitive nature, which waits for periods by reason of its weakness. But with God this cannot be, for He is not composed of parts, passibly and invisibly and simply, He is impassibly and indivisibly Father of the Son. This again is strongly evidenced and proved by divine Scripture. For the Word of God is His Son, and the Son is the Father's Word and Wisdom, and Word and Wisdom is neither creature nor part of Him whose Word He is, nor an offspring possibly begotten. Uniting then the two titles the Scriptures speak of 'Son' in order to herald the natural and true offspring of His essence, and on the other hand that none may think of the offspring humanly, while signifying His essence, it also calls Him Word, Wisdom and Radiance to teach us that the generation was impassible, and eternal and worthy of God*³⁶.

³³Against the Arians 2:2.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵In Hebr. frag 24.

³⁶Against the Arian 1:28 (See De Decretis 17).

It is important to look to God not with material sight, for He is not a human being nor a creature. On hearing the titles, "the Father" and "the Son," this does not mean that God was married and brought forth another god, for there is no sex in God's essence. The Father brings forth the Son as the sun brings forth its rays, or the human soul has its mind, or light has its brightness. Even these examples cannot express what is divine. The material view created modern "feminist theology," for women feel discrimination; they ask that God be called by feminist terms, using the word "She" instead of "He" when speaking of God, but God is beyond gender so discrimination is not possible.

7. The unity of the Holy Trinity is unique, not like the mixing of material and liquid nor as the unity of man's soul and body nor as the unity of Christ's Godhead and manhood, because the Three *Hypostases* have one clear divine Essence. Each One fills the Others and is contained in Them but is distinguished from Them. **St. Athanasius** wrote,

How can the One be contained in the Other and the Other in the One? 'I and the Father are One' (John 10:30, 38). He adds, 'that you may know that I am in the Father and the Father in Me' (John 14:10). Moreover, He has added this again, 'He that has seen Me, has seen the Father' (John 14:9). There is one and the same sense in these three passages. For He who is in this sense understands that the Son and the Father are one and knows that He is in the Father and the Father in the Son, for the Godhead of the Son is the Father's, and it is in the Son. The fullness of the Father's Godhead is the Being of the Son, and the Son is a whole God. The Godhead and the Form (eidos) of the Son is none other than the Father's, this is why He says, I am in the Father. Thus God was in Christ reconciling the world onto Him (2 Cor. 5:19). For the propriety of the Father's Essence is that Son, in whom the creation was then reconciled with God³⁷.

The holy and blessed Triad is indivisible and one in Itself. When mention is made of the Father, the Word is also included, so also the Spirit, who is in the Son. If the Son is named, the Father is in the Son, and the Spirit is not outside the Word. For there is a single grace which is fulfilled from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit³⁸.

8. Concerning the unity of the Holy Trinity in the divine will, G. L. Prestige states,

Origen³⁹ observes that the will of God is present in the will of the Son, and the will of the Son is undeviating from the will of the Father, so that there are no longer two wills but one will, which is single and provides the reason for our Lord's assertion that, 'I and the Father are one.' He repeats⁴⁰ that the Father and the Son are two 'things' (*pragmata*) in objectivity, but one in consent and harmony and identity of purpose. **Athanasius**⁴¹ follows **Origen** in maintaining the position

³⁷Against the Arians 3:23:5.

³⁸Ep. ad Serapion 1:14,

³⁹On St. John 13:36, 228.

⁴⁰Contra Celsus 8:12.

⁴¹Against the Arians 3:66.

that there is one will which proceeds from the Father and is in the Son, so that from this fact the Son may be seen in the Father and the Father in the Son⁴².

Prestige further adds,

As God is one in will, so is He one in operation or energy. This doctrine goes back to **Athanasius**, where it forms part of his proof of the deity of the Holy Spirit. Thus he argues at some length⁴³ that, since the Father is light and the Son is radiance from the light, the Holy Spirit, being the agent by the reception of whom mankind receives its enlightenment, must be discernible in the Son. When, therefore, we are enlightened by the Spirit, it is Christ who in Him enlightens us, since St. John has said that it is Christ who is the true light that enlightens every man. Similarly, the Father is the source, and the Son is called the river that flows from the source, yet the Scripture says that we drink of the Spirit, because in drinking the Spirit we drink Christ. Again, Christ is the true Son, but it is through the Spirit that we are made sons and have received the Spirit of adopted sonship. So he concludes⁴⁴ that there is a holy and perfect triad expressed in Father and Son and Holy Spirit, which contains nothing foreign or derived from an external source; its nature is self-consistent and indivisible, and its energy is one, therefore, the Father acts invariably through the Word in the Holy Spirit. Thus the unity of the Holy Triad is preserved, and so one God is preached in the Church, who is over all and through all and in all, over all, as Father, arch and source; through all, through the Word; and in all, in the Holy Spirit⁴⁵.

St. Didymus of Alexandria asserts the single will of the Holy Trinity⁴⁶. **St. Cyril**⁴⁷ confirms the unity of the Holy Trinity's activity; for the Father works through the Son in the Spirit; the Son works, as the power of the Father, since His individual Being is from the Father and in the Father; and the Holy Spirit works, because He is the Spirit of the Father and the Son.

THE TRINITARIAN FAITH AND OUR DAILY LIFE

Our faith cannot be isolated from our daily life, for it plays an essential role in our worship, understanding, desires and behavior. Here we would like to give some examples of the effect of the Trinitarian faith on our lives.

1. We must distinguish monotheism that depends on the Trinitarian faith from that which is absolute and derived from polytheism. Polytheism is often based on a struggle among gods, which had its effect even on the inner life of man, who looked at this struggle as a model for his own life. He had this experience of struggling, not only against others, but also against himself. Concerning monotheism, as I have said, it was necessary to understand the Old Testament well to prevent men from falling into polytheism; but if monotheism is understood outside the Trinitarian dogma, it may convince us that God is a solid, huge and fearful Being and has absolute characteristics.

⁴²God in the Patristic Thought, p. 256.

⁴³Ep. ad Serapion 1:19.

⁴⁴Ibid 1:28.

⁴⁵God in the Patristic Thought, p. 257-8.

⁴⁶De Trinit. 2:1.

⁴⁷Dial. 9 de Trinit; Comm. on St. John.

This belief may create a kind of "individualism" and "isolationism," for the believer looks to God, for his model, as the one who is unapproachable, as if He were isolated in His own heaven and has no movement inside (?outside) Himself. Believing in "monotheism" through the Trinitarian mystery offers a divine Model to believers of the "Unity of love." This mystery incites us to practice love by the same steps that the Holy Trinity does by Their action.

2. Through this mystery we acknowledge "fatherhood" and "sonship" in their infinite meaning, for the Father brings forth the Son, as light generates light, giving Him His own essence. This unique relationship cannot exist outside God; I mean that the Father and the Son have one simple Essence. Through this supreme relationship we enjoy the adoption to God, for we accept the Father as our "Abba" by our unity with Him in His Only-begotten Son. Now through this mystery our relationship with God does not remain in a narrow circle, as slaves with their master, but He accepted us as His children. (Rom. 8:15-23; Eph. 1:5).

Through this new relationship we enjoy an unceasing divine movement of love, hoping not to gain pleasure or benefit from God in this world or in the world to come but to gain God Himself and to inherit His bosom as our eternal dwelling place. In other words, through the Trinitarian faith our relationship with God has been changed from self-beneficence to mutual love.

3. The Trinitarian faith grants us a broad-minded concept of "perfection." Some people ask how can the Father be Perfect while He is inseparable from the Son and the Holy Spirit, and the same concerning the Son and the Holy Spirit. We reply that true perfection is revealed not through self-satisfaction and isolation, but rather through God's eternal movement of love and infinite mutual relationship.

Man and his life attain perfection not through self-glorification, nor through self-satisfaction, but through unity with others based on love. The perfect man is not he who nourishes his "ego" and is eager to gain every glory and benefit for his own account, but the one who loves others and accepts their love.

4. The Trinitarian faith has its effect on all aspects of human life. The following are some examples:

a. In the Old Testament believers could not accept the Trinitarian faith that confirms true "monotheism." This deficiency had its effect on their worship, for they looked to God as an unapproachable Being to whom they offered worship so that He might not be angry with them. In the New Testament, as believers accepted the Trinitarian faith, they acknowledged God who revealed His love by embracing men in His bosom to enjoy His mysteries and to participate in His glory. In other words, men are not just tools who serve God automatically, but are beloved children who enjoy divine mysteries.

Men worshipped God in the Old Testament as if He was far from them, and as if they had to offer Him worship in awesome fear. In the New Testament, we accept unity with God who is within our souls, and to Him we offer worship in love.

b. The Trinitarian faith abolishes every root of "egotism." In offering our prayers, it attracts us to the Holy Trinity, the Eternal Love. Therefore, we pray for the salvation of all mankind with open hearts.

c. The Trinitarian faith has its effect even on our social life. If we choose marriage, we hope that our family may be an icon of Trinitarian love. Every member finds his pleasure in the happiness of others and acts as a member of the body for the edification of the whole family. The Family, from this point of view, is a true unity of love, wherein every member desires to give; not to take. The church as family should be the same.

On the other hand, if we choose monastic life, we offer an open heart towards the whole Church and the whole world which is revealed in our prayers while kneeling before God and fasting on behalf of all.

THE HOLY TRINITY AND PHILOSOPHY

Prof. M. Agiorghoussis states,

Platonic and neo-Platonic philosophy were the philosophical systems employed by the heresies (Arianism and the Pneumatomachs) which fought against the Christian faith and doctrine concerning the Trinity. Arius, for example, was under Platonic and neo-Platonic influence when he rejected the divinity of the Son of God and his consubstantiality with God the Father. Given that, according to Platonic philosophy birth involved a diminishing or alteration of essence, the Son could not be of the same essence as the Father. According to Plotinus, the 'entity' is of a different essence from the 'mind,' from which it emanates. Plotinus' triad is thus the trinity upheld by Arius and his followers fought against the Church's teaching. The Son - for the Arian Eunomius - is 'of a different essence (substance)' from the Father, since 'begotten,' while the Father's essence is 'unbegotten.' For strict Arians, among whom were the Pneumatomachs, in as much as the Son was a creation apart, dissimilar in substance to the Father, so was the Spirit dissimilar from that of the Father (possibly also from that of the Son). Hence it could be considered only as 'a creation of a creature' (*poiema tou poiematos, ktisma tou ktismatos*).

The Fathers, in particularly those of the Council of Nicaea, reacted against the heretics' philosophization of religion, and especially their treatment of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Their aim was anything but to bring philosophy into Christianity as a religion of revelation. The Fathers used philosophy only when obliged to answer heretics or when the Church's doctrine was needed in a language comprehensible to the men of the period whom they were addressing. A philosophical system was used only by medieval scholastics, notably Aristotelianism, which was employed by Thomas Aquinas. The fathers are sparing in their use of philosophy, always making use of it only as 'handmaid of Theology.'

The Philosophical term used by the Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Council and ratified by those of the 2nd was '*homoousion*' - consubstantiality - which was drawn from Aristotelian philosophy, and 'second ousia,' referring to a specific person. Probably on account of the Arian condemnation of the Fathers of the 1st Council for using 'unwritten' terms, the Fathers of the 2nd Council avoided using biblical terms in formulating the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the 8th article of the Creed. Those outstanding Fathers in the struggle against the heretics who used Greek philosophy according to need were Athanasius, originator of the term

'*homoousios*' (consubstantial), Basil and the other two Cappadocians, Gregory the Theologian and Gregory of Nyssa.

Prof. Nikos A. Nissiolis also confirms that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is a purely biblical doctrine and it does not, as some people think, represent an illegitimate mixture of ancient Greek philosophy and Christian faith. He states,

We can easily respond to this criticism that such a mixture never occurred in early Christianity because Greek philosophy and Christian theology are two great entities with their own genuine and entirely independent identities, areas of thought and ways of thinking which can not merge for creating a new system of pseudo-theology or pseudo-philosophy.

Regarding Trinitarian theology, as it developed in the fourth and fifth centuries for the sake of interpreting the Christian faith to face the Christological or pneumatological heresies, one can easily prove that it is a unique and once and for all doctrine about God in the world history of religious thought. This doctrine corresponds faithfully to the one and unique biblical revelation.

All of the terms used by early Christian theology explaining God as triune are biblical terms. Essence (*ousia*) nature (*physis*), person (*prosopon*), and *hypostasis* are directly borrowed from the Bible. Christ is, for instance, "He who is the character image of His (God's) hypostasis" (Heb. 1:3).

Even the highly disputed term used by the heretics in Christology, i.e., *homoousion*, expresses the clear reference in the Bible to the deep co-belongingness of God the Father with his incarnate Logos as His eternal Son (John 17:21-23). This term, anyway is not borrowed from Greek philosophy, but is a genuine theological term in Christology, introducing this deep identity in the essence of Father and Son, of which the whole New Testament clearly bears testimony in almost all of its books⁴⁸.

THE HOLY TRINITY AND LIKENESSES

Faith in the Holy Trinity, as the basic dogma of the whole Christian structure, is a "life or death" choice. It is an incomprehensible mystery that touches our life here and in heaven. The Fathers of the church did their best to explain this mystery, because human language is unable to express what is divine, and creation affords no parallel to the existence of one essence in three distinguished *hypostases* (modes).

To understand this mystery we can say that God is the only "Being" who is "self-existent." This "self-existence" which is called the divine essence, has two kinds of properties and characteristics: the self-properties that concern Himself and the characteristics that concern His relationship to Creation. The first self-properties are three, i.e. His Being, His Logos (Word or Wisdom) and His Life. These properties are not something that add to His essence as if they were introduced to it from outside, but they are eternally inseparable from the divine essence itself. There was no time that the divine essence had no "Being," otherwise It would be "non-existent"; God forbid! Nor has it ever been without the Word or Wisdom. The divine essence is also eternally alive. "Being" is distinguished from "Word" and "Life," but the three are inseparable, having one divine essence and one divine nature. The Father is the divine essence with the

⁴⁸Prof. Nikos A. Nissiotis: The Importance of the Trinity Doctrine.

property of the "Being," and the Son is the same essence with that of the Wisdom (Logos), and the Holy Spirit with the Life. Since Wisdom or Logos is begotten from the "Being," therefore, the first and second Hypostases are called the "Father" and "Son." The third is called the Holy Spirit for He is the Divine Life.

It is noteworthy that the Three *Hypostases* are inseparable and have one essence, therefore their actions also are inseparable.

Examples From Creation

As we have seen, creation affords no parallel to the existence of one essence in three distinguished modes or hypostases. Therefore, when we offer some examples to explain this divine mystery, we can assume that these examples explain it partially such that our minds find this mystery acceptable. Secondly, we are in need of enjoying the knowledge of this mystery through the divine grace that grants us participation in God, i.e., the communion with the Father in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.

1. Man is created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27; 5:2); his soul is existent, rational and alive. Although man has one soul and its being is distinguished from its mind and life, the three are inseparable.

2. God promises to protect His church, saying, "For I will be a wall of fire all around her and I will be the glory in her midst" (Zech. 2:5). Fire has three self-properties that look like the *Hypostases*, for it has the flame, the light that is begotten of the flame, and the heat that proceeds out of it. These three are not hypostases for the one does not fill the others. Through the light we can acknowledge the fire, as by the heat also.

3. The sun, being a star; brings forth rays and heat, but is one sun. We call the star itself the sun; its rays and its heat are also called the sun.

4. The Lord is likened to the apple, as it is written, "Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons" (Song 2:3). The apple has three self-properties, its material which we eat, its taste and its fragrance. We can acknowledge the apple through its taste or fragrance.

THE FATHER

Prof. Maximos Agiorghoussis states,

He is not a blind 'supernatural force,' not some kind of 'God of the philosophers,' the prime mover, moving all things in movements whilst itself remaining unmoved (Aristotle), or the Supreme Idea (Plato). He is the personal God of Revelation, creator and provider of the world, and particularly of Mankind. He is the affectionate Father of his sons and daughters, with whom he enters into an alliance, i.e., that He shall be their God, and that they shall form His chosen People.

In other words, when we speak of God the father who has an eternal relationship with the Son (and also with the Holy Spirit), we mean that God is eternally in movement, even within Himself, and can be described as an exchanging of Life. Fatherhood means that God's internal and eternal movement is "Love," and not only a "power" and an "authority."

Although the early Alexandrian theologians spoke of God's divine impassability and that He has no human emotion⁴⁹, they insisted upon declaring His true Fatherhood through love, expressed to us through human language as if He has every feeling and emotion. **Origen** states,

Moreover, does not the Father and God of the Universe somehow experience emotion, since He is long-suffering and of great mercy?! Or do you know that when He distributes human gifts He experiences human emotion?! For 'the Lord your God endured your ways, as when man endures his son' (Deut. 1:31)⁵⁰.

THE LOGOS

1. One of the Coptic hymns we sing in preparation for celebrating the Eucharist says,

The brightness of your Holy Name,
(appears) in the mouths of your saints.
My Lord Jesus Christ, my gracious Savior...
Your Name is sweet and blessed,
in the mouths of your saints...
O most glorious Name!
O most blessed Name!...

(Psalmody of Saturday)

The incarnate Son of God was called "Jesus," receiving this name before He was born (Matt. 1:21). It attracted the evangelists who repeated it almost six hundred times in the Gospels. The Christians who were of Jewish or Greek origin loved this sacred name, for to the Jews it means "Jehovah is rescue," and to the Greeks it means "the Healer."

To Joshua (Jesus), the Son of Sirach, "Joshua (Jesus) the Son of Nave (Nun) was valiant in the wars, and was the successor of Moses in prophecies, who according to his name was made great for the saving of the elect of God" (Sirach 46:1), but to the Christian-Jews Jesus is the Savior of the whole world from sin.

St. Clement of Alexandria introduced our Lord as "Jesus who heals both our body and our soul⁵¹." He is the divine Physician who alone can deliver us from the consequences of sin.

Some people ask, "Is there a need for the Word of God Himself to be incarnated to redeem us and heal our human nature?"

a. Through disobedience man chose death (Gen. 2:17) instead of life. God taught Adam the rite of animal sacrifice as a sign of his need to "shed blood" for his salvation (Heb. 10:22). It was just a symbol of the One Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus.

St. Paul presents a comparison between the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament and Christ's Sacrifice. Animals were slain unwillingly by the Jewish priest, but our Lord offered His precious blood willingly through His divine love. He was the Priest and the Victim at the same time (Heb. 9:12ff).

⁴⁹Origen: De Principiis 2:4:4, In Num, hom 16:3.

⁵⁰In Ezech. hom. 6:6.

⁵¹Paedagogos 3:12.

Animals were slain by priests who themselves were in need of purification and of salvation, but our Priest offered His blood on our behalf. He was not in need of salvation, for He is blameless.

Animals are unable to be mediators between God and men, but Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God and became Son of man, can play this role.

Animal sacrifices were unable to save or purify our inner life; therefore, they were repeated daily, while our Lord's Sacrifice was offered once on behalf of the whole world, and It still has Its effect. The same Sacrifice is still present throughout the ages.

Origen stated that the animal sacrifices were consumed by eating or even burning them; however, our Lord's Sacrifice is not only alive, but is life-giving to those who partake of it.

b. It was necessary for our salvation that the Word of God Himself be incarnated so that He might die on our behalf; then, He alone not only can realize the divine justice, but as the Creator He can renew our human nature. He is the Almighty God who grants us victory over death and evil spirits. He is the Heavenly One who can raise us to His heaven to inherit the eternal glory as children of God (Rom. 8:15, 21; 9:4) and to become in God's likeness.

St. Athanasius⁵² states,

It is just that the Word of God, in offering His body as a ransom for us, should discharge our debt by His death. So, united to all mankind by a body like theirs, the incorruptible Son of God can justly clothe all men with incorruptibility.

The Word became flesh in order to offer this sacrifice and that we, participating in the Spirit, might be deified.

God became man that we might become gods.

2. The clauses of the original Creed of Nicaea, specifically included to refute Arianism were: "and (we believe) in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, Only-begotten, that is, of the essence of the Father from God, Light from Light, very God from very God, begotten not made (i.e. created), of one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father." Controversy focused upon the last of these clauses, the celebrated "*homoousion*" clause, which states that Christ is of the very substance of God in a manner which leaves no room for equivocation. Christ is divine, because His nature or essence is that of the Father⁵³.

3. Concerning the nature of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, the Alexandrian tradition insists on the oneness of the Lord, confirming the real unity of the Godhead and manhood without separation or confusion⁵⁴.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal divine energy, nor just a presence of God or a divine gift, but we believe His personality is the third Hypostasis. Our Lord called Him the "other comforter" (John 14:16). The Holy Scripture introduces Him as the Creator (Job 33:4). He witnessed through the prophets, revealing the will of God and preparing

⁵²De Incarn. 9; De Decretis 14, De Incarn. 54.

⁵³See Alan Richardson: Creeds in the Making, P 54, 55.

⁵⁴See the Theological Terms Physis and Hypostasis in the Early Church, 1986.

mankind to accept the incarnate Son of God. He is the Life-Giver, and the source of sanctification. St. Peter considered Him God (compare Acts 5:3 and 5:4).

Christ's redeeming action is the basis of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the Church, for He grants communion with the Father in the crucified Christ. At the same time without the Holy Spirit "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord" (Cor. 12:3). Neither can the Church enjoy the presence of Christ as her Head without the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Lord said, "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away the Comforter (Paraclete) will not come to you" (John 16:7). Thus, the beginning of the historical Church is to be understood pneumatologically, for she had her birth as the body of Christ in the Pentecost, and she is still nourished by the Holy Spirit who leads, guides, sanctifies, assists in worship and preaching, inspires and builds up the body of the Church.

St. Athanasius used the statement of Isaiah (63:7-14) to declare that "the Spirit of God is neither angel nor creature, but belongs to the Godhead⁵⁵." For **St. Didymus**, this statement was proof that the believers in the Old Testament had received grace from no less than "the Spirit, who is inseparable from the Father and the Son⁵⁶." **St. Cyril of Alexandria**⁵⁷ saw in the same statement proof for the identity of "*ousia*" (essence) between the Holy Spirit and the Father⁵⁸.

The Alexandrian Fathers of the Church used the titles of the Holy Spirit as an argument of His divinity. Moreover, they used His works for the same aim. **St. Didymus** said that He who filled all creatures had to be of a different substantia than all other creatures⁵⁹. **St. Athanasius** said, "If the Holy Spirit were a creature, we should have no participation in God through Him, we should be united to a creature and alien from the divine nature. If He makes men divine, His nature must undoubtedly be that of God⁶⁰." **St. Cyril of Alexandria**⁶¹ stated that the Holy Spirit, as the One who justifies sinners and perfects the elect, does what is appropriate only to the divine and supremely exalted nature. He also says that if the Spirit that makes us gods were of a nature different from that of God, all hope would be lost⁶².



⁵⁵Ep. ad Serap. 1:12.

⁵⁶Didym: Spirit 43 PG 39:1071.

⁵⁷Dial. Trinit. 7 PG 75:1104-5.

⁵⁸J. Pelikan: The Christian Tradition, Vol. 1, P.214.

⁵⁹Spirit 8 PG 39:1040.

⁶⁰Ep. ad Serap. 1:24.

⁶¹Dial. Trinit 7 PG 75:1101.

⁶²Ibid PG 75:1089, 1097 (J. Pelikan, P 216.)

GOD IN THE WRITINGS OF THE ALEXANDRIAN FATHERS

The early Alexandrian theology was first of all Biblical. Its aim was to introduce the evangelic truth to everybody, especially those who were well-educated in Greek philosophy.

Every Alexandrian Father offered the same theological line according to the needs of his age. For example, **Athenagoras**, who devoted many years to attack the Christian faith through the Holy Scripture itself, was converted and felt responsible for defending Christian "monotheism" through believing in the Holy Trinity. He wrote his plea to the emperors to defend our faith, calling on them to enjoy it⁶³. **St. Clement** wrote to the philosophers about God, concentrating on the Son as the true Instructor who educates believers and grants them the divine knowledge. **Origen**, who was involved in enjoying allegorical interpretation of the Holy Scripture, explained that God who is incomprehensible grants His true believers the knowledge of the heavenly and divine mysteries. **St. Athanasius** defended the Orthodox faith in the Holy Trinity against Arianism. **St. Cyril** defended the church faith against Nestorianism, confirming the oneness of Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Son of God. **St. Dioscorus** clarified the same faith, explaining that the unity between the Godhead and manhood was without separation nor confusion. The Fathers of the Coptic Church in the middle ages, especially in the thirteenth century, wrote in more detail of the Holy Trinity to defend the Christian faith from accusations of polytheism, using logical arguments and the Islamic "*Quraan*." El-Safii-ebn-el-Assal was the pioneer of this age. Many Christian writers and theologians in the Middle East used his arguments for the same purpose.

1. ATHENAGORAS

Athenagoras explains the relationship of Christ and the Holy Spirit to the Father, to confirm "monotheism" through the unity of the triad.

He enumerates God and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Son is the Mind, Word, and Wisdom of the Father, and the Spirit is an effluence (*'atto'ppoidv*) of the Father⁶⁴, flowing from and returning to Him like a beam of the sun or a light from fire.

He states that the unoriginate, eternal and invisible God has created and adorned, and actually governs the universe by His Word, who is the Son of God. The Son of God is not like sons of men for He is His Word in idea and actualization. He is the unity with Him, for He is in the Father, and the Father is in Him.

He also asserts the place of the Holy Spirit as the eminent power in creation; God has created all things by His Word and holds them in being by the Spirit that is from Him⁶⁵.

⁶³*Supp. 10:3.*

⁶⁴*Ibid 24:1 f.*

⁶⁵*Ibid 6:3.*

2. ST. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

a. Kelly states, "For him⁶⁶ (Clement) God is absolutely transcendent, ineffable and incomprehensible; He is 'unity, beyond unity, and transcending the monad' and yet somehow embracing all reality...⁶⁷." **St. Clement** had written,

The Deity is without form and nameless. Though we ascribe names, they are not to be taken in their strict meaning: when we call Him One, Good, Mind, Existence, Father, God, Creator, Lord, we are not conferring a name on Him. Being unable to do more, we use these appellations of honor, in order that our thought may have something to rest on and not wander at random. He cannot be comprehended by knowledge, which is based on previously known truths, whereas nothing can precede what is self-existent. It remains that the Unknown be apprehended by divine grace and the Word proceeding from Him⁶⁸.

b. The Son is eternal, His generation from the Father is without beginning. **St. Clement** also said, "*The Father is not without His Son, for along with being Father, He is Father of the Son⁶⁹.*" The Son is essentially one with the Father, since the Father is in Him and He is the Father⁷⁰.

c. J. Quasten says that the idea of the Logos is at the center of St. Clement's theological system and all his religious thinking. Joseph C. McLelland stated that his theology is a Christian "*paideia*" (education). Christ is the *Paedagogos* (Instructor) who educates the believers, granting them true *gnosis* (knowledge). According to **St. Clement**,

...there is no faith without knowledge, nor knowledge without faith... and the Son is the true Teacher⁷¹. He educates the believer by training his soul to discover truth⁷². *Paedagogos* is the training of children... we are the children... To speak briefly, the Lord acts toward us as we do toward our children⁷³.

This divine *paedagogos* teaches us about the Father. "*In order that we may come to know the Father, we must believe in the Son, because the Son of the Father is our teacher, for the Father brings us from faith to knowledge by means of the Son⁷⁴.*"

The Son, as our divine *Paedagogos*, not only grants us His grace of true knowledge, but also offers Himself as the model that we have to imitate to become like Him⁷⁵.

The divine Teacher - in His infinite love to the believer - is involved in all his life, taking care of even the smallest actions. "*As the sun illumines not only the heaven and the whole world, shining on both land and sea, it also sends its rays through windows and*

⁶⁶*Paedagogos* 1:71; *Stromata* 2:6:1; 5:65:2; 5:78:3; 5:81:3.

⁶⁷Kelly, P. 127.

⁶⁸*Stromata* 5:12:82.

⁶⁹*Strom.* 4:162:5; 5:1:3; 7:5:5.

⁷⁰*Paedag.* 1:24:3; 1:53:1; 1:62:4; 1:71:3; 3:101:1.

⁷¹*Strom.* 5:1:11.

⁷²*Strom.* 4:6:35; 6:15:121; 7:16:95.

⁷³*Paed.* 1:5:12; 1:9:75.

⁷⁴*Strom.* 5:1:1.

⁷⁵*Protop.* 12:120:4; *Strom.* 2:19:100.

*small chinks into the furthest recesses of a house, so the Word, poured out everywhere, beholds the smallest actions of man's life*⁷⁶."

3. ORIGEN

According to **Origen**, establishing the Spiritual church is the true aim of theology or of our faith and knowledge of God. He says, "*God is not an object of curiosity, but a free and sovereign Being who gives Himself to be known by a created being, who is equally respected for its own subjective integrity and expected to be willingly and freely related to God. This faith has gathered together men from east, west, north, and the south into the knowledge of God*"⁷⁷."

a. For **Origen** God is immaterial, transcendent, and incomprehensible, but He reveals Himself to men especially when they have pure minds. He says, "*There is a kinship between the human mind and God; for the mind is itself an image of God, and therefore can have some conception of the divine nature, especially the more it is purified and removed from matter*"⁷⁸."

b. God who is absolutely impassible has no human motions, at the same time He is not a solid Being, for He is "Love," unique Love. Love is expressed by our human nature that we might acknowledge it and accept it, therefore we read in the Holy Scriptures that God grieves at our falling into sin; He hates sin and rejoices in our repentance. **Origen** gives many examples from the Scriptures, then concludes, "*Now all these passages where God is said to lament, or rejoice, or hate, or be glad, are to be understood as spoken by Scripture in metaphorical and human fashion. For the divine nature is remote from all affection of passion and change, remaining ever unmoved and untroubled in its own summit of bliss*"⁷⁹."

c. **Origen** is quite familiar with the terms "triad"⁸⁰ (*Tpias*) and "*Hypostasis*"⁸¹."

d. He is accused of teaching subordinationism, i.e., the Son is subordinate to the Father and is inferior to Him, and the Holy Spirit is subordinate to the Son. J. Quasten says, "That he teaches subordinationism has been affirmed and denied. St. Jerome does not hesitate to accuse him of doing so, while Gregory Thaumaturgas and **St. Athanasius** clear him of all suspicion. Modern authors like Regnon and Prat also acquit him"⁸²."

e. **Origen** states that the Son is brought forth from Father, not by a process of division, but in the same way as the will is brought forth from reason. He writes,

The Only-begotten Son of God is His Wisdom existing substantially... How could anyone believe that God the Father could have existed at any time without begetting Wisdom?... We must believe that Wisdom is without beginning...

He is called the Word because He is as it were the interpreter of the secrets of the mind of God.

We are forbidden the impiety of supposing that the way in which God the Father begat and sustains His Only-begotten Son is equivalent to the begetting of

⁷⁶*Strom.* 7:3:21.

⁷⁷*Comm. on the Proverbs* PG 17:229. (See *Emilianos Timiadis: The Nicene Creed*, 1983, P.22.)

⁷⁸*De Principiis* 1:1:5 - 7.

⁷⁹*In Numb. hom.* 33:2.

⁸⁰*In John* 10:39:270; 6:33:166; *In Jes. hom.* 1:4:1.

⁸¹*In John* 2:10:75; *Contra Celsus* 8:12.

⁸²*J. Quasten: Patrology*, Vol 2, P '7.

man by man or animal by animal; there must be a great difference. It is fitting that this should be so, since nothing can be found in existence, or conceived or imagined, to be compared with God. Thus human thought cannot comprehend how the unbegotten God becomes the Father of the Only-begotten Son. For it is an eternal and ceaseless generation, as radiance is generated from light. For He does not become the Son externally, by the adoption of the Spirit, but He is by nature the Son. He alone is Son by nature, and therefore He is called 'Only-begotten.'

Caution is needed lest anyone should fall into those absurd fables invented by those who picture for themselves some kind of 'prolations,' so as to assign parts to the divine nature and to divide the essential being of God the Father. Rather as an act of will proceeds from the mind without cutting a part of the mind or being separated or divided from it; in some such way the Father is to be thought of as 'begetting' the Son⁸³.

St. John tells us that 'God is light,' 1 John 1:5, and Paul calls the Son 'the radiance' of eternal light (Heb 1:3). Therefore, as light can never be without radiance, how can it be said that there was a time when the Son was not? For that is as much as to say that there was a time when Truth was not, when Wisdom was not, when Life was not. But we have to apologize for using such phrases as 'there was never a time when He was not,' for these words have a temporal significance. Yet when they are used of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, they are to be understood as denoting something 'supra-temporal'⁸⁴.

Origen asserts that the Word or the Wisdom was begotten apart from any physical passion, just as the will proceeds from the mind. If He is called the Son of Love (Col. 1:13), then why not, in the same manner, also the Son of Will?⁸⁵

f. **Origen** confirms the personality of the Holy Spirit. He states,

'The Spirit blows where it wills' (John 3:8). This signifies that the Spirit is a substantial being (ousia). It is not, as some imagine, an activity (energia) of God without individual existence. And the Apostle, after enumerating the gifts of the Spirit, proceeds thus, 'And all these things come from the activity of the one some Spirit, distributing to each individually as He wills' (1 Cor. 12:11). If He 'wills' and 'is active' and 'distributes,' He is therefore an active substance (ousia) not a mere activity⁸⁶.

He used the words of the book of Acts to prove the same idea: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:21), "The Holy Spirit said" (13:2), and "This is what the Holy Spirit says" (21:10).

g. **Origen** asserts the divinity of the Holy Spirit, "*The Spirit Himself is in the law and in the gospel; He is ever with the father and the Son; like the father and the Son He always is and was and will be*⁸⁷."

Origen declared the work of the Holy Spirit in our life, saying,

⁸³*De Principiis 1:2:1 - 6.*

⁸⁴*Ibid 4:4:28.*

⁸⁵*De Principiis 4:4:1.*

⁸⁶*In Joan Frag. 37.*

⁸⁷*Comm. in Ep. ad. Romans 6:7.*

The grace of the Holy Spirit is added that those creatures which are not holy by virtue of their own being may be made Holy by participation in the Spirit. Thus they derive existence from God the Father, rationality from the Word and sanctity from the Holy Spirit. Again when they have once been sanctified through the Holy Spirit they are made capable of receiving Christ, in respect that He is the 'righteousness of God' (1 Cor. 1:30) and those who have deserved to advance to this stage through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit will go on to attain the gift of wisdom through the power of the Spirit of God and His operation in them⁸⁸.

4. THEOGNOSTUS

Theognostus, master of the school of Alexandria in the second half of the third century, declared⁸⁹ that the Son's essence (*ousia*) is derived not out of nothingness, but out of the Father's *ousia*, as the radiance that comes from light and vapor are neither identical with the sun or with water nor alien from them, so the *ousia* of the Son is neither identical with nor alien from the Father. He is an effluence of the Father's *ousia*, however, He suffers no partition in the process.

5. PIERIUS⁹⁰

He seems to have spoken of the Father and the Son as two substances or natures, clearly using these terms as equivalents of **Origen's** *hypostases*.

6. ST. DIONYSIUS OF ALEXANDRIA

In his defense of the Orthodox faith against Sabellianism, he stressed the three Hypostases. Dionysius of Rome viewed the use of the Greek word, *hypostasis*, as equivalent to '*substantia*,' which he had learned from Tertullian as signifying the indivisible concrete reality of the Godhead, and therefore he accused Dionysius of Alexandria of the following⁹¹:

- a. making a sharp division, amounting to separation, between Father and Son;
- b. denying the Son's eternity;
- c. naming the Father without the Son and the Son without the Father, as if They were not inseparable in their very being;
- d. failing to describe the Son as *homoousios* (consubstantial) with the Father;
- e. stating that the Son was a creature different from the Father in substances.

The Alexandrian Pope sent a letter to his brother in Rome, explaining that he believed in only one divine essence. In the following century, **St. Athanasius** defended his Alexandrian predecessor in his letter '*De sententia Dionysii*' (On the Opinion of Dionysius). The following are some quotations of **St. Dionysius** mentioned in this letter,

Christ is forever, being Word and Wisdom and Power. For it is not to be supposed that God, having at first no such issue afterwards begat a Son...

But only the Son, who always is with the Father and is filled of Him that is, Himself also is from the Father.

⁸⁸*De Principiis* 1:3:8.

⁸⁹**St. Athanasius**: *De Decretis* 25.

⁹⁰Kelly, P 133.

⁹¹*Ibid* 134.

... the charge they allege against me is untrue, namely that I denied Christ to be of one essence with God. For even I argue that I have not found this word olloovc~lovnor nor read it anywhere in the Holy Scriptures, yet my subsequent reasonings, which they have suppressed do not discord with its meaning.

Life was begotten of Life, and flowed as a river from a well, and from Light unquenchable bright Light was kindled.

For there was no time when God was not Father... God at any rate is light, eternal without beginning nor even end, accordingly the brightness is eternally before Him and coexists with Him, without beginning and ever-begotten, shining in His Presence⁹².

7. ST. ALEXANDER OF ALEXANDRIA⁹³

Although accused by Arius of Sabellianism because he insisted on the unity of the Triad, it is manifest that he conceived of the Word a "*Hypostasis*" distinguishable from the Father. He was charged by his opponents with teaching that the Son is unoriginate like the Father, but actually he taught that the Son is derived from the Father's being, and co-eternal with Him since the Father could never have been without His Word, His Wisdom, His Power, His Image, and the Father must always have been Father.

8. ST. ATHANASIUS

St. Athanasius defended the Orthodox faith in the Holy Trinity against Arianism. He clarified the Church's faith that the simplicity of God does not contradict belief in the Holy Trinity, and at the same time, he depended on soteriological thought in defending the Godhead of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

He revealed the role of the Trinitarian doctrine in the life of the church, saying,

Theology is perfect in the Trinity. This is the only true piety, and this is the truth and the good. It is the faith which the Lord Himself gave, the apostles preached and the fathers kept. It is the faith on which the church is built. The trinitarian economy, the Three Hypostases are in unison the Father saves, the Son saves, the Spirit saves. This unit is not based on the knowledge of God's being, but on the knowledge of the one saving act of the Triune God⁹⁴.

a. The Simplicity of God

St. Athanasius confirms that God is simple, not compound, nor of composite nature; He is simply One though in Three, and has one grace and unity in His energy and actions. **St. Athanasius** states the following:

We confess God to be one through the Triad⁹⁵.

There is one Godhead of the Holy Trinity, and one faith in the Holy Trinity... If the Spirit were a creature, He would not be included in the Trinity; for the whole Trinity is one God. Nothing alien is mingled in the Trinity, it is indivisible and of the same nature⁹⁶.

⁹²*De Sententia* 15, 15, 18, 18, 22.

⁹³Kelly, p. 224.

⁹⁴*Against the Arians I* (PG 26:49); *Ep. ad. Serap. I* (PG 26:596, 605) See *Emilianos Timiadis: The Nicene Creed* 1983, p.19.

⁹⁵*Against the Arians* 3:15.

⁹⁶*Ep. ad. Serap. I*:16, 17.

*The Father accomplishes all things through the Word in the Holy Spirit⁹⁷.
There is a single grace which is fulfilled from the Father through the Son
in the Holy Spirit⁹⁸.*

Such being the coordination and unity in the Holy Trinity, who would divide the Son from the Father, or the Spirit from the Son or the Father Himself? Who would dare to say that the Trinity was internally 'dissimilar' or 'heterogeneous'? Or to speak of the Son as 'of alien essence' from the Father, or of the Spirit as foreign to the Son? But if anyone asks how this happens, how the Son can be said to be in us when the Spirit is; or the Father, when the Son is; or how the whole Trinity is implied in the mention of one Person or is said to be in us when one Person is - if anyone asks such questions, let him first divide brightness from light, or wisdom from a wise man, or explain how such things can be. If he cannot do this, much more insane is the presumption in making such inquiries about God; for (the truth about) the Godhead is not given by a display of arguments, as it has been said (1 Cor. 1:17; 2:4), but by faith, and reason exercised with reverent caution...

Yet such perplexity may be remedied, firstly and chiefly by faith, but in the second place by such analogies as those of image, brightness, the source and the river of substance and (specific) character. For as the Son is in the Spirit as in His own image; so the Father is in the Son. The scriptures have supplied us with such comparisons... So that we may believe that there is one sanctification, from the Father, through the Son, in the holy Spirit...

The Son is sent by the Father... (John 3:16); the Son sends the Spirit... (John 16:7); the Son glorifies the Father... (John 17:4); the Spirit glorifies the Son... (John 16:14). The Son says, 'I speak to the world what I have heard from the Father' (John 8:26); while the Spirit receives from the Son: 'He will receive of mine and will proclaim (it) to you' (John 16:14). And the Son came in the Father's name; so the Son says, 'The Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name' (John 14:26)⁹⁹.

For where the Father is, there is the Son, and where there is light, there is radiance; and what the Father works, He works through the Son. The Lord Himself says, 'What I see the Father do, that do also'; so also when baptism is given, whom the Father baptizes, him the Son baptizes; and whom the Son baptizes, he is consecrated in the Holy Spirit. And again as when the sun shines, one might say that the radiance illuminates, for the light is one and indivisible, and can not be detached, so where the Father is or is named, there plainly is the Son also; and is the Father named in Baptism? Then must the Son be named with Him¹⁰⁰.

b. The Eternal Son

Concerning the Eternal Son, he wrote,

*If He is called the eternal offspring of the Father, He is rightly called so.
For never was the essence of the Father imperfect, that what is proper to it should*

⁹⁷Ibid 1:18, 30.

⁹⁸Ibid 1:14.

⁹⁹Ibid 1:20 (H. Bettenson: *The Early Christian Fathers*, 1956, P 406-7.)

¹⁰⁰Against Arians 2:41.

*be added afterwards, nor, as man from man, has the Son been begotten, so as to be later than His Father's existence, but He is God's offspring and as being a proper Son of God, who is ever, He exists eternally. For, whereas it is proper to men to beget in time, from the imperfection of their nature, God's offspring is eternal, for His nature is ever perfect.*¹⁰¹

*Whereas God is, He was eternally; since then the Father is ever, His Radiance ever is, which is His Word. And again, God who is, has from Himself His Word who also is; and neither has the Word been added, whereas He was not before, nor was the Father once without Reason*¹⁰².

9. OTHER FATHERS

Already I have discussed the theology of St. Cyril and St. Dioscorus in the book, ***The Theological Terms: Physis and Hypostasis in the Early Church.***

Concerning the Fathers of the Middle Ages, I prefer to present their theology in another book.



¹⁰¹ 39. *Ibid* 1:14.

¹⁰²*Ibid* 1:25 20. J. Quasten: *Patrology*, Vol 2, P '7.

CHRIST'S DIVINITY IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURE

The Holy Scripture in all its parts reveals Jesus Christ's Godhead in many ways so that we may accept Him as the Almighty Savior, who grants us the experience of salvation from judgment, corruption, death and Satan.

1. He is the Lord¹⁰³

- Isaiah, who asserts that there is only one Lord (45:5, 21, 22), confirms that the Messiah is the Lord (9:6).
- Jesus Christ implied that meaning in His discussion with the Jews (Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46). Men will use this title in speaking to Him in the Last Day (Matt. 7:22, 23; Matt. 25:37-44; Luke 13:25).
- It is clear that the title "Lord" is used to proclaim Christ's Godhead, for He is called "the Lord Of Glory" (1 Cor. 2:8), "the Lord of Lords" (Rev. 19:16; 17:14), and "the Lord of Sabbath" (Matt 12:8), and so on. I will elaborate on only two titles:

a. The Lord of Sabbath: This title means that He is the Law-Giver who issued the law of the Sabbath, one of the important divine commandments, so that God attributes the "Sabbath" to Himself. (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; 31:13; Lev. 19:3, 19:30, 26:2).

b. The Lord of David¹⁰⁴: No wonder the Jews and some Gentiles, both individuals and groups, simple and well-educated, addressed Him as "the Son of David" when they discovered that Jesus was the Messiah (Matt. 9:27; 12:13; 15:22; 20:30; 21:19). For David, the first king that God chose to rule His people, received a great promise, "Your kingdom shall be established forever" (2 Sam. 7:16). Through the dark ages, the prophets hoped for the messianic Kingdom as that of the Son of David (Isa. 9:7; 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 30:9; 33:17; Ezek. 34:23, 24; 37:24; Amos 9:11; Zeck. 12:8; Hos. 3:5). Even in the Book of Revelation the Risen Lord is called "the Lion of Judah, the Root of David" (Rev. 5:5). When Jesus asked the well-educated leaders of the Jews - the Pharisees - about the Messiah, they replied that He is the Son of David (Matt. 22:41-45; Mark 2:35-37; Luke 20:41-44). He perplexed them when He drew their attention to Psalm 110:1 which was universally accepted as messianic, wherein David himself called the Messiah his Lord. The Lord declared His divinity by asking them, "If David then calls Him Lord, how is He his son?" (Matt. 22:45).

2. He is God:

I refer the reader to the following verses:

"And Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed'" (John 20:28, 29).

"But to the Son He says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever'" (Heb. 1:8).

¹⁰³H.H. Pope Shenouda 111: *Lectures in the Dogmatic Theology, Christ's Godhead, October 1984.*

¹⁰⁴W. Barclay: *Jesus as they saw Him, 1980, Ch. 3.*

"... by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:1).

"This is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

"Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God" (Rom. 9:5).

"For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

"Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

"To shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

"... who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God... And being found in appearance as a man ..." (Phil. 2:6).

In the last verse, we notice that St. Paul uses the Greek terms "*morphe*" and "*schemata*" which translate into "form" and "appearance," respectively. The first means the unchanging and unchangeable essential nature of a thing, while the second means the changing and altering external form of a person or thing. For instance, a man always has the unchanging *morphe* of manhood but he will have different *schemata*, such as the different, outwardly appearances of infancy, childhood, youth, maturity and old age. St. Paul says that Jesus was in the "*morphe*" of God, that is to say, the essential nature of Jesus is the same as the essential nature of the Father¹⁰⁵.

3. Jesus Christ is the Incarnate "Logos of God"

Refer to John 1:1, 1 John 5:7, and Rev. 19:13.

To the Jews, the Logos or the Word of God is not merely a "voice" or "words" to be uttered, but a Person who was walking in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8), the Creator of heavens (Ps. 33:6, 9), the creative and dynamic power of God in action (Isa. 55:11; Jer. 23:29). To the Greeks the term "Logos" is a philosophical word meaning the pronounciational mind of God, or His rational pronounciation that is inseparable from His essence.

4. He Has God's Characteristics and Practices God's Works¹⁰⁶

Jesus says, "All things that the Father has are Mine" (John 16:15), and "And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine" (John 17:10). What are the "All things that the Father has" which our Lord Jesus attributes to Himself except the divine characteristics, energies and perfectness?! The Jews accused Him of blasphemy for He made Himself equal to God (John 5:18; 10:30-33), but He asserts this equality even in His speech with the Father (John 17:10).

I offer the following examples of His divine characteristics and actions:

a. The Eternal One: It is said, "Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Ps. 90:2). (See also Jer. 10:10 and Hab. 1:12). Our Lord Jesus Christ attributed eternity to Himself when He said to the Jews, "before Abraham was I am" (John 8:58). They therefore wanted to stone Him.

Micah states, "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity" (5:2).

¹⁰⁵*Ibid* P 27, 28.

¹⁰⁶H.H. Popc Shenouda 111: Lectures in the Dogmatic Theology...

(See also John 17:5, 24)

b. The First and the Last: In Isaiah God reveals Himself as the First and the Last (41:1; 44:6; 48:12); and in the Book of Revelation Jesus Christ does the same (Rev. 1:7, 8, 9, 17; 22:12-16).

He is the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and the Omega, for He is eternal; there was no beginning before Him nor an end after Him. He is the Alpha and the Omega; there is nothing lacking in Him, but He is complete, has all power, all holiness, all knowledge, all wisdom, and all goodness.

c. The Unchangeable One: God is the unchangeable One (James 1:17). St. Paul states that, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). In the Book of Revelation, it is said, "Who is, and who was and who is to come" (Rev. 1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:6; 16:5).

d. He is present everywhere: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name I am there in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).

"No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man, who is in heaven" (John 3:13).

"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" (John 14:23).

"Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20).

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me" (Rev. 3:20).

e. He is the Almighty: God alone is the Almighty (Gen. 6:3; 48:3; 2 Cor. 6:18), and our Lord Jesus Christ called Himself the Almighty (Rev. 1:1, 8). See also 2 Pet. 1:1, 3; Jude 24, 25; Phil 3:20, 21; and Rev. 4:8; 11:6; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22.

f. The Judge: God is called the Judge (Gen. 18:25; Ps. 7:9; 49:6; 94:2; Rom. 3:6; 14:12; Heb. 12:23). Our Lord reveals Himself as the Judge (Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; 13:26, 27, 41, 42; Rev. 22:12-16).

g. He tests the hearts and minds: In consecrating the temple, Solomon prayed to God, "Who alone knows the hearts of men" (1 Kings 8:39). He also describes Him elsewhere saying that He tests the hearts (Prov. 17:3) and weighs them. (See also Ps. 7:9; Jer 11:20; 17:9, 10; and 1 Thess: 2:4).

Jesus Christ says, "And all the churches shall know that I am He who examines the minds and hearts, and I will give to each one of you according to your works" (Rev. 2:23). In fact, when He was on earth, He knew the thoughts of men (Matt. 9:3, 4; 12:24, 25; Mark 11:16, 17; Luke 5:21, 22; 7:39, 40; 9:46, 47; 11:17; John 16:7, 8).

h. He alone is blameless and Holy: All men - even the saints - are sinners (Ps. 14:3; 53:3; Rom. 3:12; John 1:8; 1 Tim 1:15). God alone is the Good One (Matt. 19:17) and the Holy One (Rev. 15:34), to whom the Seraphim give hymns saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy" (Is: 6:3). Jesus Christ is the Holy One (Luke 1:35; Acts 13:14, Heb. 7:26; Acts 4:30; Rev. 3:7; John 8:46; 14:30; Heb 4:15, 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet 2:22).

i. He forgives sins: God is the Forgiver of sins (Ps. 103:1, 3; 130:3, 4; Ex. 34:6, 7; Mark 2:7). Therefore when the Lord Jesus forgave sins, the Jews said, "Why does this man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:7). He confirmed that He forgives sins, but also He gave His disciples and apostles the authority to forgive sins by His Holy Spirit (John 20:22). He opens Paradise to repentant sinners (Luke 23:34).

j. He accepts worship: Worship is due to God alone (Matt 7:22; Phil. 2:10, 11; Rev. 15:4); even in praying to the Father, we have to ask in Jesus' name (John 16:23, 24; 14:13, 14).

k. He is the Life and the Life-Giver: God is self-existent; He grants life to his creatures. He says, "As I live, says the Lord of hosts" (Zeph. 2:9). Our Lord is the Life (John 7:11-17; John 11) by His own Authority (John 5:21; 6:54; 10:27, 28). He is the Bread of Life (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51). He is the Resurrection (John 11:25).

i. He is the Creator

See John 1:3; Heb. 1:1; Col. 1:15, 16; and 1 Cor. 8:6. As the Creator, He changed water into wine (John 2) and granted sight to the one born blind (John 9:32).

5. Sending the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God

See Joel 2:27, 29; Ex. 39:29; Acts 2:33; and John 15:26; 16:7; 20:22.

6. His relation to the Holy Spirit

He was born of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18) from a Virgin (Isa. 7:14). He stated that the Holy Spirit would take that which is His own and declare it to us, and all things that the Father has are His own... (John 16:14, 15).

7. His descent from heaven

See John 3:3; 6:33, 38, 41; and 16:27, 28.

He not only dwells in heaven, but He has authority in heaven (Acts 7:59; Luke 23:43; Matt. 16:19), and there the heavenly creatures worship Him (Phil. 2:9). He is higher than the heavens (Heb. 7:26).

8. The Son of God

His Sonship to the Father is unique as He is called the Only-begotten Son (John 1:18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). Thus His Sonship is distinguished from our sonship to God (Gen. 6:2, Ps. 29:1, 2; Ex. 4:22, Matt. 5:9). His Sonship to the Father is natural and not by adoption like us. It is eternal (Heb. 1:5; Ps. 2), and was declared by the Father Himself when heaven was opened at His baptism (Matt. 3:17; Luke 3:22) and when He was transfigured (Mark. 9:2-7). The aim of the Gospel is to believe in it (John 20:30, 31); this belief is the rock on which the church is built (Matt. 16:13-18).

The Sanhedrin understood His Sonship as an equality to the Father, and considered it as blasphemy (Matt. 26:63-65; John 10:33), and Satan was perplexed because of it (Matt. 4:3; 27:4).

The Son of God was foretold in the Old Testament (Prov. 30:4), the angel Gabriel preached it (Luke 1:35), and the disciples discovered it as He practiced divine deeds such

as enabling St. Peter to walk on water (Matt. 14:15-33). Even the blind man confessed it (John 9:35-38), as did the centurion at Golgotha (Matt 27:54).

The term "the Son" is used for Jesus Christ alone (John 8:36; 1 John 4:14; 5:12), and when it is gathered to the terms "Father" and "the Holy Spirit," they are used as One God, for Jesus Christ said "In the name of," not "in the names of" (see Matt 28:19).

9. Faith in Him

As God the Father is the object of our faith, so also is Jesus Christ (John 14:1; Acts 10:43; 13:38, 39). By believing in Him we enjoy salvation and eternal life (John 3:16; 11:25, 26; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38), and without this belief we perish in our sins (John 8:24).

We must believe in Him as the Son of God (John 20:31), the Only-begotten Son (John 3:16, 18), and realize that He is in the Father and the Father is in Him (John 14:10, 11). He who sees Him sees the Father (John 14:9) and has life in Him (John 1:4); He is the Redeemer of the world (1 John 5:14) and the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2).

10. He is the Savior

God Himself is the Savior and the Redeemer (Ps. 49:7, 15; Ps. 103:1-4; Isa. 41:13, 14; 44:6; 45:21; 47:4; 48:17; Luke 1:46; Titus 2:10; 3:4; Hos. 13:4). Jesus Christ is the Redeemer (Matt. 1:21; John 12:4; Matt. 18:11; 1 Tim. 1:15; Titus 2:14; Gal. 2:13; Heb. 2:3; 5:9; Acts 4:12).

He is the Savior who alone offered Himself as a mighty Sacrifice: "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

11. His relation to the Father

His relationship to the father declares His divinity, for He is called the Wisdom and the Power of God (1 Cor. 1:23, 24). He repeatedly reveals His Oneness with the Father (John 10:30; 14:10; 16:15; 17:10, 11). On this account the Jews would stone Him as a blasphemer (John 10:31-33).

He was not born of the seed of a man, but from the Virgin (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18, 20) to confirm His eternal relationship to the Father.

12. His absolute Authority

a. Over nature: He ordered the sea and the wind to be quiet and they obeyed Him (Mark 4:37-41). He not only walked on water, but He also let Peter do the same by His word (Matt. 14:25-32). On His crucifixion, nature declared its anger (Matt. 27:51), and darkness covered the earth for three hours (Mark 15:33). He entered the upper-room while the doors were closed (John 20:19) by His own authority. Against the laws of nature, He ascended to heaven (John 3:13; Acts 1:9).

b. Over the angels: He is greater than angels (Heb. 1:4), who worship Him (Heb. 1:6; Phil. 2:10; Rev. 5:8; 1 Pet. 3:21, 22). He will send them at His last coming (Matt. 13:41, 23; 24:30, 31) as His own.

c. Over the Divine Kingdom, as His own kingdom (Matt. 13:41, 42; 16:28; 2 Tim 4:1; Luke 23:43, Dan. 7:14).

d. Over life and death (John 11:25, 26; 14:6; Rev. 1:18; John 5:21; 8:51).

e. Over the Law (John 13:34; Matt. 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44): He called Himself the "Lord of the Sabbath," the Lord's day (Matt. 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5).

f. Over His soul: He died only to rise again (John 10:17, 18).

g. Over demons (Mark 1:22-24; Luke 8:28, 29; Matt. 8:29): He gave His disciples and apostles the authority over them in His name (Luke 10:11, 17; Mark 16:17; Acts 16:18).

h. Over eternal glory as His own (Matt 25:31, 32; Matt 16:27; Luke 9:26): He sits on the divine throne (Rev. 7:17).

i. In performing countless miracles (John 20:30; 21:25; Luke 4:40; Matt 4:23, 24): These were realized through His own order (Mark 2:9; Luke 6:10; Mark 5:41, 42; John 11:43, 44), or by touching the sick (Luke 4:40; 22:51; Matt 20:34; Mark 8:25), or merely by His will (Mark 1:41; John 2:7-9) without prayer. His disciples and apostles performed miracles, but in His name (Phil 4:13; Matt. 10:1, 8, 19). He performed miracles so that men might believe in Him (John 14:11; John 10:37, 38).

Lastly His own life was a unique miracle, for He was born of a Virgin (Isa. 7:14). Not only angels but the appearance of a strange star proclaimed His birth (Matt. 2:2-10). At his baptism, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit appeared. At His transfiguration, His glory was revealed. Nature declared His glory even at His crucifixion, and on the third day He rose again while the tomb was closed. He appeared to His disciples while the doors were closed, and He ascended to heaven. The details of His life and work were foretold by the prophets clearly, hundreds and thousands of years before His coming.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that the main line of Christian theology is that the God in whom we believe is God who created man to embrace him as His child and grant him participation in His glory to eternally live with Him. God created this marvelous free creature - man - to raise him up to His heaven and not to leave him isolated on earth. He grants man His divine mysteries, not as a subject for discussion or as theoretical dogmas, but as a sign of God's openness towards him, and as the source of life and sanctification.

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