

## **Anthropomorphism and Transcendence in The New Testament and the Christian Fathers**

Christianity inherited the Hebrew Bible from the Jews. Some of the early Church Fathers, especially the Alexandrian Platonists, struggled to reconcile and interpret biblical anthropomorphism with a Platonic conception of God as a spirit and the spirit as immaterial, ideal, and absolute.<sup>1</sup> Many of these Fathers saw biblical anthropomorphisms incompatible with the divine majesty and mystery, and tried to eliminate them by allegorical interpretations. Clement of Alexandria, for instance, allowed neither human form nor human passions in God, the Father, and argued that biblical anthropomorphisms were metaphors adapted to the limitations of human understanding. He argued, that God "is formless and nameless, though we sometimes give Him titles, which are not to be taken in their proper sense; the One, the Good, Intelligence, or Existence, or Father, or God, or Creator, or Lord."<sup>2</sup> Bigg observes, that to Clement, God was unknowable: "We know not what He is, only what He is not. He has absolutely no predicates, no genus, no differentia, no species. He is neither unit nor number; He has neither accident nor substance. Names denote either qualities or relations; God has neither... These are but honorable phrases which we may use, not because they really describe the Eternal, but that our understanding may have something to lean upon."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, when "the Hebrews mention hands and feet and mouth and eyes and entrance and exits and exhibitions of wrath and threatening, let no one suppose... that these terms express passions of God." Clement continued, "Reverence rather requires... an allegorical meaning... you must not entertain the notion at all of figure and motion, or standing or seating, or place, or right or left, as appertaining to the Father of the universe, although these terms are in Scripture."<sup>4</sup> Origen was no less emphatic on the issue. To him, "The most impious doctrines are implied by the belief that God is corporeal; and He will be thought to be divisible, material, and corruptible."<sup>5</sup> His God was Mind and hence incorporeal. "Being incorporeal God is independent of the laws of Space and Time, omniscient, omnipresent, unchanging, incomprehensible. His dwelling-place is the thick darkness. 'How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out.' He has in a sense no titles, and His fittest name is He That Is."<sup>6</sup> Origen was not unaware of the fact that, "even before the corporeal coming of Christ, many passages of Scripture seem to say that God is in a corporeal place..."<sup>7</sup> Through his allegorical interpretations he wanted to "persuade the reader in every way to hear the sacred Scripture in a more lofty and spiritual sense, when it appears to teach that God is in a place."<sup>8</sup> St. Augustine<sup>9</sup> and many others, especially the mystical theologians,<sup>10</sup> also insisted upon ineffability and utter transcendence of God, the Father.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, this transcendental or Platonistic model is not the peculiar concept which the popular or-

thodox Christianity has cherished over the centuries following Clement and Origen.<sup>12</sup> In 543, Origen and his views were condemned by a synod in Constantinople and the condemnation was ratified by the Fifth General Council of 553.<sup>13</sup>

The distinctive portion of Christianity in the present Bible is the New Testament. The distinctively Christian understanding of God is based on the claim that God is most fully revealed through what Christians claim is his self-revelation in the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. "The final revelation of Christianity", observes William Blake, "is, therefore, not that Jesus is God, but that "God is Jesus."<sup>14</sup> I. R. Netton confirms the point by observing that, "The *traditional* Christian theological paradigm, of course, despite much debate, was that Jesus' 'self-consciousness was always consciously of Himself as God.'"<sup>15</sup> If the essence of Christianity is that God has revealed himself most fully in the language and reality of a human life, it inevitably follows that the Christian understanding of God is essentially and literally corporeal and anthropomorphic. To say that the historical human person, Jesus of Nazareth was simultaneously God and man, requires as its necessary condition that divinity could find self-expression and self-exposure through the "form of a man" which is what the two Greek words "morphe" and "anthropos" translate to. To show that this is really implied in the claims of historic Christianity, it is necessary for us to show two things: first, that the New Testament documents are essentially focused on the life and works of Jesus Christ as the center of the Christian religion; and second, that the historic formulations of Christian doctrine as set out by the early Christian Fathers, and recognized as normative by subsequent generations of Christians, teach a doctrine of salvation such that it is necessary that Christ be truly God and truly man and truly one. This is what we seek to show in the following pages.

The second division of the Bible, the New Testament, consists of twenty seven books and is highly valued by all divisions of Christianity-Roman, Protestant, Eastern, Orthodox. The term New Testament stands in contrast with the term Old Testament to denote the inauguration of "a new covenant that has made the first old" (Heb. 8:13) The Christians refer to the Hebrew Bible as the Old Testament because, to them, it is associated with the history of the "old covenant", the one which Yahweh made in the past with the Israelites in the wilderness. They refer to their specific portion in the present Bible as the New Testament because, the Christians believe, they are the foundation documents of the "new covenant", the covenant inaugurated and fulfilled by the works of Jesus, the Christ.

The central pivot of all the New Testament writings is the one individual Jesus Christ. Although they contain crucial information about his life, teachings, death, and resurrection, none of the books were written by Jesus or under his supervision. Philip Scaff observes: " ...the Lord chose none of his apostles, with the single exception of Paul, from the ranks of the learned; he did not train them to literary authorship, nor gave them, throughout his earthly life, a single express command to labor in that way."<sup>16</sup> There is a consensus among biblical scholars regarding this issue; "whereas we possess documents originally written by Paul", observes J. Jeremias, "not a single line has come down to us from Jesus' own hand."<sup>17</sup> These books were the product of later generations and are commonly accepted as the earliest, classical responses to the many-faceted Christ event. R.M. Grant observes, that the New Testament "is the basic collection of the books of the Christian Church. Its contents, unlike those of the Old Testament, were produced within the span

of a single century, under the auspices of disciples of Jesus or their immediate successors. The collection is unlike the Koran in that it contains not a word written by the founder of the community, though his spoken words are recorded by evangelists and apostles and reflected in almost all the documents."<sup>18</sup>

The New Testament, as said, consists of twenty seven different books written by different individuals at various places, communities, and times. It has four widely known Gospels: the three Synoptic Gospels, as the term has been commonly used for Matthew, Mark, and Luke since the nineteenth century, and the fourth Gospel of John, the Acts of Apostles, fourteen Pauline Epistles (the Greater as well as Pastoral) i.e., Romans, I & II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon and Hebrews, and the seven "Catholic" (meaning "universally accepted") Epistles i.e., the letters of James, I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude and finally the book of Revelation.

The New Testament with its present shape, number, and order, was not available to the early Christians for centuries after the departure of Jesus and his disciples. The New Testament writings, observes Clarke, were "written for the special needs of particular groups of people, and the idea of combining them into one authoritative volume was late and not in the mind of the authors. Christians, therefore, and the Christian Church might conceivably have gone on indefinitely without Christian scriptures."<sup>19</sup> One of the leading factors may have been the existence of an already compiled Hebrew Bible. "Throughout the whole patristic age", observes Kelly, "as indeed in all subsequent Christian centuries, the Old Testament was accepted as the word of God, the unimpeachable sourcebook of saving doctrine."<sup>20</sup> The compilation, collection, and identification of this particular group of writings (the canonization process) as a distinct and authoritative entity resulted from a complex development within the Christian Church. It took the Church 367 years to produce a list of writings and a canon that would contain all the present day (New Testament) canonical writings. The oldest indisputable witness to the New Testament canon is Athanasius, a fourth century bishop of Alexandria.<sup>21</sup> He in his Easter letter of 367 wrote, "Forasmuch as some have taken in hand, to reduce into order for themselves the books termed apocryphal, and to mix them up with the divinely inspired scriptures... it seemed good to me also ... to set before you the books included in the Canon, and handed down and accredited as Divine."<sup>22</sup> The list that follows this prologue then contains the twenty seven books of our present New Testament though not in the same order.<sup>23</sup> These books are, according to Athanasius, "the springs of salvation, so that he that is thirsty can fill himself with the ( divine ) responses in them; in these alone is the good news of the teaching of the true religion proclaimed."<sup>24</sup>

The New Testament scholars differ widely over the process of compilation, authors, places, sources, dates, and history of the New Testament canon. The traditional or Orthodox scholars attribute almost all the New Testament writings to the disciples or the immediate apostles; therefore declaring the New Testament as an absolutely authentic and inspired work of the disciples or apostolic age, the first century A.D. For instance, R. L. Harris claims, that "It seems clear that the New Testament books arose in the latter half of the first century A.D., and almost all of them were clearly known, revered, canonized, and collected well before a hundred years had passed."<sup>25</sup> Philip Scaff is more specific regarding this issue: "Nearly all the books of the New Testament were written between the years 50 and 70, at least twenty years after the resurrection

of Christ, and the founding of the church; and the Gospel and Epistles of John still later." He concludes that, "Hence seven and twenty books by apostles and apostolic men, written under the special influence and direction of the Holy Spirit."<sup>26</sup>

The scholars following this line of thought argue that Jesus was the personal Word of God, the eternal *Logos*, hence the ultimate authority. He assigned this divine authority to his twelve disciples (Mt. 10:2-5) after his resurrection.(Mt. 28:19-20, Mk. 16:15-16) The Church was "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph. 2:20) whom Christ had promised to guide unto "all the truth" (John 16:13) by the assistance of the Holy Spirit. The apostles, like Luke and Mark, derive their authority from their masters who for their part represent the authority of Christ. Therefore, the entire collection of the New Testament derives its authenticity and authority from the ultimate divine authority of Jesus. Harris argues, that "The Lord Jesus did not, in prophecy, give us a list of the twenty-seven New Testament books. He did, however, give us a list of the inspired authors. Upon them the Church of Christ is founded, and by them the Word was written."<sup>27</sup> In the words of H.T. Fowler, "Jesus strove to set religion free from the tyranny of the written law, meticulously interpreted by the scribes. He left no written word, but instead, living men whom he had inspired by his own life and word to claim direct access to God as Father and to trust in the power and guidance of the Spirit."<sup>28</sup> In short, argues Geisler, "God is the source of canonicity."<sup>29</sup>

Such a view of apostolic authority and authorship of the New Testament writings was common with the early Christian Fathers. Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons,<sup>30</sup> in the second century (180 A.D.) wrote: "For the Lord of all gave to His apostles the power of the Gospel, through whom also we have known the truth, that is, the doctrine of the Son of God, to whom also did the Lord declare: `He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me, and Him that sent Me."<sup>31</sup> He further maintained, that the apostolic authority issues from the apostles endowment with the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, "For after the Lord rose from the dead, (the apostles) were invested with power from on high when the Holy Spirit came down (upon them), were filled from all (His gifts), and had perfect knowledge: they departed to the ends of earth preaching the glad tidings."<sup>32</sup> As these apostles were assigned the responsibility of conveying the faith to others, they did their utmost to perform the duty wholly and properly. Thus Matthew, claims Irenaeus, "among the Hebrews in their own dialect, brought out also a writing of a Gospel while Peter and Paul in Rome were preaching and founding the Church. After their death Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also himself committed to us inscripturated the things being preached by Peter. And Luke the follower of Paul, the Gospel being preached by that one he put down in a book. Then John, the disciple of the Lord who lay upon his breast, also he gave out the Gospel while staying in Ephesus of Asia."<sup>33</sup>

It is evident from the above citation that Irenaeus attributes the ultimate authorship of all the four Gospels to the immediate disciples of Jesus. It has been a common practice with the early Fathers to ascribe the Marcan and Lucan Gospels to their respective masters: Peter and Paul,<sup>34</sup> hence insinuating Mark and Luke's first hand knowledge and their Gospels perfect accuracy. The same trend is pervasive among the present day orthodox/traditional scholars. P. Scaff writes: "The first and fourth Gospels were composed by apostles and eye-witnesses, Matthew and John; the second and third, under the influence of Peter and Paul, and their disciples Mark and Luke, so as to be indirectly likewise of apostolic origin and canonical authority."<sup>35</sup> R. L. Harris makes Mark and

Luke the secretaries to Peter and Paul.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand B. B. Warfield,<sup>37</sup> Charles Hodge, Geisler, and a number of other scholars argue that it was the apostolic authority or apostolic approval that was used as the criterion for canonicity. Geisler, for instance, argues, that "The term "apostolic" as used for the test of canonicity does not necessarily mean "apostolic authorship," or "that which was prepared under the direction of the apostles," unless the word "apostle" be taken in its non-technical sense, meaning someone *beyond* the twelve apostles or Paul. In this non-technical sense, Barnabas is called an apostle (Acts 14:14; cf. v. 4), as is James (Gal. 1:19), and evidently others too. (Rom. 16:7; II Cor. 8:23, Phil. 2:25). It appears rather unnecessary to think of Mark and Luke as being secretaries of apostles, or to argue that the writer of James was an apostle, to say nothing of Jude or the writer of Hebrews. In fact, the writer of Hebrews disclaims being an apostle, saying that the message of Christ "was attested to us [readers and writers] by those [the apostles] who heard him." (Heb. 2:3)" Geisler concludes, that "it is apostolic authority, or apostolic approval, that was the primary test for canonicity, and not merely apostolic authorship."<sup>38</sup>

There is a different line of approach taken by Papias, a second century bishop of Hierapolis. Though not suspicious of the intention or sincerity of Mark, he does raise some questions about the direct authority and order of Marcan Gospel. He observes, that "The elder [John] used to say, Mark, having become Peter's interpreter, wrote accurately all that he remembered; though he did not [record] in order that which was either said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him; but subsequently, as I said [attached himself to] Peter, who used to frame his teachings to meet the [immediate] wants [of his hearers]; and not as making a connected narrative of the Lord's discourses."<sup>39</sup> It is difficult to fully accommodate these traditional claims of apostolic authorship and authority for most of the New Testament books in the light of what the modern scholarship has proved. The fact of the matter is, as Westcott observes, that "The recognition of the Apostolic writings as authoritative and complete was partial and progressive."<sup>40</sup>

Contemporary critical scholars, following form-criticism,<sup>41</sup> redaction criticism,<sup>42</sup> literary criticism,<sup>43</sup> and historical approach to the New Testament, disagree with the above sketched traditional view of the authenticity and divine nature of the New Testament writings. They argue, that the New Testament books were not the works of the immediate disciples of Jesus. They were compiled long after the disciples by the authors mostly unknown to us. Hans Conzelmann argues that, "the circumstances of composition (author, time, place, occasion, and any of the more specific circumstances) are not known for any of the New Testament writings other than Paul's letters."<sup>44</sup> These scholars further argue, that Jesus never asked his disciples to put any thing in writing. After his resurrection the disciples were busy preaching the end of the world and arrival of the Kingdom of God, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk. 1:15); therefore, the disciples were least interested in writing the words of Jesus. The first Christians, observes R. L. Fox, "were people of faith, not textual fundamentalists: to hear Peter or Paul was to hear a man with a conviction, not a Bible, and a new message which old texts were quoted to back up. We can take this message back to within four years of Jesus' death through the personal testimony of Paul: he 'received,' he tells the Christians in Corinth, that 'Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scripture, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scripture,' and he then appeared to Peter and then to others in a sequence which does not match the stories of the appearances in our Gospels."<sup>45</sup> In the words of J. D. Crossan,

"Jesus left behind him thinkers not memorizers, disciples not reciters, people not parrots."<sup>46</sup> The disciples also waited the second coming, the '*Parousia*' of the risen Lord and expected his return at any moment. D. Nineham observes: "Since the early Christians thus believed themselves to be living in a comparatively short interim period before the end of the world, their energies were naturally concentrated on practical tasks, on bringing others to a realization of the situation and on the attempt to maintain and deepen their own relationship with the exalted Lord so that when he came to establish his kingdom finally, they would be worthy to be members of it. Consequently, they will have had little leisure, even had they had aptitude, for antiquarian research into Christ's earthly life; nor would they have thought it worth while, seeing that they do not look forward to any posterity who might be expected to profit from the result of it."<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the belief that the eschatological and prophetic Spirit of God was operative among them, led the first Christians to focus more on oral transmission and preaching rather than writing the message. Even Paul who actually wrote the letters did so because he could not personally reach those places (see 1 Thes. 2:17, 3:10 or 1 Cor. 4:14-21). Otherwise, he appears to have valued spoken words and personal presence over the written word.

Consequently, the word or the tradition was orally transmitted until the second generation when the enthusiasm about Jesus' second coming cooled with the passage of time. When his delay caused a number of problems, the books began to be written. F.R. Crownfield observes, that even when they were compiled, "it was not with any thought that they would eventually become a part of Scripture, in supplement to the ancient Scriptures which Christians now call the Old Testament."<sup>48</sup> J. Jeremias observes, that "It was more than thirty years after his death before anyone began to write down what he [Jesus] said in an ordered sequence, and by that time his sayings had long been translated into Greek. It was inevitable that during this long period of oral transmission alterations took place in the tradition..." Jeremias continues, that "A second development makes it even more urgent for us to discover how reliably the message of Jesus has been handed down: not only have we to reckon with the fact that sayings of Jesus were altered in the period before they were written down, but in addition we have to consider the possibility that new sayings came into being. The seven letters of Christ to the seven churches in Asia Minor (Rev. 2-3) and other sayings of the exalted Lord handed down in the first person (e.g. Rev. 1:17-20; 16:15; 22:12ff.) allow the conclusion that early Christian prophets addressed congregations in words of encouragement, admonition, censure and promise, using the name of Christ in the first person. Prophetic sayings of this kind found their way into the tradition about Jesus and became fused with the words that he had spoken during his lifetime. The discourses of Jesus in the Gospel of John provide an example of this development; to a considerable degree they are homilies on sayings of Jesus composed in the first person."<sup>49</sup> In Hans Kung's opinion "the *Gospels emerged* in a process of about fifty to sixty years... The disciples at first passed on orally what he had said and done. At the same time, like any narrator, they themselves changed the emphasis, selected, clarified, interpreted, extended, in each case in the light of their own personal inclination and the needs of their hearers. There may have been from the beginning a straightforward narrative of the work, teaching and fate of Jesus. The evangelists- certainly not all directly disciples of Jesus, but witnesses of the original apostolic tradition- collected everything very much later: the stories and sayings of Jesus orally transmitted and now partly fixed in writing, not as they might have been kept in civic archives of Jerusalem or Galilee, but as were used in the religious life of the early Christians, in sermons, catechetics and worship." Kung further observes, "All these texts

emerged out of particular "living situation" (*Sitz im Leben*) they already had behind them a history which had helped to shape them, had already been passed on as the message of Jesus. The evangelists- undoubtedly not merely collectors and transmitters, as people once thought, but absolutely original theologians with their own conception of the message- arranged the Jesus narratives and Jesus sayings according to their own plan and at their own discretion... The evangelists- themselves certainly active engaged in missionary work and in catechizing- arranged the traditional texts to suit the needs of their communities. They interpreted them in the light of the Easter events, expanded them and adapted them where they thought it necessary. Hence, despite all their common features, the different Gospels each acquired a different profile of the one Jesus."<sup>50</sup>

John Hick puts the point in a nutshell: "None of the writers was an eye-witness of the life that they depict. The Gospels are secondary and tertiary portraits dependent on oral and written traditions which had developed over a number of decades, the original first-hand memories of Jesus being variously preserved, winnowed, developed, distorted, magnified and overlaid through the interplay of many factors including the universal tendency increasingly to exalt one's leader-figure, the delight of the ancient world in the marvelous, opposition to the mainstream of Judaism from which the church had now been separated, an intensification of faith under persecution, factional polemics within different streams of the Christian community itself, and a policy of presenting events in Jesus' life as fulfillments of ancient prophecy or as exemplifying accepted religious themes."<sup>51</sup> Clearly, argues Hick, "the attempt to form a picture of the life that lay forty to sixty or seventy years behind the written Gospels cannot yield a great deal in the way of fully assured results."<sup>52</sup> Howard Kee observes, that unlike our times the historians and writers of the first century, "were not interested simply in reporting events of the past, but saw their role as providing the meaning of those past events for readers in the present."<sup>53</sup> Therefore, during these sixty years or so, the Gospels were developed, in the words of Paula Fredricksen, "from oral to written; from Aramaic to Greek; from the End of time to the middle of time; from Jewish to Gentile; from Galilee and Judea to the Empire..."<sup>54</sup>

From the facts like these of oral transmission, Easter experience, missionary zeal, and compilation of Jesus's sayings after a period of 30 to 60 years, many modern scholars doubt the authenticity and integrity of most of the New Testament books. Ernst Kaesemann argues, that "the individual sayings and stories it must be said that from their first appearance they were used in the service of the community's preaching and were indeed preserved for the very reason. It was not historical but kerygmatic interest which handed them on. From this standpoint it becomes comprehensible that this tradition, or at least the overwhelming mass of it, cannot be called authentic. Only a few words of the Sermon on the Mount and of the conflict with the Pharisees, a number of parables, and some scattered material of various kinds go back with any real degree of probability to the Jesus of history...The preaching about him has almost entirely supplanted his own preaching, as can be seen most clearly of all in the completely unhistorical Gospel of John."<sup>55</sup> John Hick claims that, "The identifiable consensus begins with a distinction between the historical Jesus of Nazareth and the post-Easter development of the church's mingled memories and interpretations of him. And it is a basic premise of modern New Testament scholarship that we have access to the former only through the latter."<sup>56</sup>

G. Zuntz has observed that people of the old times had a different attitude towards the text of an author, an attitude altogether different from that of ours in the modern times: "an attitude of mind almost the opposite of that which, at the time, prevailed among Christians of all classes and all denominations. The common respect for the sacredness of the Word, with them, was not an incentive to preserve the text in its original purity. On the contrary, the strange fact has long since been observed that devotion to the founder and His apostles did not prevent the Christians of that age from interfering with their transmitted utterances. The reliance of the believers upon the continuing action of the Spirit easily led them to regard the letter less highly; the two appeared to be at variance, the urge to interpolate what was felt to be true was not always resisted."<sup>57</sup> Bultmann has claimed that the early Church did neither perceive nor make a distinction between the pre-Easter sayings of Jesus and the post-Easter utterances of Christian prophets which were accepted as the words of the Risen Lord and were, sometimes intentionally and others unintentionally, retrojected into Jesus' mouth or into settings in Jesus' earthly life.<sup>58</sup> Martin Dibelius has discussed the issue in detail.<sup>59</sup> M.E. Boring has made a case that a substantial number of early Christian prophet's sayings found their way into Synoptic Gospels.<sup>60</sup> H. Boers argues that, "The question of whether a particular saying was actually pronounced by Jesus is not only impossible to answer but, from the point of view of the developing Christian religion, irrelevant. What was important about Jesus for the developing Christian religion was not so much the concrete facts of his life but the impact he had made on his followers, as reflected in the tradition of his life and teachings and in the legends of his birth and childhood."<sup>61</sup> Thus, in the opinion of scholars like Boring and Boers, there was a great chasm fixed between what Jesus viewed and presented himself and the way early church interpreted him as Christ, Lord, or Son of God. It is possible then to perceive that these books are merely interpretations of the Christ event and do not give us the exact and accurate information about what Jesus preached about himself and what he really was. Therefore, to H. Conzelmann, "The historical and substantive presupposition for modern research into the life of Jesus is emancipation from traditional Christological dogma on the basis of the principle of reason."<sup>62</sup>

On the other hand, there are scholars who view the matter differently. To them, the early Christians were no innovators. I. H. Marshall argues: "It is clear that the basic sayings of Jesus was *modified* both in the tradition and by the Evangelists in order to re-express its significance for new situations; it is by no means obvious that this basic tradition was created by the early church. Similarly, it is unlikely that the stories about Jesus and the narrative setting for his teaching are [all] products of the church's *Sitz im Leben*. The fact that such material was found to be congenial for use in the church's situation is no proof it was created for this purpose."<sup>63</sup> Richard A. Burridge, who has carefully discussed the biographical genre of the Gospels by comparing it with the other forms of biographies from the Graeco-Roman world,<sup>64</sup> argues that "If the early church had not been interested in the person and earthly life of Jesus, it would not have produced *Bioi*, with their narrative structure and chronological framework, but discourses of the risen Christ, like the Gnostic 'gospels', instead."<sup>65</sup> Bilezikian argues that "the very existence of the Gospel, and that of Matthew and Luke after Mark, bears witness to the importance attached to the historical Jesus by the early church."<sup>66</sup> Some of these scholars argue that Jesus used various mnemonic devices to make his teachings memorable as well as memorizable.<sup>67</sup> In Jeremias and M. Black's opinion, there had been a relatively fixed Aramaic tradition from an early date behind much of Jesus's saying material present in the Gospels, which in the case of Synoptics, seems authentic to Jeremias.



"Nevertheless, we can say in conclusion that the linguistic and stylistic evidence... shows so much faithfulness and such respect towards the tradition of the sayings of Jesus that we are justified in drawing up the following principle of method: In the synoptic tradition it is the inauthenticity, and not the authenticity, of the sayings of Jesus that must be demonstrated."<sup>68</sup> (Many scholars do not share Jeremias's optimism). After discussing the matter at length, Black has concluded: "For the sayings and teachings of Jesus, however, there is little doubt that the bulk of Semitisms are translation phenomena and have arisen in the process of translating and paraphrasing the *verba ipsissima* of Jesus....I have seen no reason to change the conclusions which I reached in my *Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* that an Aramaic tradition (oral or written) lies behind the sayings of Jesus (in the Fourth Gospel as well as the Synoptics)."<sup>69</sup> W. D. Davies has stressed that the Jewish milieu of the earliest traditions and the special reverence that Jesus enjoyed in the community would have made his words and deeds probably exercise a conserving and conservative influence on the tradition.<sup>70</sup> Hengel observed, that "The earliest stage was not the isolated individual tradition, but the elemental wealth of impressions called forth by meteoric appearance of Jesus. Then still during Jesus' lifetime, there began a process of collection which at the same time meant selection and restriction."<sup>71</sup> G. Hughes argued, that "for those who lived as contemporaries with the transmission process, there was a genuine possibility of testing the information given by the writer... over against the traditions, [which are] the public property of the community within which the traditions have been received...; but this implies, in turn, that his [the biblical writer's] picture of Jesus is not at his beck and call but is subject to some degree of historical scrutiny."<sup>72</sup>

Birger Gerhardsson has discussed the issue at length. He argued, that "During the first four centuries of our era the oral Torah tradition of the Jewish rabbis grew enormously. And it was still being handed down orally. If one wonders how it was possible for such a huge body of text material to be preserved and passed on orally, one must consider the rabbis' pedagogical methods and technique employed in oral transmission."<sup>73</sup> He pinpointed methods like memorization, text and commentary, didactic and poetic devices, repetition, recitation and art of writing as instrumental in this aspect.<sup>74</sup> From here he contended that "Jesus taught in parables and logia, in all probability he taught his hearers these texts... Jesus presented *meshalim* for his hearers, and the disciples were the first to memorize them, to ponder them, and to discuss together what they meant."<sup>75</sup> Therefore, he claims, that "there is a historical justification, based on sound historical judgments, for concluding that there is an unbroken path which leads from Jesus' teaching in *meshalim* to the early church's methodical handing on of Jesus texts, a transmission carried on for *its own sake*."<sup>76</sup> On the basis of this background he asserted that, "we are entitled to established one thing: in Paul's time early Christianity is conscious of the fact that it has a *tradition* of its own- including many *traditions*- which the church leaders hand on to the congregations, which the congregations receive, and which they are to guard and live after. In Paul's times there exists a *conscious, deliberate, and programmatic* transmission in the early Church."<sup>77</sup> He also observed that "early Christianity nonetheless had a genuine interest in the past, and a natural feeling for the fact that ancestors and generations before no longer live here on earth... Furthermore, early Christianity had a special reason for being interested in one specific aspect of the past: that which concerned Jesus of Nazareth... they wrote about his work in Israel during an era which lies in the past. It is not true that they give free, concrete expression to their faith in the heavenly Lord, and to their answers "in Christ's Spirit" to contemporary questions, by creating myths about what he says to the

congregations today."<sup>78</sup> Hence, "the early Christians preserved the memory of a distinct segment of past history and feel their dependence on it. Thus the problems of the young Christian congregations have *colored* the material, but not *created* it. This looking back upon Jesus' earthly ministry is an essential factor in the early Christian tradition formation right from the very beginning."<sup>79</sup> He concludes, arguing that, "It thus seems historically very probable that the Jesus traditions in the Gospels have been preserved for us by men both reliable and well informed."<sup>80</sup> He further argued that "one must proceed on the belief that the Synoptic material in principle comes from the earthly Jesus and the disciples who followed him during his ministry, but that one must also do full justice to the fact that this memory material has been marked by the insights and interpretations gradually arrived at by the early Christian teachers."<sup>81</sup>

The space does not allow us to discuss Gerhardsson's thesis in detail. It may suffice to quote E. P. Sanders who has shown that "the Christian tradition-at least in Papias' generation-was not passed down and spread in the systematic manner which Gerhrdsson describes as having taken place in Rabbinic Judaism. In sum, then, we see that there were probably significant differences between the Christian and Jewish method of transmission, although there may also have been significant similarities."<sup>82</sup>

In short, to this group of scholars, the Gospel material is not inauthentic, and there is no great gulf between historical Jesus' sayings and the post-Easter portrayal of him in the Gospels. R. H. Fuller argues, that "the only difference between the message of Jesus and the Church's Kerygma is that Jesus proclaims that *God is about to act* decisively and eschatologically in him, the kerygma proclaims that *God has so acted*."<sup>83</sup> M. de Jonge writes: "Jesus is at the center of all early (and later) Christology. This presupposes some degree of continuity between what he said and did and people's reactions. It also presupposes some continuity between the situation of his followers before Jesus' cross and resurrection and their situation after those events."<sup>84</sup> L. H. Hurtado writes: "a key factor that must be taken into account in understanding the rise of early Christian devotion to Jesus is the pre-Easter ministry of Jesus and its effects upon his followers."<sup>85</sup> Ben Witherington agrees with this point of view, at least in connection with the Synoptics. He concludes: "Thus, the alleged chasm between the speech event of the historical Jesus and the post-Easter speaking about Jesus probably never existed."<sup>86</sup> Though he recognizes that "through the Easter experiences a new horizon of understanding was opened up."<sup>87</sup>

From an historical perspective it may be observed, that there is no proof of any written collection of the original Aramaic sayings of Jesus or any notes or Gospel. E. G. Goodspeed has discussed the matter regarding the original language of the Gospels at length and concluded like many others, that "Certain it is that from the time Christianity really entered the Greek world it instinctively went about recording itself in writing-first letters, and then books."<sup>88</sup> There is also no proof that the disciples took notes of Jesus' sayings, or tried to preserve it verbatim or in any other systematic way such as those used by the rabbinical Judaism. E. P. Sanders has already shown that any such supposition could not be substantiated by historical facts. The sheer fact of different compositions and structures of Jesus' sayings and their early Greek translations demonstrate the validity of the assertion. Martin Dibelius' "From Tradition to Gospels", Bultmann's "History of the Synoptic Tradition", and E.P. Sanders' "The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition" are still useful references to elaborate the point.<sup>89</sup> The earliest Christian literature i.e., Paul's letters, as we

shall see later in the chapter, contain virtually nothing but a very few of Jesus' sayings. Even B. Gerhardsson recognizes that "It is certain that Paul does not quote the earthly Jesus very often in his Epistles, nor does he discuss such material."<sup>90</sup> The Gospel writers are far away from Jesus' own times and wrote at places where Jesus' disciples or contemporaries were virtually absent. The writers acceptance of Jesus as Lord and giving him central position in their writings do not necessarily mean the authenticity of their accounts regarding him. This fact becomes more evident when looked from the perspective of the time distance and the gulf that lies between Jesus and the early Christian writers.

On the other hand, it does not seem plausible that the early Church concocted the entire situation without having any base in the tradition or historical Jesus. Arthur Drews, William B. Smith, and Well's theories of non-existence of Jesus are mere guess works. They are contrary to the genuinely reliable Christian and non-Christian historical writings about the existence of Jesus.<sup>91</sup> The earliest Christian writers, argues C.F.D. Moule, "were probably already heirs to a considerable body of tradition."<sup>92</sup> There were probably oral traditions circulating in the community regarding Jesus' virgin birth, miracles, and preaching. These traditions were selected, colored, modified and added to in light of the Easter experience or kerygma. It may suffice to quote here G. N. Stanton who comments: "Perhaps we will never know *precisely* the influences at work in the earliest christological reflections of the church. To claim that the christological beliefs of the primitive church have not left their mark upon the gospel traditions would be to fly in the face of clear evidence to the contrary. But we may be sure that traditions about the life and character of Jesus played an important part not only in the preaching of the primitive church, but also in its christological reflection: both began with Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>93</sup> It must be added here that the historical Jesus of Nazareth may be the beginning point for the primitive church, but by no means identical to what the church, later on, preached about him. Howard C. Kee probably is right when he observes, that "What we are dealing with in the gospel tradition is not objective historical evidence that has become overlaid with the claims of Christian faith, but with the evidence that in its entirety stems from the witness of faith at various stages of development."<sup>94</sup>

In the middle of all these developments, one can try to locate the basic realities connected with the earthly life of Jesus overlaid with kerygmatic interpretations and mythical portrayals. A scholar of the New Testament, who is well versed in the cultural context of these writings and the first century Jewish and Hellenistic thought, can possibly determine these facts by peeling off the mythical layers. In the past scholars used to argue that we knew virtually nothing about the historical Jesus. This kind of trend had been characteristic of the period between 1910-1970, and presently has given way to a more positive approach since then. E. P. Sanders observes that "in recent decades we have grown more confident."<sup>95</sup> J. K. Riches discusses the basis of such a confidence: "What is the basis of such confidence, which is still not shared by all? In the first place it rests on a conviction that we do know that Jesus lived and died and that we know at least certain basic facts about his life with at least as much confidence as we could know similar facts about any other figure in ancient history. Compared with many ancient historians, New Testament scholars are in a relatively fortunate position. The second factor is a greater confidence in our ability to understand Jesus' social world, the world of first-century Judaism and its various renewal movements. This is obviously significant."<sup>96</sup> Sanders claims that now "There are no substantial doubts about the general course of Jesus' life: when and where he lived, approximately

when and where he died, and the sort of thing he did during his public activity."<sup>97</sup> Many modern scholars like Hick, James Dunn, N.T. Wright, J.L. Houlden and Riches would agree with most parts of this description.<sup>98</sup>

This does not mean, however, as Riches warns, that "there is any consensus, either about the way Jesus is to be situated within his Jewish context, or indeed about the most appropriate way of the undertaking the task."<sup>99</sup> Paul Badham explains that "This does not mean that modern scholarship endorses every aspect of the traditional picture of Jesus. Historical and literary criticism constantly reminds us of the inevitable limits of our knowledge as we look back over long centuries. But whereas an earlier generation of scholars tended to say that unless we know something for certain we should not claim to know it at all, the modern view recognizes that uncertainty is present in all historical reconstructions of the past and need be no bar to reasonable confidence in what seems the most probable interpretation of what lies behind the narrative."<sup>100</sup> John Hick reminds us that "Scholars have listed such generally agreed points as that Jesus was a Galilean Jew, son of a woman called Mary; that he was baptized by John the Baptist; that he preached and healed and exorcized; that he called disciples and spoke of there being twelve; that he largely confined his activity to Israel; that he was crucified outside Jerusalem by the Roman authorities; and that after his death his followers continued as an identifiable movement. Beyond this an unavoidable element of conjectural interpretation goes into our mental pictures of Jesus."<sup>101</sup> This tells us how limited our knowledge is about historical Jesus. It may suffice to quote again Howard Kee, who observes that, "Although they [the Gospel writers] did not share the contemporary fondness for facticity, they did believe that the transcendent meaning in one whom they now called Lord and Christ had its point of historical origin in someone whom they or their immediate predecessors in the Christian faith had known, seen, and heard (see 1 John 1:1; Luke 1:2)-a man known as Jesus of Nazareth. Is it Possible that this man, to whom such great deeds and such exalted meaning were attributed, never existed?"<sup>102</sup>

It seems obvious by now to establish the point, that kerygmatic interpretations of the Christ-event are at the very foundation of the Gospels. This orientation, argues Hans Kung, "and peculiar character of the Gospels do not merely render impossible a biography of Jesus. They make any dispassionate, historical interpretation of the texts more difficult. Of course no serious scholar assumes today, as people did at the beginning of Gospel criticism, that the disciples deliberately falsified the story of Jesus. They did not arbitrarily invent his deeds and words. They were simply convinced that they now knew better than in Jesus' lifetime who he really was and what he really signified. Hence they had no hesitation in following the custom of the time and placing everything that had to be said in regard to him under his personal authority: both by putting certain sayings into his mouth and by shaping certain stories in the light of his image as a whole."<sup>103</sup> J. D. Crossan argues, that "The Gospels are neither histories nor biographies even within the ancient tolerances for those genres. They are what they were eventually called, Gospels or good newses, and thereby comes a double warning. "Good" is always such within some individual's or community's opinion or interpretation. And "news" is not a word we usually pluralize again as "newses"."<sup>104</sup>

H. Riesenfeld's arguments of the rigid formulation and careful memorization of early Christian traditions, analogous to that of the Jewish method of that time, does not seem convincing in the

light of a long period of mere oral transmission and the freedom with which material was handled by the earliest Christian community.<sup>105</sup> Stephen Neill observes, that "No one is likely to deny that a tradition which is being handed on by word of mouth will undergo modification. This is bound to happen, unless the tradition has been rigidly formulated, and has been learned by heart with careful safeguards against the intrusion of error. Most of us would, I think, be inclined to agree that, in the story of the coin in the fish's mouth, and of Peter walking on the water in Matthew 14, an element of imaginative enlargement has at some point or other been added to the original tradition. Again, the variation of the forms in which sayings of Jesus appear, as between one Gospel and another, suggests that there was freedom of interpretation, even in this most sacred area of the tradition, which did not demand exact verbal fidelity." Neill continues, "But there is a vast difference between recognition of this kind of flexibility, of this creative working of the community on existing traditions, and the idea that the community simply invented and read back into the life of Jesus things that he had never done, and words that he had never said. When carried to its extreme, this method suggests that the anonymous community had far greater creative power than the Jesus of Nazareth, faith in whom had called the community into being."<sup>106</sup>

Moreover, the theological interests have always played a vital role in the transmission of Christian texts.<sup>107</sup> The first century of transmission is no exception as Helmut Koester observes: "The problems for the reconstruction of the textual history of the canonical Gospels in the first century of transmission are immense.... Textual critics of classical texts know that the first century of their transmission is the period in which the most serious corruptions occurred. Textual critics of the New Testament writings have been surprisingly naive in this respect."<sup>108</sup> Origen, in the Second Century, had to do a great deal of textual criticism. Bigg observes that "He devoted much time and labor to the text of the New Testament, which was already disfigured by corruptions, some arising from the carelessness of scribes, some from the evil licence of emendation, some from arbitrary omissions or interpolations.' Already the records were perverted in numberless passages..."<sup>109</sup> Commenting on theological insertions and forgeries in the text, an expert in church history has concluded that "Under such circumstances the preservation of any authentic texts seems almost miraculous. The needs of dogmatic theology were undisturbed by much historical sense. [By c. 600] they had resulted in distortion of the historical materials on which theology was supposedly built. The absence of any understanding of historical development allowed genuine and false documents to be so thoroughly mixed that they would not be disentangled for more than a millennium."<sup>110</sup> In the opinion of R.L. Fox "A critical history of Christian thought could not possibly begin to have been written until after 1500 because of forgeries by Christians themselves. The same danger besets the New Testament."<sup>111</sup>

If we look at these comments in light of the crucial differences between The Revised Version of the Bible and the King James Version over several theologically important passages such as, 1 John 5:7-8, it becomes evident that the theological interests have caused several insertions into the text of the New Testament after it had been canonized, declared the Divine Scripture and the Word of God. Fox rightly observes that "There is a thin and difficult line between a saying (perhaps largely authentic) which Christians inserted into an existing Gospel and those sayings which a Gospeller ascribed implausibly to Jesus himself."<sup>112</sup> If this has been the situation with the text after it had been declared the Word of God and warnings of severe punishment had been given at the end of the Canon ( in Revelation 22:18-19: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall

add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."), what about oral traditions and their text in the first century when it was not even taken as the Holy Scripture?

In the first century Christian Church, the terms 'Holy Scriptures', the 'Divine Oracles' or the 'Holy Word' were implied only for the Old Testament. The words of Jesus were prefaced with the words "the words of our Lord Jesus" or "the Lord saith". The evident example of this tendency among the first century Christians is that of the so called first Epistle of Clement of Rome. Scholars have shown that it is "an authentic production of the Church of Rome in about A.D. 96."<sup>113</sup> "If this dating and identification are accepted", writes S. Neill, "as they are by almost all scholars today, we are brought even nearer to the world of the New Testament."<sup>114</sup> In this Epistle the writer always alludes to the Old Testament as the Holy Scriptures but, as observes Grant, "never refers to the New Testament writings as scripture."<sup>115</sup> Fox summarizes the situation in the following words: "This anonymous letter twice refers directly to 'words of the Lord Jesus', but neither reference is an exact quotation of a saying found in any one of our Gospels. The author is also unaware of any written New Testament and restrained in his use of scripture. He urged Corinth to consult its epistle from the 'blessed apostle Paul' and apparently alluded elsewhere to other Pauline epistles, as if he already knew them in a collection. He certainly knew our Epistle to the Hebrews, though not its anonymous author. However when he mentioned Paul's Romans 1:29, he continued with quotation from Psalm 50, introduced by the phrase 'For the scripture says...'. It seems that Paul's epistles were not quite the same as scripture in his mind: it is striking that he quotes clusters of sayings from Jesus only twice, whereas he referred over a hundred times to verses in Hebrew scripture. Christianity, for this author, is certainly not yet a 'religion of the book' with its own closed body of texts."<sup>116</sup>

Geisler and Nix disagree with such a depiction of the Epistle of Clement of Rome. They argue, that "This contains several quotations from the New Testament, including the synoptic gospels. His citations are more precise than those attributed to Barnabas, but they still lack modern precision."<sup>117</sup> What Geisler and Nix recognize by "lack of modern precision" is exactly the point raised by the scholars of "form criticism". Concerning the issue of precision, John Ferguson observes even about Clement of Alexandria, that "He turns next to New Testament and can still startle us by throwing in a phrase from Homer in the middle of his scriptural citations."<sup>118</sup>

The earliest Christian writings are that of St. Paul as Bornkamm and others have shown.<sup>119</sup> Bornkamm argues, that "All the letters, without exception, were composed towards the end of his career and within a relatively short span of time. They cover a period of no more than six or seven years when he worked as a missionary before being taken prisoner on his last visit to Jerusalem (ca. A.D. 56-57), after which he probably died a martyr's death in Rome in the early sixties, during the reign of Nero."<sup>120</sup> A. Schweitzer observes that for these letters "we have to place a period of about twelve years, which are probably the years A.D. 52-64, but possibly from 50-62, if not still earlier."<sup>121</sup> Modern scholarship agrees with dating genuine Pauline letters between 49-62 as T.G.A. Baker has shown.<sup>122</sup>

It is interesting to note that in his writings, Paul is quite silent about the historical settings which seem to be fundamental to the whole gospel narrative of Jesus' life and he does not quote from Jesus but once. H. Anderson rightly observes that "if Paul were our only source, we would know nothing of Jesus' parables, the Sermon on the Mount, or the Lord's prayer."<sup>123</sup> Victor P. Furnish observes that "It is striking, however, how little use the apostle actually makes of Jesus' teachings. For example, he invokes none of the parables which later on were given such prominence in the Synoptic Gospels. Moreover, he has very little to say about the Reign of God, even though that is fundamental theme in both the sayings and parable traditions. True, not all of Paul's letters have survived, and we have no transcripts of his actual preaching. Yet the sources we do have probably give us an accurate picture... Paul focuses his attention neither on the teachings of Jesus nor on Jesus' Palestinian ministry. His attention is focused, rather, on Jesus the crucified Messiah and the risen Lord."<sup>124</sup> John Hick observes that "Paul fits Jesus into his own theology without little regard to the historical figure."<sup>125</sup>

Burridge, on the other hand, argues that "Because Paul says little about the person of Jesus in his epistles does not necessarily mean that he was not interested in his earthly ministry; it might be because he is writing epistles and not *Bioi*."<sup>126</sup> It is beyond the scope of this treatise to discuss how far the Gospels could be treated as the *Bioi*. Whatever the case, it highlights the fact that the parables, sayings of Jesus or the Gospels were neither transmitted in a rigid, organized or systematic method nor written or accepted as the Holy Scriptures in the Christian circles of the middle first century. This complete silence on the part of Paul, observes Grasser, "is an unexplained riddle."<sup>127</sup> Francois Bovon argues that "We must learn to consider the gospels of the New Testament canon, in the form in which they existed before 180 C.E., in the same light in which we consider the apocrypha. At this earlier time the gospels were what the apocrypha never ceased to be. Like the apocrypha, the gospels of the New Testament were not yet canonical; they did not circulate together [for example, only Luke and John are present in Papyrus 45], and when they did, they did not always appear in the same sequence [for example, the order Matthew, John, Luke, Mark in Codex Bezae]."<sup>128</sup>

The Gospel's composition and collection were not the end of oral tradition of Jesus' sayings.<sup>129</sup> It can be traced until well into the second century, in the Apostolic Fathers, and perhaps in Justin, who of course knew and used gospel writings. M. Wiles observes that "For a long time, even after many of the New Testament writings had been written, the method of oral transmission continued to be regarded as the basic way in which the substance of the Christian Gospel was to be learned and passed on. Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor in the first half of the second century, is not unrepresentative of his age in preferring to the written record of books a living and abiding voice, a continuous chain of remembered teaching which could be traced back to 'the commandments given by the Lord to faith, and reaching us from the Truth himself'. The overall picture to be found in the writings of Justin Martyr and the other apologists contemporary with him is fundamentally similar; their conception of Christianity is the teaching of Jesus spreading its way around the world through the medium of the preaching first of the apostles and then of those who came after them."<sup>130</sup> Papias of Heirapolis (about 130-140), who has been credited with being the author of "*Exposition of the Lord's Oracles*" which "survives in fragments only",<sup>131</sup> states what is thought to be a classical example of the continued exaltation of oral tradition: "I did not think that I could get so much from the contents of books as from the utterances of the

living and abiding voice."<sup>132</sup> In short "the general illiteracy of the first Christians, the expectation of an imminent parousia, and the high regard for Spirit-inspired prophetic utterance together ensured that the first generation of Christians would be itinerant, charismatic-type prophetic figures rather than scholarly authors of written works. Their social circumstances and their activity mutually served to prevent their producing written works."<sup>133</sup>

When the Gospel literature started to be compiled, it was perhaps Mark who took the initiative.<sup>134</sup> In fact, observes Burrige, "out of 661 verses in Mark's gospel, around 90 per cent occur in Matthew too, and about half are also in Luke."<sup>135</sup> The old hypothesis that Mark made use of Matthew and Luke was challenged by Lachmann in 1835 in his article on "*De Ordine Narrationum in Evangeliiis Synoptics*" "*The Order of the Narration of Events in the Synoptic Gospels*".<sup>136</sup> Hermann Weisse (1801-66) furthered it by two acutely penetrating remarks i.e., the fuller account of various events in Mark than that in Matthew and Luke and Mark's addition of vivid touches. He further observed that Matthew and Luke must have made use of another written collection of Jesus' sayings from which much of the material common between them was derived. Here, in Weisse, S. Neill finds, "in embryo the 'Two-Source' theory of composition of the Gospels, which at the end of the century was to hold the field."<sup>137</sup> B. H. Streeter (1874-1937) developed a "Four-document" theory of the origins of the Gospels. He argued that "It is assumed that a hypothesis which reduces the number of sources to a minimum is more scientific... But a plurality of sources is historically more probable. In particular, if Mark is the old Roman Gospel, it is antecedently to be expected that the other Gospels conserve the specific traditions of Jerusalem, Caesarea and Antioch."<sup>138</sup>

By the end of the century the priority of Mark and of the "Two-source" theory was looked as the assured results of the critical approach to the New Testament and, in the words of Riches, "the investment of the discipline as a whole in the hypothesis is enormous: any attempts to replace it with an alternative view meet with sustained opposition and, to date, little success."<sup>139</sup> By 1919 Martin Dibelius could write "the two-source theory is better able than any other to explain the synoptic problem."<sup>140</sup> Burrige observes that "the current consensus among gospel scholars about the complex overlapping between the gospels is that Mark wrote first; Matthew and Luke used Mark and another source, 'Q', plus their own material; and that John was written independently of the other three, probably last of all."<sup>141</sup> It is worth mentioning here E.P. Sanders' words of caution who argues that "The evidence does not seem to warrant the degree of certainty with which many scholars hold the two-document hypothesis."<sup>142</sup> Mark is said to have been written shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem between the years 65 and 75 A.D. as Baker contends<sup>143</sup> or by the end of the seventies as Crossan argues;<sup>144</sup> Matthew around 90 A.D. and Luke as early as nineties, most probably A.D. 85<sup>145</sup> (both after the destruction).<sup>146</sup> By comparison with the Synoptics, the Gospel of John, observes Hans Kung, "has a completely different character in both the literary and theological sense... Undoubtedly too it was the last Gospel to be written (as David Friedrich Strauss discovered early in the nineteenth century). It could have been written about the year 100."<sup>147</sup> The earliest extant fragment, argues Crossan, "of John is dated to about 125. C.E."<sup>148</sup>

In addition to late compilation of the Gospels, when the Christian literature started to be compiled it was not only the books later regarded as canonical that were in circulation or accepted as authoritative. Luke's beginning verse pinpoints the situation. "Forasmuch as many have taken in



hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent The-oph-i-lus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed." (Lk. 1:1-4) There were quite a few other gospels, like the Gospel of the Hebrews which according to Jerome, some called it "the true Matthew", the Gospel According to the Egyptians, the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of Thomas<sup>149</sup> and the Gospel of Philip, The Gospel of the Ebionites, and others,<sup>150</sup> which were in circulation too. Helmut Koester summarized the situation in the following words: "the number of gospels in circulation must have been much larger, at least a good dozen of which we at least have some pieces, and everybody could and did rewrite, edit, revise, and combine, however he saw fit."<sup>151</sup> Some of these Gospels were frequently quoted by the early fathers like Clement and Papias and were later declared Apocryphal or unlawful. Fox observes that "At the turn of the century, the Christian intellectual Clement of Alexandria still cited the Gospel of the Egyptians and interpreted a saying of Jesus from it, although he knew very well that it was not one of four."<sup>152</sup>

On the whole, then, it can be stated that during the first half of the second century, the four Gospels of our present New Testament and other Christian literature like Paul's epistles were there, but the idea of a close canon or New Testament was not present. No doubt the traces of the idea of a Christian Scripture steadily became clearer during this period and the presuppositions of the formation of the canon can be evaluated. But the crystal clear idea of the Christian canon was not the work of orthodoxy but a reaction and response to the pressure of heretics like Marcion, Montanists and Gnostics and their heretical teachings. As B. M. Metzger observed: "Various external circumstances assisted in the process of canonization of the New Testament books. The emergence of heretical sects having their own sacred books made it imperative for the church to determine the limits of the canon."<sup>153</sup>

The great majority of New Testament scholars, especially since the last century (after the works of D. de Bruyne and A. von Harnack were published), have argued that Marcion was responsible for creating the canon. Marcion in his book 'Antitheses' contrasted his own ethical dualism (as has been discussed earlier in chapter 2), as based on New Testament texts, with other New Testament texts and with passages from the Old Testament. He rejected the Old Testament altogether and set up a list of writings to be recognized as Scripture by his followers. It was comprised of a form of the Gospel of Luke and 10 of the Pauline Epistles (excluding the three Pastoral Epistles). The mainstream Church could not accept this short canon and as a reaction was forced to define more carefully the list of books that it recognized as Divine Scriptures.

J.N.D. Kelly, on the other hand, disagrees with Harnack and others by observing that "The significance of Marcion's action should not be misunderstood. He has sometimes been acclaimed (e.g. by the great German scholar Harnack) as the originator of the Catholic canon, but this is an extravagant point of view. The Church already had its roughly defined collection, or (to be more precise) collections, of Christian books which, as we have seen, it was beginning to treat as Scripture. The Lord's sayings, as the use of them by St. Paul and the early fathers testifies, had been treasured from the beginning, and about 150 we find Justin familiar with all four gospels (the 'memoirs of the apostles', as he calls them), and mentioning their use in the weekly service.

If it is too much to say that they already formed a corpus, they were well on the way to doing so...Ignatius, for example, states that the Apostle makes mention of the Ephesians 'in every letter'; and Polycarp's citations from them indicate that such a collection existed at Smyrna. There are numerous apparent echoes of them in Clement which perhaps indicate that he was acquainted with the nucleus of one as early as 95. It is altogether more probable, therefore, that when he formulated his *Apostolicum*, as when he singled out the Third Gospel, Marcion was revising a list of books currently in use in the Church than proposing such a list for the first time."<sup>154</sup> Professor Kelly fails to prove the point in discussion i.e., the Church's own initiative in canonizing the Christian books with the exclusion of many others. Moreover, he himself recognizes the fact by observing: "Nevertheless, if the idea of a specifically Christian canon was deeply rooted in the Church's own convictions and practice, Marcion played an important part in the practical emergence of one. What none of the great ecclesiastical centers, so far as we know, had done, and what his initiative seems to have provoked them to do, was to delimit their lists of authorized Christian books in a public, official way. The influence of Montanism...worked in the same direction."<sup>155</sup>

Furthermore, as already observed by Kelly, the Montanist controversy<sup>156</sup> of the "Spirit" was another factor in narrowing down the list of divine writings. In the early Christian congregations the Spirit had been accorded a central role. When the Montanists tried to exploit this belief in the Spirit to rationalize some of their extravagant assertions, the Church emphasized the authority of the written Word (the Scriptures) to counter them.

A decisive element in the canonization process of the New Testament was the combat during the second century with another group called 'Gnostics'. This group claimed to have a special knowledge of what Jesus really taught. They asserted that the ordinary Christian teachings were what Jesus and the disciples had taught publicly. They have what Jesus taught his close associates in private. To refute their claims and occult teachings, the Church focused on the sacred writings and their apostolic authority.

The first list which has come down to us from the Church is what is called "Muratorian" fragment, in Kelly's words "Late second century in date and authoritative in tone".<sup>157</sup> It was previously thought of as a second century Western text and is nowadays thought to represent a fourth-century Eastern text. It was first published by Milanese scholar L. A. Muratori (1672-1750) in 1740.<sup>158</sup> From this and other ancient manuscripts like Codex Alexandrinus, the Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, it becomes manifest that until the third and fourth century, the limits of the canon were regarded by all as fluid. These old manuscripts included in their New Testament some works like Hermas' "The Shepherd" and the "Epistle of Barnabas" which are no more a part of our present New Testament, while omitting some of the canonical ones like Epistles of James, the Epistles of Peter and the Hebrews. Eusebius of Caesarea (d.340) who is important as a witness to the state of canon in various Christian communities, classified the Christian writings into three categories. (1) *Homologoumena* "agreed upon" i.e. books universally accepted. These were the four Gospels, Acts, a fourteen-item Pauline corpus, 1 Peter, 1 John, and "if it seems correct," Revelation; (2) *Antilegomena* "the disputed" i.e. the books whose canonicity is disputed. Under this he lists five of the seven Catholic Epistles i.e. Epistle of James, Jude, second Epistle of Peter

and the second and third Epistles of John. These are accepted by the majority and rejected by a minority. A subset of the "disputed" ones is not accepted by the majority. They are the Acts of Paul, the Apocalypse of Peter, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Letter of Barnabas, the Didache and "if it seems correct" Revelation; (3) *The atopa pante kai dusebe*, "the altogether absurd and impious works". Most of the apocryphal gospels are listed under this category.<sup>159</sup> It was Athanasius's Easter letter of 367 that settled the discussion of the internal limits of the New Testament canon within the Eastern church yet not with absolute success. In the fourth century Hebrews was generally accepted in the East and rejected in the West. The Apocalypse was generally accepted in the West and rejected in the East.

The canon in the West was closed in the fifth century under the influence of St. Augustine and Jerome. For the Greek church in the East the question was settled by Constantine. He ordered Eusebius to prepare 50 copies of the Scriptures to be used in the new capital. In this way the 27 New Testament books included in these copies obtained a semi-official recognition. The Syrian church still had some reservations about 2 Peter, 2-3 John, Jude, and Revelation. The fifth-century Syrian Jacobite manuscript Peshitta contained only 22 books. In the sixth and seventh century the influence of the Vulgate and Constantinople prevailed and all 27 books of New Testament were recognized in the church. The Western Syrian Bible of the sixth and seventh century, the Philoxenian and Harklian versions, contained the same twenty-seven books accepted in the East as well as in the West though the Eastern Syrian Church, observes Metzger, "having lost contact with the rest of Christendom, continued much longer to hold to the shorter canon."<sup>160</sup>

Though the issue of New Testament canon was settled in the fifth century, Eusebius's distinction between "*homologomena*" and "*antilegomena*" did not disappear completely from the Church. During the middle ages Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles except 1 Peter and 1 John were still the subject of some controversy. Luther, for instance, severely censured Hebrews, Jude, 2 Peter and called James "a straw epistle". He relegated some other canonical books to second place. In spite of these differences, all the Catholic as well as Protestant New Testament copies contain all 27 canonical writings.

It is important to note here with Kelly that "The main point to be observed is that the fixation of the finally agreed list of books, and of the order in which they were to be arranged, was the result of a very gradual process...By gradual stages, however, the Church both in East and West arrived at a common mind as its sacred books. The first official document which prescribes the twenty-seven books of our New Testament as alone canonical is Athanasius's Easter Letter for the year 367, but the process was not everywhere complete until at least a century and a half later."<sup>161</sup> Now when we read the New Testament as a book we are reading, as R.L. Fox puts it, "a list of books which some of the Christian's bishops approved and asserted more than three hundred years after Jesus's death...Three centuries are a very long time: do these late listings really create a unity with such an authority that it directs our understanding?"<sup>162</sup> Obviously, it would be implausible to cite the protection, guidance and comforting work of the Holy Spirit to the exclusion of human beings with all their human limitations behind the very letters of the New Testament books. Fox argues that "Even an atheist can see the difference between one of the turgid or most sectarian alternative Gospels and one of the recognized four: as for the others, even early Christians who respected our four could quote sayings from some of the other Gospels too. As for the

rest of the New Testament, it was never agreed definitively, unless the entire Syriac, Ethiopic and Greek Orthodox Churches are disqualified from a share in the Holy Spirit, along with the bulk of those Christians who wrote in Greek throughout the first seven centuries of Church history and made such subtle contributions to Christian theology."<sup>163</sup>

Therefore, the only solid conclusion one could reach is that the authors, compilers, and canonizers were after all just human beings. In addition, it is pertinent to note here with S. Neill that "Whatever view we may hold of the inspiration of the New Testament, we are bound to admit that it has been immune from none of the chances, the perils, and the corruption's which have assailed all other manuscript traditions of similar length."<sup>164</sup> He further argues that "In regard to the text of almost all ancient authors this is certain that none of them presents what the author himself can possibly have written...We cannot rule out the possibility that the same may be true of the New Testament, and that in certain passages, which are likely to be very few, nothing but the inspired guesswork will take us back to the original."<sup>165</sup> Just the expressions Canonical writings or Canon of Scriptures, in the words of Matthew Arnold, "recall a time when degrees of value were still felt, and all parts of the Bible did not stand on the same footing, and were not taken equally. There was a time when books were read as part of the Bible which are no Bible now; there was a time when books which are in every Bible now, were by many disallowed as genuine parts of the Bible... And so far from their finally getting where they now are after a through trial of their claims, and with indisputable propriety, they got placed there by the force of circumstances, by chance or by routine, rather than on their merits."<sup>166</sup> It is not that once the Canon was established no body had any problems with it. But "the whole discussion died out, not because the matter was sifted and settled and a perfect Canon of Scripture deliberately formed; it died out as medieval ignorance deepened, and because there was no longer knowledge or criticism enough left in the world to keep such a discussion alive."<sup>167</sup>

Since the eighteenth century onward, the discussion has once again been made alive, though its emphasis and tone is a little different.

### **Contemporary Christian Standpoint:**

Christians are divided on the issue of their Scripture's origin and authority. Some Christians, particularly in some Evangelical traditions, advocate infallibility, inerrancy and verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. Their logic is palpable. If God is the Omniscient, the Omnipresent, the Omnipotent and is the author of the scriptural text, then it follows that the text be free of mistakes and errors whether in content or form. If it is found to contain some errors, through some unintentional or indiscernible will of its authors, it remains problematic that the Omniscient and Omnipotent God should be content to allow errors to have come to existence in His written work.

According to B.B. Warfield, one of the staunch exponents of Scriptural Inerrancy, scriptures are, "not as man's report to us of what God says, but as the very Word of God itself, spoken by God himself through human lips and pens."<sup>168</sup> He further argues that each word of the text is "at one and the same time the consciously self-chosen word of the writer and the divinely-inspired word of the Spirit."<sup>169</sup>

Therefore, according to the 1978 International Conference on Biblical Inerrancy, whose roughly 300 attendees drafted "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy", "Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teachings, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives."<sup>170</sup> G.L. Archer is more specific when he states that "We must therefore conclude that any event or fact related in Scripture - whether it pertains to doctrine, science, or history - is to be accepted by the Christian as totally reliable and trustworthy, no matter what modern scientists or philosophers may think of it."<sup>171</sup>

Such Evangelists are often called, "Fundamentalist" and hold that the Scriptures should be understood literally. O.B. Greene, for instance, argues: "Jesus dies a literal death. He was buried - not figuratively or spiritually, but literally, in a literal tomb. And He literally rose again - bodily, as He had declared He would and it had been prophesied."<sup>172</sup>

The literal reading of the Scriptures or in the words of Henry "the literal truth of an inerrant Bible" is often emphasized but not followed all the time. There is a common tendency to interpret the text in a way to fit a presupposed scheme, theology or eschatology leading sometimes to a "full-scale exegetical exploitation."<sup>173</sup>

Furthermore, the Scriptures should be accepted in totality, otherwise it would cast doubts to its authority and absolute truthfulness in the matters fundamental to the Christian faith. If Paul, argues Francis Schaeffer, "is wrong in this factual statement about Eve's coming from Adam [ 1 Cor. 11:8 ], there is no reason to have certainty in the authority of any New Testament factual statement, including the factual statement that Christ rose physically from the dead."<sup>174</sup> Therefore any criticism of its text or belief in limited or "virtual" inerrancy would be appalling in that it not only negates the Scripture's self-testimony, but because it appears to cast doubts about the pivotal doctrine of the Christian faith and the perfect knowledge and authority of Jesus. J.I. Packer observes that "Christ does not judge Scripture; He obeys it and fulfills it. By word and deed He endorses the authority of the whole of it. Certainly, He is the final authority for Christians; that is precisely why Christians are bound to acknowledge the authority of Scripture. Christ teaches them to do so."<sup>175</sup>

In short, the fundamentalists prove inerrancy and plenary inspiration by appealing to the character of its witnesses, "We believe this doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures primarily because it is the doctrine which Christ and his apostles believed, and which they have taught us." The church history and tradition is a witness as says Gaussens, "With the single exception of the Theodore of Mopsuestia...it has been found impossible to produce, in the long course of the first eight centuries of Christianity, a single doctor who has disowned the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, unless it be in the bosom of the most violent heresies that have tormented the Christian Church."<sup>176</sup> This point is supported by what J.N.D. Kelly observes: "It goes without saying that the fathers envisaged the whole of the Bible as inspired. It was not a collection of disparate segments, some of divine origin and others of merely human fabrication. Irenaeus, for example, is not surprised at its frequent obscurity, 'seeing it is spiritual in its entirety'; while Gregory of Nyssa understands St. Paul to imply that everything contained in Scripture is the deliver-

ance of the Holy Spirit. Even Theodore of Mopsuestia, who distinguished between the special inspiration of the prophets and the inferior grace of 'prudence' granted to Solomon, was not really an exception, for he was satisfied that all the authors of both the Testaments wrote under the influence of one and the same Spirit. Origen, indeed, and Gregory of Nazianzus after him, could perceive the activity of wisdom in the most trifling verbal minutiae, even in the solecisms, of the sacred books." Kelly further observes that, "This attitude was fairly widespread, and although some of the fathers elaborated it more than others, their general view was that Scripture was not only exempt from error but contained nothing that was superfluous. 'There is not one jot or tittle', declared Origen, 'written in the Bible which does not accomplish its special work for those capable of using it.' In similar vein Jerome stated that 'in the divine Scriptures every word, syllable, accent and point is packed with meaning'; those who slighted the commonplace contents of *Philemon* were simply failing, through ignorance, to appreciate the power and wisdom they concealed. According to Chrysostom, even the chronological figures and the catalogues of names included in Scripture have their profound value; and he devoted two homilies to the salutations in *Romans 16* in the hope of convincing his auditors that treasures of wisdom lie hid in every word spoken by the Spirit."<sup>177</sup> Kelly concludes that with the exception of Augustine and Theodore "The majority were content to accept the fact of the inspiration of the sacred writers, without examining further the manner or the degree of its impact upon them."<sup>178</sup>

However such a claim may be anachronistic for according to Canon Charles Smyth "nobody really believed in the verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures until the geologists began to question it in the nineteenth century."<sup>179</sup> The Scriptures are not infallible and inerrant Word of God containing absolute truth about every thing in the world. They are records of God's revelation and good for Christian faith. Long before modern times St. Augustine commented " We do not read in the Gospel of the Lord's having said: I send you a Comforter to teach you about the course of the sun and moon. What he sought to produce was Christians, not astronomers."<sup>180</sup> Augustine further analyzed the prophetic vision into three principal categories i.e. corporal, spiritual and intellectual.<sup>181</sup> Writing about the scriptural depiction of the paradise of Eden St. Augustine observed: "a number of interpreters give a symbolic meaning to the whole of that paradise, in which dwelt the first parents of mankind, according to the truthful narrative of holy Scripture. They give a spiritual reference to those fruit-bearing trees, and the others, turning them into symbols of virtues and moral qualities. They take it for granted that those were not visible and material objects, but were thus described in speech or writing to stand for spiritual and moral truths."<sup>182</sup> Augustine approves this line of approach to the Scriptures by arguing that "This is the kind of thing that can be said by way of allegorical interpretation of paradise; and there may be other more valuable lines of interpretation. There is no prohibition against such exegesis, provided that we also believe in the truth of the story as a faithful record of historical fact."<sup>183</sup> The Christian history is replete with allegorical interpretations of the Scriptures as we have already seen in the previous chapter.

Modern Christian response to the Scriptures has taken so many forms that it cannot be surveyed here at this point. One of the most frequently discussed responses is that of Rudolf Bultmann.

To Bultmann the New Testament cosmology is "essentially mythical in character."<sup>184</sup> Its world view and the event of 'redemption' which is subject of its preaching is obsolete. A "blind accep-

tance of the New Testament mythology would be arbitrary, and to press for its acceptance as an article of faith would be to reduce faith to works."<sup>185</sup> Modern man's knowledge and mastery of the world has advanced to such an extent that he is no more interested in this pre-scientific and mythical eschatology, "Man's knowledge and mastery of the world have advanced to such an extent through science and technology that it is no longer possible for anyone seriously to hold the New Testament view of the world- in fact there is no one who does."<sup>186</sup> If the Christians want to save the truth and message of the New Testament "the only way is to demythologize it."<sup>187</sup> The New Testament itself invites such a revolutionary process, "the principal demand for the criticism of mythology comes from a curious contradiction which runs right through the New Testament."<sup>188</sup>

The demythologization of the Scriptures can be achieved only through "an existentialist interpretation" of the New Testament. Bultmann and his school have given a great deal of thought to hermeneutics and scriptural interpretation. They believe that the Christian Gospel is the proclamation of something God has done once for all in the early decades of our era. That kerygma, as Bultmann calls it, of the New Testament can be made fully intelligible and acceptable today once interpreted by appropriate hermeneutic techniques apart from mythology. This kerygma will offer "man an understanding of himself which will challenge him to a genuine existential decision."<sup>189</sup>

The scholars following the existential approach view the Scriptures as the unique place where the believer encounters the Word of God. To them only the Christ is the Word of God and the Scriptures are fallible, finite and human witness/response to Christ. The Scriptures become the Word of God only because God uses them to reveal Himself. The spoken word, says Brunner, "is an indirect revelation when it bears witness to the real revelation: Jesus Christ, the personal self-manifestation of God, Emmanuel."<sup>190</sup> Therefore, the "Scriptures- first of all the testimony of the Apostle to Christ- is the "crib wherein Christ lieth" (Luther). It is a "word" inspired by the Spirit of God ; yet at the same time it is a human message; its "human character" means that it is colored by the frailty and imperfection of all that is human."<sup>191</sup> This question remains unanswered: how in the world is anyone going to know the true "Word of God" while the sole source of information about the Word i.e. the Scripture is imperfect and unauthentic. How could it be that the Holy Spirit or the Divine Providence preserved and guarded the text and truths of certain parts of the Scriptures and let the others be suffered and disfigured by imperfect human beings?

For Paul Tillich the Scripture is less revelation itself than record of revelation; revelation takes place in a dialectical encounter between God and man. The Scriptural text is the report of such an encounter. "The Bible is a document of the divine self-manifestation and of the way in which human beings have received it...The basic error of fundamentalism is that it overlooks the contribution of the receptive side in revelatory situation and consequently identifies one individual and conditioned form of receiving the divine with the divine itself."<sup>192</sup> The question remains still unanswered. What are the other forms and ways of receiving the divine and how authentic and objective are they? Would they not lead us to sheer subjectivity? What would be the methods and tools of verifying the authenticity and rationality of such forms or claims?

Liberal Christians seem to answer many of these questions by not believing in the literal doctrine of divine dictation of the Scriptures. For them the Scriptures are an outstanding expression of man's hopes, aspirations and fears. The authors of these so called 'sacred' books were mere human beings whose thought patterns were influenced and conditioned by their cultural limitations. Therefore, the liberals may disagree with the Biblical authors even in religious matter if they deem that modern time and understanding demands so.

D. Nineham, for instance, argues that as soon as "we look closely at individual New Testament writers and the way they articulate their feelings and their understanding of the new situation, the element of variety and strangeness become much more apparent, and it becomes clear that the variety derives from the fact that the writers have come from a variety of backgrounds, each with its own mythology and terminology, each dominated by its distinctive religious outlook, fears and aspirations."<sup>193</sup> They were not infallible stenographers putting into writing whatever God dictated to them or whatever the Spirit inspired them. They were "at best honest, but simple-minded and ill-educated, primitives",<sup>194</sup> who were trying to make some sense out of the unusual event of Christ. Their account of Christ's event is not the inerrant Word of God but it is "precisely history and story- history embedded in a context of interpretative story."<sup>195</sup> The "story" was not critically examined in the previous generations because, as says C.S. Lewis, the Middle Ages were "the ages of authority", and he goes on, "if their culture is regarded as a response to environment, then the element in that environment to which it responded more vigorously were manuscript. Every writer if he possibly can, bases himself on an earlier writer, follows an auctor: preferably a Latin one. This is one of the things that differentiates that period...from our modern civilization."<sup>196</sup>

To tell the same story is the "embarrassment of the modern scholar"<sup>197</sup> because it lacks "consistency appropriate to unified dogmatic theory."<sup>198</sup> Therefore, Dennis Nineham advises the Christians to approach the Scriptures "in an altogether more relaxed spirit, not anxiously asking ' what has it to say to me immediately?, but distancing it, allowing fully for its 'pastness', accepting it without anxiety as an ancient story about God and the world, told by people who regarded the world as a phenomenon of at most some five thousand year's duration and believed in God's constant saving interventions in its affairs from creation day to Doomsday."<sup>199</sup> It is no more a 'sacred' book and Christians should not feel guilty about it. Fr. William writes, that "The discarding of the old bottle and the provision of the new has been interpreted by some Christians as a denial that there is any wine at all. That is because they have imagined that God can be contained within the limits of a definition as though wireless waves were identical with a certain type of receiving set."<sup>200</sup> The question is worth being repeated again. If the wireless waves are not fully transmitted and authentically communicated through the receiving set, what else is there to authentically inform us and appropriately convey to us the nature and function of the waves and how could we benefit from such a source of communication? Discarding the old bottle is quite different from discarding the only bottle available.

In short, according to Nineham, "Liturgists, quite as much as dogmatic theologians, need to free themselves from what has rightly been called ' the curse of the canon'." <sup>201</sup>



Richard Swinburne's approach is quite interesting. He agrees with many, that we cannot take the Bible literally. He observes: "Of course if we are misguided enough to interpret the Bible in terms of the 'original meaning' of the text, that the original meaning is often false: there is scientific, historical, moral, and theological falsity in the Bible, if it is so interpreted. This evident fact led many liberal-minded theologians of the twentieth century to cease to talk of the Bible being 'true', but to speak rather of it being 'useful' or 'insightful' if read in accord with some rule or other of interpretation; and there have evolved as many ways of interpreting as there have been theologians to do the interpreting. And saying this sort of things about the Bible hardly gives it special status-the same could be said of any great work of literature. A general fog settled over 'hermeneutics.'"<sup>202</sup> But he further argues: "And yet the rules are there, sanctified by centuries of use by those who claimed in accord with Christian tradition that the Bible was 'true'. If we wish to take seriously claims for truth of the Bible, we must understand it in the way that both philosophical rules for interpreting other texts, and so many of those who interpreted the Bible or laid down the rules for doing so in previous centuries, suggest; and that includes their admission that it contains deeper truths which future generations wiser than themselves might detect by using their rules."<sup>203</sup> Swinburne, I think, is quite aware of the limitations of these centuries-old rules of interpretations and can appreciate the problems involved in applying and following those rules without further elaborations and modifications.

Any modification less than a frank confession of the fact that the writers of these books were imperfect, primitive human beings trying to understand and interpret the multi-faceted Christ event to the best of their ability, probably, would not work in our times. It goes without saying that such a response and interpretation face the limitations of their writers and cannot be equated with or labeled as the inerrant Word of God Himself.

## **CHRISTOLOGY AND ANTHROPOMORPHISM:**

Jesus historically existed among Jews, respected their Scripture and claimed to be sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. "To a considerable extent", writes Grant, "Jesus shared the views of his fellow Jews about the God who had revealed himself to Moses and to the prophets."<sup>204</sup> There may have been features distinctive to Jesus' understanding of God and His transcendence, but the concept as a whole would probably be not at odds with the Jewish understanding of the Deity. Earliest Christians, then, obviously inherited themes of divine transcendence and monotheism from the developed Judaism "and it was almost inevitable that they should have been discussed by early Christians when the nature of God was being considered."<sup>205</sup> Therefore the earliest Christians must have believed in the One, Holy, Just God of developed Judaism. Later history and claims of Christianity are living proofs of this fact as Kelly observes: "The doctrine of one God, the Father and creator, formed the background and indisputable premise of the Church's faith. Inherited from Judaism, it was her bluewark against pagan polytheism, Gnostic emanationism and Marcionite dualism."<sup>206</sup>

Like Clement, many of the church fathers argued that the Hebrew Bible's anthropomorphic expressions must be taken metaphorically. Basil interpreted turning "His face" as God leaving us alone in difficulties. Gregory of Nazianzus interpreted God's face as His oversight, Theodoret as

His benevolence and restoration of freedom, and John of Damascus as his display and self-revelation through countless works.<sup>207</sup>

On the other hand, the New Testament contains very few anthropomorphic expressions like the finger of God (Luke 11:20), mouth of God (Matthew 4:4), sight of God (Luke 16:15), earth being the footstool of God (Matt. 5:35) and almost all of them can be interpreted metaphorically. In spite of that, many church fathers' held a corporeal and anthropomorphic concept of the Deity. Bigg observes that "In the view of the *Homilies*, the Valentinians, Melito..., Tertullian *Adv. Praxeam* 7, God is corporeal. Even Irenaeus finds the image of God in the body of man... Anthropomorphism lingered on long in the East."<sup>208</sup> Two centuries after Clement, St. Augustine still wrestled with strong anthropomorphic and corporeal tendency among Christians as well as the Church itself. Christians, he observed, "think of God in a human form and suppose that he is such."<sup>209</sup>

This is in addition to the fact that the New Testament is not centered on Almighty God. It is Christocentric. Burrige has shown by manual analysis of the four Gospels that Almighty God/Father occupies a sum total of just 2.5% of the Gospels while the rest of the Gospels are concerned with Jesus in various capacities i.e. his person, teachings, his disciples, his recipients, his dialogue with Jewish leaders etc. (Mark gives only 0.2%, Matthew 0.6%, Luke 1.1% and John 0.6% place in his Gospel to the verbs whose subject is God/Father).<sup>210</sup> Charles Gore long ago has pinpointed this fact by observing that "Christianity is faith in a certain person Jesus Christ, and by faith in Him is meant such unreserved self-committal as is only possible, because faith in Jesus is understood to be faith in God, and union with Jesus union with God."<sup>211</sup>

There is, then, a tremendous concentration on one man, Jesus of Nazareth. He is described in different terms, concepts and ways. He is addressed as the Son of man, Son of God, the Word, the Prophet, the Messiah, the Kyrios or Lord and perhaps even as God. S. C. Guthrie Jr. observes that "All the doctrines of the Christian faith are related to Christ as spokes to the hub of a wheel. We could not talk who God is, how we know Him, what He is like and what He wants with us, without talking about the revelation of himself, His will and work in Christ...Everything else Christians believe stands or falls with what they believe about Jesus."<sup>212</sup>

Had there been no concentration on Jesus' person, or had the New Testament been systematic or uniform with regard to the nature of the above descriptions, there might perhaps have been no need for critical study or discussion of anthropomorphism in the New Testament. But as it is the New Testament writers are so obsessed with the Christ event that they seem to reflect upon every other thing, even God, through that mirror. Moreover, there is such a diversity of descriptions that it is extremely difficult to render Jesus into one uniform, universally agreed upon figure or concept. Therefore, the Christology, or the significance of Jesus and his relationship with God Almighty is the basic issue in our study of anthropomorphism in the New Testament. R. A. Norris Jr. rightly observes that the term "Christology" "does not signify just any sort of inquiry or reflection which has Jesus as its object. It refers quite specifically to inquiry and reflection that are concerned with Jesus *in his messianic character*. In other words, Christology asks what is presupposed and implied by the fact that Jesus is the elect "Son of God," the one through whose life, death, and resurrection God has acted to realize his purpose for humanity; and this fact imposes,

from the beginning, a certain logic on Christology. To understand or evaluate Jesus christologically means, on the one hand, to ask about his relation to God and, on the other, to seek a way of expressing his representative character as a human being-his status as the one in whom humanity's common destiny is both summed up and determined."<sup>213</sup>

There are many Christologies in the New Testament. The fundamental issue in connection with the transcendence of God and anthropomorphism is the Christology of the person i.e. the doctrine of Christ's person and divinity. Modern scholarship is more widely divided on the issue of Christ's divinity and interpretations of the person of Jesus than Christians of the past generations. Almost all of the old christological issues and trends, often declared heresies by the Church, could virtually be traced in many modern scholars in one way or the other.

It has been customary with the Christians until the late nineteenth century to believe in Jesus' divinity. The Church as well as the Christian population in general, as we will have the opportunity to see later in the chapter, had always contended that Jesus had proclaimed himself to be God the Son, second person of a divine Trinity, living among the human beings a complete human life like them except sin.

Still, in this modern age and time, there are scholars who argue that Jesus was divine and was conscious of his identity. R. E. Brown argues: "Jesus knew his own identity which involved a unique relationship to God that we call the divinity of the Son. Christians of later period were able to formulate Jesus' identity as "true God and true man," a formulation better than any other that had been attempted but certainly not exhaustive of the mystery....The idea that he was divine I find in most Gospel pages. An attempt to lessen the self-evaluation of Jesus to something like "he thought only that he was a prophet" would, in my judgment, involve proving the Gospels misunderstood Jesus. No Old Testament prophet acted in such independence of the Mosaic Law; and it is remarkable that one never finds in reference to Jesus a prophetic formula such as, "The word of God came to Jesus of Nazareth."...Jesus' intuitive knowledge of his self-identity would have been a knowledge of what we call in faith being God and being man, and certainly such self-knowledge can have been no less difficult to express than our knowledge of being human. I regard the term "God" applied to Jesus to be formulation of Christians in the second half of the first century seeking to express an identity that Jesus knew better than they and which is scarcely exhausted by the term "God"...It is not evident that Jesus formulated...his self-identity in the terms of later New Testament Christianity, such as...God. [Nonetheless] I have no difficulty with the thesis that if Jesus ... could have read John, he would have found that Gospel a suitable expression of his identity ... The affirmation that Jesus had knowledge of his self-identity ... is not meant to exclude a development in his existential knowledge of what that identity implied for his life."<sup>214</sup>

Ben Witherington, III fully agrees with Brown's thesis. He writes: "Material in the Synoptics hints that Jesus had a transcendent self-image amounting to more than a unique awareness of the Divine. If, however, one means by divine awareness something that suggests either that Jesus saw himself as the whole or exclusive representation of the Godhead or that he considered himself in a way that amounted to the rejection of the central tenet of Judaism, (i.e., monotheism),

then the answer must be no. Jesus clearly prayed to a God he called *abba*, which excludes the idea that Jesus thought he was *abba*. Jesus' affirmation of monotheism seems clear (e.g., Mark 10:17-18; Matt. 23:9).<sup>215</sup> He concludes affirming that "the seeds of later christological development are found in the relationships, deeds, and words of Jesus, and that in these three ways Jesus indirectly expressed some of his self-understanding. In short, he may have been mysterious and elusive at times, but this was because he intended to tease his listeners into thought and ultimately into a response of faith or trust."<sup>216</sup> F. Buechner has argued that Jesus had a face that was "not a front for him to live his life behind but a frontier, the outermost visible edge of his life itself in all its richness and multiplicity .... So once again, for the last time or the first time, we face that face."<sup>217</sup>

D. M. Baillie goes further than that. He argues that "Indeed it seems alien to the New Testament writers, in all the varieties of their Christology, not only to say that Jesus *became* divine, but even to say He was or is divine. That is not how they would have put it, because in the world of the New Testament, even though it is written in Greek, the word God is a proper name, and no one could be divine except God Himself. Therefore it is more congenial to Christian theology to say that Jesus is God (with the further refinements of meaning provided by the doctrine of the Trinity) than to speak of Him as divine; and certainly it will not say that He became divine."<sup>218</sup> R. C. Moberly argues that Christ "is not so much God and man as God in, and through, and as, man."<sup>219</sup> L. S. Thornton argues that "in Christ the human organism is taken up on to the "level" of deity."<sup>220</sup> Frank Weston has almost similar views regarding the divinity of Christ..<sup>221</sup>

There are other scholars who do believe that Jesus was divine, God the Son, but recognize the fact that Jesus did not explicitly proclaim his divinity. For instance Archbishop Michael Ramsey wrote that "Jesus did not claim deity for himself."<sup>222</sup> C.F.D. Moule observed that "Any case for a "high" Christology that depended on the authenticity of the alleged claims of Jesus about himself, especially in the Fourth Gospel, would indeed be precarious."<sup>223</sup> James Dunn and even staunch upholders of traditional christology like Brian Hebblethwaite and David Brown acknowledged the fact.<sup>224</sup> Hebblethwaite wrote that "it is no longer possible to defend the divinity of Jesus by reference to the claims of Jesus."<sup>225</sup> Brown recognized that it is "impossible to base any claim for Christ's divinity on his consciousness..."<sup>226</sup>

On the other hand, some of these scholars argue that Jesus was implicitly aware of his divine identity and he revealed the same to his disciples by means of his extraordinary actions like radical approach to the Mosaic law and forgiving of sins. C.F.D. Moule argues that "Jesus was, from the beginning, such a one as appropriately to be described in the ways in which, sooner or later, he did come to be described in the New Testament period- for instance as "Lord" and even, in some sense, as "God".<sup>227</sup> The Catholic scholar Gerald O' Collins affirms "a self-consciousness and self-presence in which [Jesus] was intuitively aware of his divine identity."<sup>228</sup> James Dunn implies such an implicit awareness when he argues that "We cannot claim that Jesus believed himself to be the incarnate Son of God; but we can claim that the teaching to that effect as it came to expression in later first-century Christian thought was, in the light of the whole Christ-event, an appropriate reflection on and elaboration of Jesus' own sense of sonship and eschatological mission."<sup>229</sup>

Contrary to that, John Hick firmly rejects this line of approach. He argues that "If one has already accepted a form of orthodox christology one can reasonably interpret some of Jesus' words and actions, as presented by the Gospel writers, as implicitly supporting that belief. But it seems clear that one cannot justifiably arrive at the belief simply from the New Testament evidence as this has thus far been analyzed and interpreted by the scholarly community."<sup>230</sup>

There are other traditional scholars who use the concept of "Christ-event" to justify the proper divinity in spite of the fact that Jesus did not proclaim it for himself. This elusive concept of kerygma and the Christ-event seems to have appeared first in R. Bultmann's existential interpretations of the New Testament myth<sup>231</sup> and has been widely utilized by scholars like John Knox. Knox argues that "The Church is the distinctive Christian reality...And it is because the Church is [Christ's] body and, in history, his only body, that we often use the words "Christ" and "Church" interchangeably, saying "in Christ" when we are wanting to refer to what it really means to be--and really to be--in Church. It is this embodiment or incarnation (that is, the Church) which is most immediately- indeed alone is immediately - known... And so I say again, the Incarnation originally took place, not within the limits of an individual's individual existence, but in the new communal reality, in principle co-extensive with mankind, of which he was the creative center."<sup>232</sup>

J.N.D. Kelly insists upon essential continuity between later trinitarian christological developments and the initial New Testament as well as Church's christology. He argues: "The Trinitarianism of the New Testament is rarely explicit; but the frequency with which the triadic schema recurs ... suggests that this pattern was implicit in Christian theology from the start. If these gaps are filled in, however, we are entitled to assume with some confidence that what we have before us, at any rate in rough outline, is the doctrinal deposit, or the pattern of sound words, which was expounded in the apostolic Church since its inauguration and which constituted its distinctive message."<sup>233</sup> He further argues: "Nevertheless the Trinitarian ground-plan obtrudes itself obstinately throughout, and its presence is all the more striking because more often than not there is nothing in the context to necessitate it. The impression inevitably conveyed is that the conception of the threefold manifestation of the Godhead was embedded deeply in Christian thinking from the start, and provided a ready-to hand mould in which the ideas of the apostolic writers took shape. If Trinitarian creeds are rare, the Trinitarian pattern which was to dominate all later creeds was already part and parcel of the Christian tradition of doctrine."<sup>234</sup> John Macquarrie finds the concept of the Christ-event and the continuity between that significant event and the response of the Church as very useful as it does, in view of Macquarrie, "relieve the problems that arise from our lack of information about the historical Jesus." He further argues that "We do not need to know the inner thoughts of Jesus, and in any case we cannot. When one places him in his context and acknowledges that he cannot be abstracted from his community and the responses of that community, to be gathered from the appellations it applied to him, then many of our questions, although they continue to have certain historical interest, are of no great moment for christology."<sup>235</sup>

It is strange enough to assume that the first generation of Christians were better equipped to understand Jesus than Jesus himself. Modern day fundamentalists seem to be claiming they are even better equipped than the first Christians to understand what Jesus must have been. Such in-

terpretations substantiate the claims that Christianity consists in later responses to Jesus and not necessarily what Jesus preached about God or about his person. John Hick rightly observes that "this kind of thinking, in which Christianity is no longer centered upon the person of Jesus but now upon the church, has moved a long way from the traditional belief that Jesus, the historical individual, was himself God the Son incarnate."<sup>236</sup> He argues that the "'soft' divinity, expressed in the 'son of God' metaphor, eventually developed into the 'hard' metaphysical claim that Jesus was God the Son, second person of a divine Trinity, incarnate. But to use the 'Christ-event' concept to validate this development involves arbitrarily stretching that highly flexible 'event' at least as far as the Council of Nicaea (325 CE), and preferably to include the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE)."<sup>237</sup> He further asks, "how is it possible for the church to know something so important about Jesus that he did not know about himself?"<sup>238</sup> After a good discussion of other trends like that of the Holy Spirit guiding the church to these theological developments,<sup>239</sup> or cosmic Christ or risen Lord,<sup>240</sup> Hick concludes that "none of these ways can relieve upholders of Jesus' deification of the task of justifying that momentous move. Such justification involves showing both that the process by which the deification came about is one that we can regard as valid, and that the resulting doctrine is in itself coherent and credible."<sup>241</sup>

Contrary to what has been observed about the traditional view, many liberal scholars do not accept the theme of the divinity of Jesus Christ in its above discussed strict sense. They believe that Jesus was not divine in the above discussed sense at all. He neither claimed nor was conscious of the divinity of his person. The Ritschlian historian of dogma, Harnack, roundly rejects notions of Christ's divinity in his classical statement: "The Gospel, as Jesus proclaimed it, has to do with the Father only and not with the Son. This is no paradox, nor, on the other hand, is it "rationalism," but the simple expression of the actual fact as the evangelists give it."<sup>242</sup> He further observes that "The Gospel is no theoretical system of doctrine or philosophy of the universe; it is doctrine only in so far as it claims the reality of God the Father."<sup>243</sup> To Harnack, Jesus "desired no other belief in his person and no other attachment to it than is contained in the keeping of his commandment. Even in the fourth Gospel, in which Jesus' person often seems to be raised above the contents of the Gospel, the idea is still clearly formulated: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." To lay down any "doctrine" about his person and his dignity independently of the Gospel was, then, quite outside his sphere of ideas. In the second place, he described the Lord of heaven and earth as his God and his Father; as the Greater, and as Him who is alone good. He is certain that everything which he has and everything which he is to accomplish comes from this Father. He prays to Him; he subjects himself to His will; he struggles hard to find out what it is and to fulfill it. Aim, strength, understanding, the issue, and the hard *must*, all come from the Father. This is what the Gospels say, and it cannot be turned and twisted. This feeling, praying, working, struggling, and suffering individual is a man who in the face of his God also associates himself with other men."<sup>244</sup>

It had been customary to suggest, as we have seen earlier, that Jesus did not disclose his true identity and message to the disciples because of their limitations. For instance A. S. Peake wrote: " ... It was far better that Jesus should lead them through intimate familiarity with Him, through watching His actions and listening to His words to form their own judgment of Him, rather than by premature disclosure to force the truth upon them before they were ready for it, and when they would inevitably have misunderstood it."<sup>245</sup> To contend that Jesus intended his true message to

be partially hidden or to be understood in the light of his death and resurrection, to Harnack, "is desperate supposition. No! his message is simpler than the churches would like to think it; simpler, but for that very reason sterner and endowed with a greater claim to universality. A man cannot evade it by the subterfuge of saying that as he can make nothing of this "Christology" the message is not for him. Jesus directed men's attention to great questions; he promised them God's grace and mercy; he required them to decide whether they would have God or Mammon, an eternal or an earthly life, the soul or the body, humility or self-righteousness, love or selfishness, the truth or a lie."<sup>246</sup> In short, Jesus " leads them to God, not only by what he says, but still more by what he is and does, and ultimately by what he suffers."<sup>247</sup> Jesus did not have any other creed than the simple creed of "do the will of God". "How great a departure from what he thought and enjoined is involved in putting a Christological creed in the forefront of the Gospel, and in teaching that before a man can approach it he must learn to think rightly about Christ. This is putting the cart before the horse."<sup>248</sup>

Harnack argues that this radical departure from Jesus' Gospel took place during the process of the Hellenization of the Gospel. It took place when Christianity entered the Greek world, "the Gospel was detached from the mother soil of Judaism and placed upon the broad field of the Graeco-Roman Empire. The apostle Paul was the chief agent in accomplishing this work, and in thereby giving Christianity its place in the history of the world."<sup>249</sup> Though apostle Paul "not only worked harder but also accomplished more than all the rest put together," he perverted the Gospel of Jesus by giving new directions to it. "The formation of a correct theory of and about Christ threatens to assume the position of chief importance, and to pervert the majesty and simplicity of the Gospel. Here, again, the danger is of a kind such as cannot arise with Jesus' sayings. Even in John we read: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." But the way in which Paul defined the theory of religion, the danger can certainly arise and did arise. No long period elapsed before it was taught in the Church that the all-important thing is to know how the person of Jesus was constituted, what sort of physical nature he had, and so on. Paul himself is far removed from this position,- "Whoso calleth Christ Lord speaketh by the Holy Ghost," - but the way he ordered his religious conceptions, as the outcome of his speculative ideas, unmistakably exercised an influence in a wrong direction." Harnack concludes observing: "That, however great attraction which his way of ordering them may possess for the understanding, it is a perverse proceeding to make Christology the fundamental substance of the Gospel is shown by Christ's teaching, which is everywhere directed to the all-important point, and summarily confronts every man with his God."<sup>250</sup>

Likewise, John Hick contends that "it is extremely unlikely that Jesus thought of himself, or that his first disciples thought of him, as God incarnate."<sup>251</sup> At another place Hick writes: "it seems pretty clear that Jesus did not present himself as being God incarnate. He did not present himself as the second person of a divine trinity leading a human life. If in his lifetime he was called "son of God," as is entirely possible, it would be in the metaphorical sense that was familiar in the ancient world. In this sense, kings, emperors, pharaohs, wise men, and charismatic religious leaders were freely called sons of God, meaning that they were close to God, in the spirit of God, that they were servants and instruments of God. The ancient Hebrew kings were regularly enthroned as son of God in this metaphorical sense."<sup>252</sup> He further argues that "From our point of view today it would require earth-shaking miracles, overturning the whole established secular worldview, to cause a historical individual to be regarded as being also God."<sup>253</sup> He claims a kind of

broad agreement among contemporary New Testament scholars that "the historical Jesus did not make the claim to deity that later Christian thought was to make for him: he did not understand himself to be God, or God the Son, incarnate. Divine incarnation, in the sense in which Christian theology has used the idea, requires that an eternally pre-existent element of Godhead, God the Son or the divine Logos, became incarnate as a human being. But it is *extremely* unlikely that the historical Jesus thought of himself in any such way. Indeed he would probably have rejected the idea as blasphemous; one of the sayings attributed to his , 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone' (Mark 10. 18)"<sup>254</sup>

Hick also views the impact of the Graeco-Roman world upon the Christian thought as the point of departure from the true teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. He argues that Jesus was "fulfilling the unique role of the final prophet, come to proclaim a New Age, the divine kingdom that God was shortly to inaugurate on earth...to endure in the pluralistic world of the Roman empire and eventually to become its dominant structure of meaning: Jesus the eschatological prophet was transformed within Christian thought into God the Son come down from heaven to live a human life and save us by his atoning death."<sup>255</sup>

The fundamental role played by Paul in giving altogether new directions to Jesus' message has been emphasized by Wellhausen and other liberal scholars of that era. The core of the influential "Tubingen hypothesis" was that Christianity owes far more to Paul than to Jesus. F. C. Baur, the founder of the "Tubingen School", argued that "The history of the development of Christianity dates of course from the departure of Jesus from the world. But in Paul this history has a new beginning; from this point we are able to trace it not only in its external features, but also in its inner connection."<sup>256</sup> He observed that "from the time of his conversion the apostle Paul went his own independent way, and avoided intentionally and on principle all contact with the older apostles."<sup>257</sup> Therefore it was the apostle Paul, concluded Baur, "in whom Gentile Christianity found in the course of these same movements, of which the proto-martyr Stephen is the center, its true herald, and logical founder and expositor."<sup>258</sup>

This influenced the famous nihilist scholar Nietzsche to observe first in his "The Dawn of Day" that "the ship of Christianity threw overboard no inconsiderable part of its Jewish ballast, that it was able to sail into the waters of the heathen and actually did do so: this is due to the history of one single man, this apostle who was so greatly troubled in mind and so worthy of pity, but who was also very disagreeable to himself and to others."<sup>259</sup> Then in his "Antichrist" he claimed that Paul was the great falsifier, disevangelist, forger out of hatred, the very opposite of a bringer of glad tidings: " Paul is the incarnation of a type which is the reverse of that of the Saviour; he is the genius in hatred, in the standpoint of hatred, and in the relentless logic of hatred. And alas what did this dysevangelist not sacrifice to his hatred! Above all the Saviour himself: he nailed him to *his cross*. Christ's life, his example, his doctrine and death, the sense and the right of the gospel-not a vestige of all this was left, once this forger, prompted by his hatred, had understood it only that which could serve his purpose."<sup>260</sup> He claimed that "The very word "Christianity" is a misunderstanding,- truth to tell, there never was more than one Christian, and he *died* on the Cross. The "gospel" *died* on the Cross. That which thenceforward was called "gospel" was the reverse of that "gospel" that Christ had lived: it was "evil tiding," a *dysevangel*."<sup>261</sup>



G. Bernard Shaw argued that "Paul succeeded in stealing the image of Christ crucified for the figure-head of his Salvationist vessel, with its Adam posing as the natural man, its doctrine of original sin, and its damnation avoidable only by faith in the sacrifice of the cross. In fact, no sooner had Jesus knocked over the dragon of superstition than Paul boldly set it on legs again in the name of Jesus."<sup>262</sup> He concluded that, "Now it is evident that two religions having such contrary effects on mankind should not be confused as they are under a common name. There is not one word of Pauline Christianity in the characteristic utterances of Jesus."<sup>263</sup> In fact "There has really never been a more monstrous imposition perpetrated than the imposition of the limitations of Paul's soul upon the soul of Jesus."<sup>264</sup> De Lagard, the champion of a "German religion" and "national church" traced the ironic development of Christianity back to the fact that "a man with no call whatsoever [Paul] attained to influence in the church."<sup>265</sup> Rosenberg's remarks in his "Myth of the Twentieth Century" would be painful to recall here.

This negative attitude towards the apostle Paul is nothing new. The third century anonymous treatises like "A False Proselyte" or "Messenger of Satan" or "Persecutor of Faith"<sup>266</sup> are enough to show the sense of negativity harbored by some Jewish-Christian opponents of Paul. G. Bornkamm has shown that "even in his own lifetime his opponents considered him as apostle without legitimation and a perverter of the Christian Gospel. In the subsequent history of the early church, too, there were two very different judgments. For a considerable period he continued to be sternly rejected by Jewish Christians as antagonistic to Peter and James the brother of the Lord; in these circles people did not even stop short of ranking him with Simon Magus, the chief of heretics (Pseudo-Clementine). It is true that from the end of the first century onward there are a few ecclesiastical writers who hold him in high esteem and quote from his letters (1 Clement, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp). Apart from these, however, very soon it was the Gnostics and leaders of sects, in particular Marcion, who claimed him as theirs, thereby making him suspect in the eyes of the church. Accordingly, for decades we hear absolutely nothing about him or else, as in the spurious 2 Peter (written in the middle of the second century), he is mentioned as "dear brother," but with reserve because, since his letters were hard to understand, "ignorant and unstable people have twisted" his teaching "to their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:15f). Even when, as in Acts, he was hailed as a great missionary or, as in the Pastorals, an attempt was made to preserve his teaching, and when in other parts of early Christian literature voices were raised in his honor, the lines along which theology evolved were different from his. Then, unequivocally and finally, the great church wrested his theology from the heretics and requisitioned it as its own- but in a tamed and modified form."<sup>267</sup>

Since the last century, polemics against the apostle have been observed in writings of many critical Protestant researchers. "Admittedly, the results of critical Protestant research were largely negative. Above all, it revealed the gulf between Jesus and Paul and ended by saying that Christianity was founded not by the Jesus of history who, in spite of all his uniqueness, is to be understood in the light of Judaism, but by Paul, who turned it into a religion of redemption, the influence on him being Jewish modes of thought, but also, and specially, Oriental pagan views and myths, as these have spread mainly in Hellenistic mystery religions."<sup>268</sup> The elements of truth in these kinds of remarks need corrections. But it is pertinent to mention before we discuss the corrections and later developments in connection with Paul that these conclusions led many scholars to the oft-repeated slogan "Back to the historical Jesus" or "Jesus, not Paul".<sup>269</sup>

It was Wilhelm Heitmüller who gave a new dimension to the debate over Paul's contributions towards hellenization of Christianity. Heitmüller argued that "The Christianity which Paul joins and from which he is to be understood, is not really the primitive church in the strict sense, i.e., the Christianity of the earliest Jesus-group on Jewish soil in Jerusalem and Judea, to which the immediate disciples and friends of Jesus belonged. It is rather a *form already further developed*: if one can use an expression and rightly understand it, a *Hellenistic Christianity*."<sup>270</sup> He further observed that "The development series reads: Jesus-primitive church-Hellenistic Christianity-Paul. And even if the *genesis* of Pauline Christianity were to be thought of as quite independent of this Hellenistic form of primitive Christianity, it would still remain certain that the piety and theology of the missionary Paul who encounters us in the letters...the only Paul we know-could only be understood in light of his constant contact with Hellenistic Christianity of a congregation like Antioch, which first supported his mission and which was in part Gentile Christian."<sup>271</sup> However, it needs to be substantiated by authentic historic facts how all these radical changes took place within such a short span of time i.e. before the conversion of Paul and what were the factors that made such a swift change possible?

After the Second World War the slogan "Jesus, not Paul" virtually became a slogan in the debates between Christians and Jews as Meeks observes: "it had lasting influence on the conversation between Jews and Christians. It now became possible for sophisticated Jews in pluralistic environments to claim Jesus as their own, while laying at Paul's doorstep the alienation between classical Judaism and orthodox Christianity."<sup>272</sup> Martin Buber's "Two Types of Faith",<sup>273</sup> Leo Baeck's "Romantic Religion"<sup>274</sup> and H.J. Schoeps' "Paul, The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History"<sup>275</sup> are examples of this trend. These scholars represent to an extent a consensus that has been growing in this century. The consensus, in Meek's words, is that "Paul has to be understood as a Jew and a Hellenist, and both his Jewishness and his Hellenism were transformed by his Christianity."<sup>276</sup>

With the rise of the academic discipline of "the history of religions" or "comparative religion" emphasis was laid upon the religious experience of Paul instead of his theology. Certain parallels were observed between the language of Paul and that of the mystery cults and also between the sacramental practices in his churches and the rituals of the mysteries.<sup>277</sup> Adolf Deissmann's illustration of caches of papyrus documents contemporary with the earliest Christianity showed that Paul was not that much of a theologian as much a representative of popular piety.<sup>278</sup> Deissmann observed that "What happened at Damascus ought not to be isolated, but it should be regarded as the basal mystical experience of the religious genius to whom also in later life extraordinary and even ecstatic experiences were vouchsafed. All that can be called Paul's Christ-mysticism is the reaction to this initial experience."<sup>279</sup> Equally important was the discovery or recovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other early Christian and Jewish *apocalypses*, a number of books advocating the end of the present world and giving a mythological description of the messianic age or the kingdom of God at hand. Albert Schweitzer seized upon this framework of apocalyptic ideology to interpret Paul. He argued that "Instead of the untenable notion that Paul had combined eschatological and Hellenistic ways of thinking we must now consider either a purely eschatological or a purely Hellenistic explanation of his teaching. I take the former alternative throughout. It

assumes the complete agreement of the teaching of Paul with that of Jesus. The Hellenization of Christianity does not come in with Paul, but only after him."<sup>280</sup> In this way Schweitzer broke with the tradition of Reitzenstein, Bousset, Baur, Harnack and others who gave either Hellenistic or Jewish-Hellenistic interpretations to Paul. He argued that "the conviction that through the death and resurrection of Jesus the proximate coming of the Messianic Kingdom with Jesus as its ruler was assured. It was this elementary teaching which formed the burden of the discourse when he journeyed as a missionary from place to place. To it he constantly recurs in his Letters. With this therefore, the exposition of Paulinism must logically begin."<sup>281</sup>

It was R. Bultmann's view of Paul which dominated the discipline in the 1950s and 1960s. Bultmann argued that "The mythology of the New Testament is in essence that of Jewish apocalyptic and the Gnostic redemption myths. A common feature of them both is their basic dualism, according to which the present world and its human inhabitants are under the control of demonic, satanic powers, and stand in need of redemption."<sup>282</sup> Man alone cannot achieve redemption. "At the very point where man can do nothing, God steps in and acts-indeed he has acted already-on man's behalf."<sup>283</sup> That is what Paul's mysticism has emphasized.<sup>284</sup> "The Pauline catalogue of the fruits of the Spirit ("love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, temperance", Gal. 5. 22) shows how faith, by detaching man from the world, makes him capable of fellowship in community. Now that he is delivered from anxiety and from the frustration which comes from clinging to the tangible realities of the visible world, man is free to enjoy fellowship with others."<sup>285</sup>

J.K. Riches observes that Bultmann's view of Paul was attractive and its "powerful attraction stemmed from his combination of detailed philological studies of Paul's language and thought with a searching theological analysis. While his interpretation was deeply Lutheran in inspiration (albeit a Luther understood as a prophet of radical human freedom), it was also worked out in dialogue with significant contemporary attempts to make sense of human existence. Paul emerges not as the purveyor of arcane, pre-scientific myths, but as the father of a rich tradition of spirituality, including among its representatives Augustine (353-430), Luther, Pascal (1623-1662) and Kierkegaard, which charts and illumines the inwardness of men's and women's existence under God."<sup>286</sup> Bultmann tried to give a Pauline reading of John to show that both were the apostles of a Christian inwardness (spirituality) that was effected by the kerygma or preaching of Christ, the Word. Though E. Kasemann, E. P. Sanders and others have differed with him over a number of issues their appraisals of Paul are quite favorable like those of Bultmann.<sup>287</sup> It may be observed that even mystical rather than theological Paul was either misleading by himself or misunderstood by the later generations so as to be a herald of such a change of emphasis that replaced God with the person of Jesus the Christ. The role of Paul is still significant and can be argued as one of the determining factors of the radical change mentioned above.

There is another significant development with regard to Pauline studies in modern times. Presently, a good number of New Testament scholars seem to disagree with the nineteenth century portrayal of Paul and do not see the sharp distinction and wide gap between Jesus' teachings and those of Paul, the characteristic of nineteenth century liberal interpretation of Paul. Scholars like J. G. Machen argue that "Paul was not regarded as an innovator with respect to Jesus by Jesus' intimate friends. He was not regarded as an innovator even with regard to those elements in his

message-such as freedom from the Law-about which no definite guidance was to be found in the teaching or example of Jesus. Still less was he regarded as an innovator in his account of Jesus' person."<sup>288</sup> He further argues that if the Gospels are "trustworthy, then it will probably be admitted that Paul was a true disciple of Jesus. For the Gospels, taken as a whole, present a Jesus like in essential to that divine Lord who was sum and substance of the life of Paul."<sup>289</sup> We have already discussed the difficulties involved in taking the Gospels as the trustworthy and historically authentic documents about Jesus and riddle of silence in Paul of the historical settings peculiar to the Gospel material. The issue of the Gospels portraying Jesus as divine Lord in the traditional sense is again a debatable issue as seen already. Therefore this appraisal of Paul can be disputed or approved. It is a matter of one's taste and standpoint about the Gospels and understanding of Paul's theology. This depends mainly upon how one takes the Gospel materials and how one interprets them and that is not an easy task.

On the other hand, the movement of the "Rediscovery of the Historical Jesus" gathered great momentum for quite a while but landed in a jungle of diverse interpretations and portraits of Jesus. The remarks of Professor R. H. Lightfoot, the representative of the British Form Criticism, are a classical reflection of the outcome. "It seems, then, that the form of the earthly no less of the heavenly Christ is for the most part hidden from us....And perhaps the more we ponder the matter, the more clearly we shall understand the reason for it, and therefore shall not wish it otherwise. For probably we are as little prepared for the one as for the other."<sup>290</sup> The reason, to quote Edwyn Bevan, may be that "As a figure calculated to inspire men to heroic acts of self-sacrifice, it may be doubted whether the figure of Jesus, if detached from what Christians have believed about Him, is adequate. There are sayings which bid men give up everything for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake, but His own life, unless what Christians have believed is true, does not offer any single example of self-sacrifice....There is the Cross. Yes, but apart from the belief of the Church, it must be exceedingly doubtful whether Jesus incurred the suffering of the Cross voluntarily, with prevision of the destiny to which His action was leading."<sup>291</sup> There is no independent source leading us to details concerning the Jesus of history except the New Testament itself and the New Testament is a result of Kerygma and not of history. It may not be inappropriate to quote Karl Barth here to whom "it is impossible from the study of the Gospels (which were never meant for such a purpose) to discover what Jesus was like as a human personality; and because, even if we could discover it, the result would be disappointing to those who expected to find a revelation there, since only a 'divine incognito', a veiling of God, was present in the human life of Jesus."<sup>292</sup>

In short, writes A. Grillmeier, S.J., "The attempt came to nothing. Thereupon there followed a return to the theological treatment of the New Testament statements about Christ. Martin Kahler stood at the beginning of the new movement; he brought to German Protestant theology the recognition, that the Christian faith is related to Jesus of Nazareth as he was preached in the apostolic proclamation as the crucified and the risen one. The message of the apostles is the proclamation of a *kerygma* for which they have been commissioned by the appearances of the risen one....The reminiscences of the Jesus of history were preserved, shaped and interpreted within the framework of the proclamation of the risen one and this interpretation is the right and legitimate one for the Christian faith.' The pendulum has now swung in the opposite direction: whereas the slogan used to be 'the pure Jesus of history', it is now 'the pure Christ of faith.' To this effect, Bultmann pursues Kahler's views to their conclusion."<sup>293</sup>

We have already seen in this chapter how Bultmann uses the "Christ myth" of the New Testament for a Christian self-understanding by means of "existential interpretation". The result is that "the problem of the 'Jesus of history' is bracketed off from 'theology', and the latter is made dependent on itself."<sup>294</sup> In the words of E. Kasemann: "the earthly, crucified Jesus was to be seen only in the light of Easter day. But it was also realized that the event of Easter cannot be adequately comprehended if it is looked at apart from earthly Jesus."<sup>295</sup> It follows without saying that for the early church "the life of Jesus was constitutive for faith, because the earthly and the exalted Lord are identical."<sup>296</sup> This position is quite paradoxical and in a sense contradictory. The difficulties involved are still the same: Is Christianity in its traditional garb, the religion manifestly preached by Jesus himself or what the later Christians thought about him? In either way the question of authenticity and logical proof would by and large still be there. However, in spite of its limitations, this has been the position adopted by a majority of English theologians as H. Conzelmann observes: "They thus reserve for themselves the possibility of drawing a continuous line from Jesus' understanding of himself to the faith of the community. Easter is no way ignored, but the content of the Easter faith, and with it the basic christological terms and titles, is traced back to Jesus' own teaching. The theology of the community appears as the working out of the legacy of the Risen Christ on the basis of his appearance...."<sup>297</sup>

A. M. Ramsey summarizes the Anglican position in the following words: "Modern Anglican theology owes many of its characteristics to the central place held within it by the Incarnation. Anglicanism has, for instance, dwelt much on the Nicene and Chalcedonian dogmas and on those ancient Fathers who directly interpreted them. Always somewhat insular in its attitude to continental theology, Anglicanism in these years paid little heed to continental movements and writers, except when they concerned the Person of Christ, in history or dogma: as did the writings of Harnack, Ritschl and Schweitzer. Furthermore, the doctrine of the Incarnate Christ as the Logos gave a constant impulse towards relating the Incarnation, wherever possible, with contemporary movements in thought or social progress."<sup>298</sup> It is true as we have seen already in Kelly, Moule and Stanton. It will suffice here to quote A. M. Ramsey himself who observed that "The theology of the Apostles sprang ... not from their own theorizing, but from certain historical events which led them to beliefs far removed from their own preconceived notions. The most significant of the events was the Resurrection."<sup>299</sup> Therefore, to Ramsey, "The Resurrection is the true starting-place for the study of the making and meaning of the New Testament ... Jesus Christ had, it is true, taught and done great things: but He did not allow the disciples to rest in these things. He led them on to paradox, perplexity and darkness; and there he left them.... But His Resurrection threw its own light backwards upon the death and the ministry that went before; it illuminated the paradoxes and disclosed the unity of His words and deeds. As Scott Holland said: "In the resurrection it was not only the Lord who was raised from the dead. His life on earth rose with Him; it was lifted up into its real light."<sup>300</sup> He concludes that "It is desperate procedure to try and build a Christian Gospel upon the words of Jesus in Galilee apart from the climax of Calvary, Easter and Pentecost. If we do so we are professing to know Jesus better than the first disciples knew Him; and the Marcan record shews us how complete was their perplexity before the Resurrection gave them the key.... early oral tradition about Jesus was handed down, every written record of Him was made only by those who already acknowledged Him as Lord, risen from the dead."<sup>301</sup> The

question of explaining how the disciples would know Jesus better than Jesus himself remains unanswered.

With this swinging of the pendulum in the other direction, views about Paul are also modified to a significant extent as we have discussed earlier. Even a contemporary German scholar like Hans Kung could argue that "only blindness to what Jesus himself willed, lived and suffered to the very roots or to what Paul urged with elemental force, in Jewish-hellenistic terminology, moved-like Jesus- by the prospect of the imminent end of all things: only blindness to all this can conceal the fact that the call "Back to Jesus" runs right through the Pauline letters and frustrates all attempts to turn the message into Jewish or Hellenistic ideology."<sup>302</sup> Paul, according to Kung, spiritualized the Jesus Christ. "It is not a question of another Jesus Christ but of a fundamentally changed relationship with him."<sup>303</sup>

Even amidst these changed circumstances and views we can see the old central theme of liberal theology echoing itself in many modern scholars. K. Armstrong wrote: "There has been much speculation about the exact nature of Jesus' mission. Very few of his actual words seem to have been recorded in the Gospels, and much of their material has been affected by later developments in the churches that were founded by St. Paul after his death."<sup>304</sup> Paul, the Jew, could have never called Jesus God. "It was a subjective and mystical experience that made him describe Jesus as a sort of atmosphere in which "we live and move and have our being". Jesus had become the source of Paul's religious experience: he was, therefore, talking about him in ways that some of his contemporaries might have talked about a god."<sup>305</sup> She is sure that "Paul never called Jesus "God". He called him "the Son of God" in its Jewish sense: he certainly did not believe that Jesus had been the incarnation of God Himself: he had simply possessed God's "powers" and "Spirit," which manifested God's activity on earth and were not to be identified with the inaccessible divine essence. Not surprisingly, in the Gentile world the new Christians did not always retain the sense of these subtle distinctions, so that eventually a man who had stressed his weak, mortal humanity was believed to have been divine."<sup>306</sup> Armstrong further argues, that "After his [Jesus] death, his followers decided that Jesus had been divine. This did not happen immediately... the doctrine that Jesus had been God in human form was not finalized until the fourth century. The development of Christian belief in the Incarnation was a gradual, complex process. Jesus himself certainly never claimed to be God."<sup>307</sup>

R. A. Norris gives a somewhat similar account of the situation. "It may well be the case that the earliest Christology simply proclaimed Jesus as the human being who had been marked out by the resurrection as the coming Messiah, that is, as the one through whom God would finally set things right. In such a Christology, the title "Son of God" would have referred not to any quality of divinity but to the fact that Jesus was called and set apart for a certain function in God's purposes. In fact, however, this way of understanding Jesus was generally supplanted as Christianity spread among Greek-speaking peoples in the Mediterranean world."<sup>308</sup> It was Paul, writes Norris, who directed the significant developments in the portrayal of Jesus that "The Christ is a heavenly figure who was "in the form of God" and who enters the world as a human being in order to bring salvation."<sup>309</sup>

Therefore, it is safe to argue that discussions about Paul, his mysticism, and theology, and also about the role of the first Christians and evangelists in determining the direction of the Christianity, all these discussions have taken several turns in the past century. But the fundamental questions regarding the historical Jesus' role in the outcome, about the significance of Paul and the Church's role, and relationship of later christological developments with the original message of Jesus, all these questions are still by and large unanswered. Whenever the efforts have been made to answer these questions, the suggested answers have not been to the satisfaction of a great majority of scholars in the field. Therefore, no body can deny the difficulties, doubts, and uncertainties involved in the issue. The modern research has afforded us a better understanding and appreciation of the difficulties involved but, by no means answered all the questions with certainty.

In addition, there are numerous developments in modern thought concerning Christology and Jesus' divinity which, to Albert C. Knudson, "make inevitable a revision of the traditional Christology. They call for a more historical, a more empirical, a more anthropocentric, a more ethical, a more personalistic approach to the problem. This is evident from the history of Christological thought during the past century."<sup>310</sup> Knudson summarizes the specific changes in the main three areas: "First, complete humanity must be attributed to Jesus, not only in the sense that he had a human spirit as well as a human soul and body, but in the sense that his personal center, his ego, was human. This does not exclude his divinity, but it does mean the relinquishment of traditional theory that the human nature of Jesus was impersonal and that the ego or personal center of his being was constituted by the eternal Logos."<sup>311</sup> It can be seen even in conservative theologians such as D. M. Baillie and careful ones like Mackintosh. The fifth century Cyril of Alexandria's familiar phrase, "the impersonal humanity of Christ" looks like 'Docetism' to Baillie and he recognizes that "few theologians now would defend the phrase or would hesitate to speak of Jesus as a man, a human person."<sup>312</sup> H. R. Mackintosh wrote: "If we are not to trust our intuitive perception that the Christ we read of in the Gospels is an individual man, it is hard to say what perception could be trusted."<sup>313</sup> R. C. Moberly wrote: "Human nature which is not personal is not human nature."<sup>314</sup>

Furthermore, observes Knudson, "In the second place, the uniqueness of Jesus is to be regarded as due, not to the union of two "natures" within him, one human and the other divine, but to his unique dependence upon the divine will and to his unique endowment with the Divine Spirit. Thirdly, divinity is to be ascribed to Jesus, not because he made this claim for himself, nor because he was possessed of omniscience and omnipotence, but because of his unique consciousness of oneness with God and because of his creative and redemptive agency in the founding of the kingdom of God."<sup>315</sup> How different is this approach from traditional claims that Charles Gore represented, arguing that "If we wish to account for the unique position which Jesus Christ has held in religion it is only necessary to examine the claim which he is represented to have made for Himself in the earliest records which we possess."<sup>316</sup> And we believed in Jesus divinity because he claimed so.

With these significant changes, especially "with the new emphasis on the humanity of Jesus limitations came to be placed on his divine nature."<sup>317</sup> The divinity of Jesus, according to many modern scholars, is grounded "in the divine will rather than the divine nature" and in many modern works is "thought of as manifesting itself in a heightened human consciousness rather than in a

type of experience alien to that of normal humanity."<sup>318</sup> His divinity in other words " was not his own theory about himself nor was explicit in own self-consciousness. It was rather the church's conception of what he was or should be to his followers and to the world. Looking back upon what he was and upon his moral and spiritual significance in the history of the world the church has confidently affirmed with Paul that God was in him. This is the Church's interpretation of his unique personality."<sup>319</sup>

Moreover, the ancient Greek and Christian understanding of the term " *persona*" or "personality"<sup>320</sup> have undergone significant changes in modern times. Karl Barth, for instance, disagrees with Boethius' (sixth century) classical definition that continued to be influential in the Middle Ages: "*naturae rationalis individua substantia*" which really means an individual rational being. Quoting Aquinas' consciousness of the difficulties involved in the definition, Barth goes on to show how the modern concept of personality adds the attributes of "*self-consciousness*". The traditional doctrine of trinity (three Persons) or the Social Trinity would then be tantamount to tritheism as it would mean three distinct individuals and centers of consciousness, three self-conscious personal beings. Therefore Barth suggests to drop the term "three Persons" as he argues: "The ancient concept of Person, which is the only one in question here, had to-day become obsolete....Wherever ancient dogmatics, or Catholic dogmatics even to-day, speaks of "Person", we prefer to call Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in God the three individual modes of existence of the one God, consisting in their mutual relationship."<sup>321</sup> "It is to the one single essence of God, which is not to be tripled by the doctrine of the Trinity, but emphatically to be recognized in its unity, that there also belongs what we call to-day the "personality" of God."<sup>322</sup>

On the other hand Clement C. J. Webb does not see any radical change in the usage of the term "person" in the modern times. "The general history of the word Person with its derivatives in philosophical terminology may be said to have moved throughout on lines determined for it by the process whose result is summed up in the Boethian definition of *persona*."<sup>323</sup> He argues that the orthodox Church spoke of personality in God rather than the personality of God. It conceived of God as comprising of a unity of three personalities and not as one personality. "It might seem then as though Divine Personality might be conceived as analogous to the Personality of a nation or state."<sup>324</sup> This is different from Barth's view and close to the Cappadocian father's analogy of three distinctive individual men alongside each other. This "ultra Cappadocian" movement, as Baillie names it, in modern Trinitarian thought has been influential in Anglican circles. Leonard Hodgson's "*The Doctrine of the Trinity*",<sup>325</sup> F. D. Maurice are good examples of this influence.<sup>326</sup> Karl Rahner prefers "Sabellian Modalism" to what he calls the "vulgar tritheism" of Social Trinities.<sup>327</sup>

The central theme of this school is the "social" interpretation of the Trinity and phrases such as "the social life of the Blessed Trinity" are frequently observed in the writers of this school. The main contrast between Barthian interpretations and this school, in the words of Baillie, is that Barth "prefers to speak of one Person in three modes of being: the other school prefers to speak quite frankly of three Persons in the highest kind of personal and social unity."<sup>328</sup> This "internal constitutive unity", as Hodgson says, or the unity in glory, as Moltmann argues, allows the possibility of three separate persons, i.e. centers of consciousness but unites them in love.



The fact of the matter is that like ancient Christian Fathers, as we shall shortly see, none of these schools and conservative theological approaches seem to solve the central problem from where we started i.e. the relationship of Jesus Christ's person with the transcendent, indivisible, impassable, unique, eternal and One God . These may be good guessworks but are definitely not satisfactory solutions. The difficulty is that the traditional Christianity has almost always insisted upon the person of Christ as divine, Second Person of the Trinity, equal in all respects with God and claimed at the same time his humanity equal in almost all respects except sin with humanity. Such a position is not paradoxical. It is contradictory in itself. It is difficult to prove such a claim so fundamental to Christianity in terms intelligible to modern man. Many modern Christian scholars and theologians seem not ready to deny or denounce the traditional claims and are at a loss to prove that to modern man. Therefore, they keep on moving in circles, making claims without logically substantiating them and in the course repeating, in many cases, opinions either discussed in early centuries or discarded as heretical. In neither case the charges of anthropomorphism can be denied.

To understand the difficulties involved we need to study the New Testament itself and how its themes were developed by the Fathers.

### **Christology and the New Testament:**

The central question "What think ye of Christ?" has been answered in a number of different ways by New Testament writers. He is a Prophet, "And King Herod heard of him...and he said , That John the Baptist was risen from the dead... Others said, That it is E-li'-as. And others said, that it is the prophet, or one of the prophets." (Mark 6:14-15) Matthew clearly names Jesus as the prophet, "And when he was to come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, who is this? And the multitude said, this is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." (Matt. 20: 10-11 see also Acts 3:22; 7:37).<sup>329</sup> In view of passages like these Henry D. A. Major argues that "Jesus was an absolute Jew in His religion and felt Himself called upon, in the spirit of one of the eighth-century prophets (an Amos or a Hosea), to reform that religion. As a consequence He made fierce attacks upon contemporary Judaism and its leaders, and, like other of the goodly fellowship of the Prophets of Israel who had preceded Him, He suffered their fate, but at the hands of the Roman Procurator of Judaea."<sup>330</sup> It was only after his death, contends Major, that some of his enthusiastic followers "became convinced that Jesus, the prophet of Galilee, was more than a prophet, and proclaimed their conviction that He was the Messiah, God's Anointed One, the Son of God."<sup>331</sup> Shirley Jackson Case argues that Jesus was a prophet of God: " The prophet lived in a relation to God that was essentially a mystical experience. But it was not the type of mysticism that evaporated in an orgy of emotions. There was a wealth of feeling in the prophetic experience, but it was of the sort that gave to life a mighty ethical and spiritual drive. Jesus did not lose himself in God, as though the emotions were an end in itself. On the contrary, the divine seizure was for the sake of increasing righteousness in the world and contributing to human welfare. Its end was to be the establishment of the Kingdom."<sup>332</sup> He further argues that "The process of idealization rapidly gathered momentum. Time dimmed historical memories as death removed those who had known Jesus in the flesh."<sup>333</sup> So Jesus who was originally a prophet was raised and exalted to God's right hand. Jeremias, refusing to accept that Jesus was a "Rabbi of Nazareth"

nevertheless writes: "Jesus then was regarded as a *charismatic* rather than a professional theologian (Mark 1.22 par.). The unanimous verdict on him was that he was a prophet. There was a constant echo to this effect among the people (Mark 6.15par.; 8.28 par.; Matt. 21.11, 46; Luke 7.16; John 4.19; 6.14; 7.40, 52; 9.17) and even-though coupled with skepticism-in Pharisaic circles (Luke 7.39; Mark 8.11 par.). According to Luke 24.19, Jesus' disciples, too, saw him as a prophet. Finally, it was as a false prophet that Jesus was arrested and accused. This is clear from the account of the mockery under Jewish confinement."<sup>334</sup> He further argues that "The tradition in which Jesus appears a prophet and bearer of the spirit must be old one, as it cannot be traced back to the early church. Where possible, the earliest church avoided 'prophet' as a christological title, because it felt it to be inadequate."<sup>335</sup>

Geza Vermes argues that it was "not merely because of any dogmatic inadequacy, that the title ceased altogether to be applied to Jesus". One of the reasons, to Vermes, was that "from the middle of the first century AD to the end of the first revolt these self-proclaimed wonder-workers found a ready following among the simple victims of the revolutionary activities of the Zealots. But as the promises remained unfulfilled and the miracles failed to materialized, and as the sarcasm and antipathy of their political opponents stripped the pretenders of their repute, the term 'prophet' applied to an individual between the years AD 50 and 70 not surprisingly acquired distinctly pejorative overtones in the bourgeois and aristocratic idiom of Pharisee and Sadducees."<sup>336</sup> Vermes quotes many New Testament verses like Mark 6:15, 8:28, 14:65, Matthew 16:14, 21:11, 21:46, 26:68, Luke 7:39, 9:8, 9:19, 13:33, 24:19 etc. to conclude that "No expert would deny that Gospels portray Jesus as wearing the mantle of a prophet".<sup>337</sup> He further argues that according to many sayings reported in the Synoptic Gospels Jesus "not only thought of himself as a prophet, but also described to his prophetic destiny every unpleasantness that was to happen to him."<sup>338</sup> To him "the belief professed by his contemporaries that Jesus was a charismatic prophet rings so authentic, especially in the light of Honi-Hanina cycle of traditions, that the correct historical question is not whether such an undogmatic Galilean concept was in vogue, but rather how, and under what influence, it was ever given an eschatological twist."<sup>339</sup>

The emphasis on the prophetic nature of Jesus' mission has been laid upon more and more in recent works especially by the scholars who study and locate Jesus against his Jewish background. M. Hengel,<sup>340</sup> G. Theissen,<sup>341</sup> G. Vermes,<sup>342</sup> Bruce Chilton,<sup>343</sup> E. P. Sanders and John Hick are just a few examples. E. P. Sanders, for instance, contends that certain unassailable facts about Jesus' life and mission locate him firmly within Jewish restoration eschatology. The fact that he was baptized by John the Baptist, was a Galilean preacher and healer who confined his activity to Israel and engaged in controversy about the temple, called twelve disciples, and aroused substantial opposition among the Jewish people, all of these facts place him in the context of Jewish hopes for the restoration of the nation of Israel. Therefore, Sanders concludes that "Jesus saw himself as God's last messenger before the establishment of the kingdom."<sup>344</sup> John Hick writes: "We can say that Jesus lived in the first third of the first century and that he was a Jew-Indeed, his Jewishness is becoming more and more fully recognized. He was evidently a charismatic preacher and healer."<sup>345</sup> He also contends that "Jesus' intense God-consciousness was of course inevitably structured in terms of the religious ideas of his own culture. The basic concept with which to understand his own existence in relation to God was that of prophet."<sup>346</sup>

On the other hand, many Christian scholars have disagreed with the above sketched description of Jesus as merely a prophet like other Jewish prophets. Charles Gore, a conservative Bishop who edited *Lux Mundi* in 1890, argued that "to represent our Lord only as a good man conscious of a message from God, like one of the Prophets or John the Baptist, is to do violence not to one Gospel only or to single passages in various Gospels, but to the general tenour of the Gospels as a whole."<sup>347</sup> Others like H. Conzelmann,<sup>348</sup> O. Cullmann,<sup>349</sup> F. Hahn<sup>350</sup> and R. H. Fuller<sup>351</sup> have discussed about the advantages and disadvantages of this title and seem to agree about its inadequacy, while V. Taylor has qualified it as christologically "abortive".<sup>352</sup>

In conclusion, it is pertinent to quote Grillmeier who rightly observes that "The designation of Jesus as 'prophet' was only short-lived; it had a reference to Deut. 18.15, 18 and served to explain Jesus' mission to Jewish audiences (Acts 3.22; 7.37; John 6.14; 7.40). And even if the Fathers are right later in emphasizing that the transcendence of Christ is something more than a heightened prophetic office, this title nevertheless embraces his mission as revealer of the Father and teacher of men."<sup>353</sup>

### **Angel Christology:**

As early as the Synoptic Gospels Christ is depicted as an angelic prince. "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." (Mk.8:38; also Matt. 13:41f; Mk. 13:26ff; 1:13; Luke 22:43; 1 Thess. 4:16). Grillmeier observes: "One of the attempts of the primitive Christian period to express the transcendence of Christ is the so-called 'angel-christology' or the designation *Christos angelos*. It is so significant that attempts have been made to prove that it was the original christology, at least in Jewish-Christian circles. Jesus, it is held, was understood as an angel in the strict sense i.e. as a heavenly creature sent by God into the world. With the condemnation of Arianism this legitimate and original conception was stamped as heresy. It had to give place to the strict doctrine of two natures."<sup>354</sup>

M. Werner argues that the oft-quoted title Son of Man would be best interpreted if we assume "that this Messiah belonged to the (highest) celestial realm of the angels. This view is expressly confirmed by the sources."<sup>355</sup> He further argues that Paul's usage of the title *Kyrios* does not negate the fact. In Late Judaism and primitive Christianity the angels were invoked as *Kyrios*. Werner observes that "The history of the Primitive Christian doctrine of Christ as a high angelic being pursued its way in the post-apostolic period through successive stages. At first the very view gradually subsided of its own accord and became problematical. Then, already profoundly shaken within, it had to endure finally a decisive assault during the Arian dispute of the fourth century. In this conflict it was bitterly attacked by the representatives of the new doctrine of Christ, which had emerged in the interval, and at last it was proscribed and suppressed as erroneous doctrine."<sup>356</sup> Grillmeier observes that "We may point out the over-estimation of the *Christos angelos* idea, but within limits it is not to be denied as a historical fact. The sources testify that Christ was given the name 'angel' right up until the fourth century."<sup>357</sup>

### **Messianic Christology:**

Long before Jesus' advent Jews had been expecting the Messiah.<sup>358</sup> Jesus was given this title. He is the Christ, the Messiah "And he saith unto them, but whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him." ( Mark 8:29-30) In Matthew 16:16-18 Jesus is told to have approved the title: "He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jo-na: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In a reply to the chief priest and the scribes Luke (22:67-69) reports Jesus to have said: "Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, you will not believe: And if I also ask you, you will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God."<sup>359</sup> It is only in Mark 14:61-62 that Jesus is reported by the evangelist to have confessed being the Christ. " Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see The Son of Man SITTING ON THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, AND COMING IN THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."

B. Harvie Branscomb argues that "As an exact historical record it is of very doubtful dependableness.... even Professor Burkitt, who championed so persuasively the historicity of Mark, admitted that " the grounds against treating Mark xiv 53-65 with the same measure of historical respect that one accords to the rest of Mark xiv. are sound." One is faced, therefore, with a baffling set of facts: in spite of the conviction of the early Church that Jesus was the expected Messiah, the Synoptic Gospels record only one dubious instance in which Jesus affirmed this..."<sup>360</sup>

The New Testament scholars differ whether Jesus used the title "Christ or Messiah" or it was put into his mouth.<sup>361</sup> Many scholars, observes Branscomb, "conclude that " Jesus made no claim to special or unique dignity, and that the title, "the Messiah," or the "Anointed One," is also to be attributed to the early Church. Jesus, it is maintained, only thought of Himself as a prophet. After the belief in the resurrection was established, His followers acclaimed Him as the Messiah or Christ, and this was read back into earlier history. In this way the "Messianic secret" of Mark is explained: there was nothing of this Messiahship in the familiar story of tradition; hence it was assumed that Jesus had imposed on the disciples a decree of silence."<sup>362</sup> W. Wrede's famous work "*Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*"<sup>363</sup> is a classical example of this approach. Although the "Messianic Secret" motif of Mark theory has been questioned by a number of scholars,<sup>364</sup> the ultimate results and conclusions drawn from that motif are still being followed by many liberal scholars. Frances Young , for instance, argues that "we do not have the evidence available now to speculate realistically about Jesus" so-called Messianic consciousness. (If we were to try and read between the lines we might even speculate that Jesus regarded personal claims as a Satanic temptation.) Of course it remains true that the church's christological preaching must have some continuity with, and basis in, the mission of Jesus, but its content need not to be, and probably was not, identical."<sup>365</sup> Bultmann contends that Jesus did not think of himself as the Messiah.<sup>366</sup> Bornkamm argues that "Jesus' history was originally a non-Messianic history, which was portrayed in the light of the Messianic faith of the Church only after Easter."<sup>367</sup> He further argues that "we must not allow ourselves to be misled by the fact that the Gospels them-

selves contain many passages which are clearly Messianic. These should be regarded first of all as the Credo of the believers, and as the theology of the early Church."<sup>368</sup> R. Augstein examines the implications of this position in the following words: "The Gospels, all four of them, leave no doubt in their teaching that Jesus knew himself to be the Messiah and, sooner or later actually said so. What truth can there be in them, if they regard Jesus as the Messiah when he himself does not..."<sup>369</sup>

Ben Witherington, on the other hand, argues that "Close scrutiny shows no unified messianic secret motif in Mark."<sup>370</sup> Hoskyns and Davey observe that "The Christology lies behind the aphorisms, not ahead of them; this means that at no point is the literary or historical critic able to detect in any stratum of the synoptic material that a Christological interpretation has been imposed upon an un-Christological history."<sup>371</sup> P. Stuhlmacher argues, that "The so-called Messianic secret is not simply ... a post-Easter theological construction, and in general it had nothing to do with the attempt after easter to hide the fact that Jesus' life had proceeded unmessianically and beginning at easter had first been put in the light of Messianism. It is a question much more of a characteristic of the work of Jesus himself."<sup>372</sup> Witherington concludes that " Jesus saw himself as the Messiah - the *Jewish mashiach*."<sup>373</sup>

Branscomb, after a good discussion of the difficulties involved, concludes: "In view of these facts it seems reasonable in itself, and in accordance with the evidence, to assume that Jesus, believing Himself divinely commissioned to proclaim the nearness of the Realm of God and also its true character, opposed in this work by virtually all the accepted leaders of the day, threatened with death, yet striving to create a repentant and righteous nation ready for the imminent judgment, should have felt that He was "the anointed one" whom God had sent for this task."<sup>374</sup> He further argues that "This seems on the whole the most satisfactory solution. The records have been so overlaid with later beliefs that proof and absolute certainty are out of question. But without the assumption that Jesus accepted His disciples' expression of faith in Himself as "the Anointed One," the story of His last days and of the rise of the Christian movement becomes a series of unrelated and almost incomprehensible facts."<sup>375</sup>

## **The Son of Man Christology:**

Jesus' most favorite and frequently used title, as the evangelists report, is the Son of Man. The great significance, says Oscar Cullmann, "of this designation is shown by the fact that according to the Gospels it is the only title Jesus applied to himself."<sup>376</sup> "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." (Matt. 16:27) "Jesus said unto them, the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again." (Matt.17:22-23) There are so many passages in the Gospels (69 times in the first three Gospels only) in which Jesus refers to himself as the Son of man that there is no need to enumerate them here.

The New Testament scholars differ over the origin, meanings and significance of this title.<sup>377</sup> An overwhelming majority of biblical scholars look for its origins and significance in the Jewish apocalyptic literature. H. E. Todt's "The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition" is a typical exam-

ple of this approach. The heading of the first chapter of this book reads: "The transcendent sovereignty of the Son of Man in Jewish apocalyptic literature." 1 Enoch 37-71 (the Similitudes), Daniel 7, and 4 Ezra 13 are the frequently quoted passages in this connection.

The scholars also differ whether Jesus used the title for himself or it was put into his mouth by the church. P. Vielhauer, for instance, argues that the term "the Son of man" was originally used as a title to Jesus by the early Palestinian communities. It signified a supernatural, apocalyptic figure. It was not Jesus but the early Christians who used this term to designate Jesus. If "Jesus used it himself at all, it was only... with reference to a figure other than himself"<sup>378</sup> Bultmann and Bornkamm argue that Jesus did speak of the "Son of man or *bar enasha*" but his usage of the term was different from its later usages. Actually he was referring to someone other than himself.<sup>379</sup> Reference has been made above all to Luke 12.8 "Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God". Bornkamm argues that "although the historical Jesus spoke most definitely of the coming Son of man and judge of the world in the sense of the contemporary apocalyptic hope, and did so with the amazing certainty that the decisions made here with regard to his person and message would be confirmed at the last judgment, nevertheless he did not give himself the title Son of man. Also we can hardly assume that the earthly Jesus saw himself as destined to be the heavenly judge of the world."<sup>380</sup> Jeremias, on the other hand, argues that "when Jesus speaks in the third person he makes a distinction not between two different figures, but between his present and the future state of exaltation."<sup>381</sup>

Wilhelm Bousset observed: "In all our considerations we have no wish to deny the possibility that an individual Son of Man saying could have come from the lips of Jesus. But one cannot escape the impression that in the majority of these sayings we have before us the product of the theology of the early Church. That is the sure starting point for our work."<sup>382</sup> Todt quotes Matt.12:32 and Luke 12:10 to show the developing theology of the early church.<sup>383</sup> R. H. Fuller calls attention to a fundamental change of emphasis in christological outlook which has taken place between the stage of development represented by Acts 3:20-21 and Acts 2:36. He observes: "Third, why? The answer must surely be, the delay of the parousia, and the increasing experience of the Spirit's working in the church."<sup>384</sup> Fuller further observes that "Jesus had declared that his own eschatological word and deed would be vindicated by the Son of Man at the end. Now his word and deed has received preliminary yet uncertain vindication by the act of God in the resurrection. The earliest church expressed this newborn conviction by identifying Jesus with the Son of man who was to come."<sup>385</sup> Norman Perrin goes further by observing that "Jesus had not referred to the Son of Man at all; all the Son of Man sayings stemmed from the early church."<sup>386</sup> He concludes, that "every single Son of Man saying is a product of the theologizing of the early church."<sup>387</sup> J. Hick observes that "There was the image of the son of man of Danielic prophecy, who was to come again in clouds of glory, and there was the image of the Messiah. However, it does not seem very probable that Jesus applied either of these images, or any other titles, to himself; rather, other people came to apply them to him."<sup>388</sup> Branscomb observes: "I conclude, therefore, that the series of ideas which viewed Jesus as the Son of Man to come in glory on the clouds of heaven, with the holy angels, was the theological achievement of the Palestinian Church." He further observes that "it never appears in the Gospels in the mouths of the disciples,

probably for the following reason: It was known that this view of Jesus was not entertained by the disciples during Jesus' lifetime. In the tradition this fact took the form of the oft-repeated thought that the disciples did not understand until later what Jesus was endeavoring to teach them."<sup>389</sup>

Acceptance of this approach has significant implications upon our understanding of Christology as Perrin observes: "The acceptance of the fact that synoptic sayings have a history in the tradition makes a great deal of difference to the study of Christology, especially in connection with the beginnings of Christology, because it raises serious questions with regard to sayings which hitherto have been held to tell us something about Jesus' understanding of himself and in this way to mark the beginning of Christology."<sup>390</sup> He further argues that "What is true of the Son of man Christology is certainly going to be true of the other christological patterns, those using Son of God, Son of David, Christ, Lord, and so on, for none of these has anything like the secure place in earliest Christianity that the Son of Man has."<sup>391</sup> R. Augstein asks that "If Jesus was neither the Messiah nor the son of man nor the son of God, and if he did not even think he was any of those, what is left? ...what good could his death do?"<sup>392</sup>

Professor J. W. Bowker of the University of Lancaster, on the other hand, emphasizes that Jesus used this term as an alternative for the first pronoun "I" or "me" or to denote himself as a frail mortal.<sup>393</sup> K. Armstrong observes that "the original Aramaic phrase (*bar nasha*) simply stressed the weakness and mortality of the human condition. If this is so, Jesus seems to have gone out of his way to emphasize that he was a frail human being who would one day suffer and die."<sup>394</sup> J. D. Crossan argues that "if Jesus spoke about a son of man, his audience would not have taken the expression in either a titular or a circumlocutionary sense but, following normal and expected usage, in either a generic (everyone) or an indefinite (anyone) sense. He is talking, they would presume, about human beings, making claims or statements about humanity. An unchauvinistic English translation would be "the human one".<sup>395</sup>

Many New Testament scholars argue that Jesus used this term for himself in light of the well known Danielic Son of man and apocalyptic literature. C. F. D. Moule, for instance, says that the title Son of man "seems to have come through virtually unmodified from Jesus himself."<sup>396</sup> He further states that "there is a strong case (or it seems to me) for the view that the phrase belonged originally among Jesus' own words as a reference to the vindicated human figure of Dan. 7 and as a symbol for the ultimate vindication of obedience to God's design."<sup>397</sup> Jeremias observes, that "It would be an error of method to suggest without further ado that these remaining Son of man sayings may be regarded as authentic, lock, stock and barrel."<sup>398</sup> But he concludes, that "the apocalyptic Son of Man sayings which we have recognized as the earliest stratum must in essentials go back to Jesus himself."<sup>399</sup> Ben Witherington claims a sort of consensus among scholars over this issue observing that "One of the most complex problems in the New Testament studies is how to understand the one label almost all scholars agree Jesus used of himself-the Son of man."<sup>400</sup> de Jonge makes almost the same claims.<sup>401</sup>

Scholars also differ over the true meanings of Daniel 7. Their views could be summarized in three man categories. (1) The figure mentioned in the Danielic vision refers to one or more angels. J. J. Collins persuasively argues this view.<sup>402</sup> (2) It stands for Israel, or at least for faithful

Israel, for those who endure persecution. To Casey it is a symbol of Israel's triumphant.<sup>403</sup> (3) *Bar enash* does not represent Israel as much as it represents an individual figure who would represent Israel in the presence of Almighty God. This is the sense conveyed in the Similitude as well as in Daniel 7. B. Lindars argues that the "figure of the Similitude, variously termed, as we have seen, the Righteous One, the Chosen One, or "that Son of man," is a leader of the righteous and chosen ones, i.e., the faithful Jews. Consequently he must be seen as a representative figure, embodying the expectation of the Jews that their righteousness before God will be vindicated, their enemies will be liquidated, and they will reign with God....It would be a mistake to suggest that he is in some way a corporate figure, i.e., identical with the faithful Jews. But he represents their aspirations and expectations, and so is the head of them as a group...."<sup>404</sup> What is true of the Similitudes is true of Daniel 7.

Hence, many scholars conclude that Jesus used the term "the Son of man" for himself in conformity with the messianic figure envisioned in Dan. 7:13-14. B. Witherington observes that "The proper matrix in which to interpret the Son of man material, that which provides the clues as to how Jesus himself viewed the material, is Dan. 7:13-14 and probably also the *Similitude of Enoch*. The evidence seems sufficient to conclude that because Jesus *bar enasha* implies a certain form of messianic self-understanding on his part, although it does not take the form of the popular Davidic expectation. Indeed, Mark 14:62 suggests that Jesus corrected such an interpretation of himself by referring to the Danielic Son of man. Only when he comes upon the clouds will he assume the role of world judge and, indeed, judge of the people of God."<sup>405</sup> C. K. Barret believes that "the title Son of Man...does more than any other to cement the unity of the Gospel tradition. We have seen that in the background of this expression both suffering and glory play their part."<sup>406</sup> de Jonge concludes: "There seems to be no reason to deny that Jesus himself did claim a particular authority, there and then and in the future; thought of himself in terms of suffering and vindication; and expressed this in the term "the Son of Man" -covertly referring to the destiny of the "one like a son of man" in Daniel."<sup>407</sup> Even those scholars who do not believe that the title originated with Jesus himself do agree with the thesis that its usage in the Gospels was meant to convey the above mentioned Danielic sense. N. Perrin, for instance writes: "the evangelist Mark is a major figure in the creative use of Son of Man traditions in the New Testament period. To him we owe the general picture we have from the Gospels that "Son of Man" is Jesus' favorite self-designation and that Jesus used it to teach his disciples to understand both the true nature of his messiahship as including suffering and glory, and the true nature of Christian discipleship as the way to glory through suffering."<sup>408</sup>

Our prime interest in the title lies in the fact that in classical Christian theology, as will be discussed later, the Son of Man has often been contrasted with the other significant title the Son of God to designate a dogma "true God- true Man" which on its part is very crucial for our study of anthropomorphism. For the time being it may suffice to quote Morton S. Enslin who observes that "The term "Son of man," whether Jesus did or did not employ it for himself, indicated a supernatural figure of cosmic importance, an angel far removed from common clay, and quite apart from "flesh and blood." Thus for preachers to persist in using the term as an antithesis to "Son of God": "He was both `Son of God' and `Son of man'," is unqualifiedly wrong and misleading. The term did not connote participation in the common lot of men, either by humble birth or amazing



condescension. It was a unique and- to adopt a modern phrase-an "altogether other" figure. There were many "sons of God"; there was, could be, but *one* "Son of man."<sup>409</sup>

### **The Son of God Christology:**

The Gospel of Mark starts with this highly significant title, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." (Mk. 1:1) There are few passages in the Gospels where this title is put in the mouth of Jesus himself. Mostly it is either the Spirit of God (Mt. 3:16-17, MK. 1:11 ) or a voice from the clouds (Mt.17:5, LK.9:35) or unclean spirits (Mk.1:23-24, 3:11, 5:7) or high priest (Mt. 26:63 ) or the Centurion (MK.15:39) who address him with this title. It is Matthew 16:15-17 where Jesus reportedly seems to have approved this title, "He saith unto them, but whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jo-na: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my father which is in heaven." In John 10:36 Jesus is reported to have used the title for himself when he said to the Jews, " Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?"<sup>410</sup>

On the other hand Jesus is reported to have used the title "My Father" more frequently. For instance Mt. 11:27 reads, "All things are delivered unto me of my father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." (see also MK. 13:32). In MT. 26 he prays two times with the words "O my Father" (Mt. 26:39-42 ) and in MK.14:36 he addresses God with the most intimate word "Abba".<sup>411</sup>

The use of the phrase "son of God" was current in Greek as well as Jewish traditions though with a wide range of implications and was applied both to human and superhuman beings.<sup>412</sup> Grant observes that "We are so accustomed to the traditional language of the Christian Church that we think it is perfectly natural to find Jesus called "Son of God" and "Son of Man" in the early Christian books, and to have these titles explained as referring to his divine nature (Son of God) and his human nature (Son of Man). These titles are not as simple as they look. In the Jewish literature of the first century, the title "Son of God" is actually used of human beings. A fragment from the Dead Sea Scrolls speaks of the Messiah, a man chosen by God, as "Son of God"; and in the apocalyptic book of Enoch there is a supernatural, heavenly figure who is called "Son of Man."<sup>413</sup> He further observes that "This example should warn us against thinking that we can have some kind of "instant understanding" of what the titles assigned to Jesus by the early church really meant. They are more strange and complicated than we assume they are."<sup>414</sup>

J. Hick writes even if Jesus was called "son of God" in his lifetime "it would be in the metaphorical sense that was familiar in the ancient world. In this sense, kings, emperors, pharaohs, wise men, and charismatic religious leaders were very freely called sons of God, meaning that they were close to God, in the spirit of God, that they were servants and instruments of God. The ancient Hebrew kings were regularly enthroned as sons of God in this metaphorical sense."<sup>415</sup> It is true that in Exodus 4:22 Israel is mentioned as the son of God, "Israel is my Son, My first born." In Psalms 2:7 David says that "The Lord had said unto me, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." In 1 Chronicles 22:10 Solomon is told to be the Son of God. Even in the

gotten thee." In 1 Chronicles 22:10 Solomon is told to be the Son of God. Even in the New Testament the title is used for human beings other than Jesus. Luke 3:38 ends the genealogy of Jesus by writing "...son of Adam, which was the son of God." Matthew 5:44 declares those who love their enemies and 5:9 declares the peacemakers as the children of God. Moreover Jesus is told to have used the phrases like "My Father", "Your Father" and "Our Father" frequently.

Now, in the historical person of Jesus, these variety of implications were woven together to create a mysterious and awe inspiring figure. It is true to observe with A. D. Nock that "the impact of the figure of Jesus crystallized elements which were already there."<sup>416</sup> But there is a distinctive element in Jesus' use of the term "Abba" as writes Michael Goulder, "Although there are a number of examples in Jewish literature of rabbis and other holy men being spoken of as God's sons, there is no serious parallel for the use of Abba in address to God, the term being normal for a human child to his father."<sup>417</sup> Hans Kung observes that "Hitherto only one explanation has been found: *abba*- like our "Daddy"- is originally a child's word, used however in Jesus' time also as a form address to their father by grown-up sons and daughters and as an expression of politeness generally to older persons deserving of respect. But to use this not particularly manly expression of tenderness, drawn from the child's vocabulary, this commonplace term of politeness, to use this as a form of addressing God, must have struck Jesus' contemporaries as irreverent and offensively familiar, very much as if we were to address God today as "Dad."<sup>418</sup> Jeremias argues that "All this confronts us with a fact of fundamental importance. *We do not have a single example* of God being addressed as 'Abba in Judaism, but Jesus *always* addressed God in this way in his prayers. The only exception is the cry from the cross (Mark 15:34 par. Matt. 27.46), and the reason for that is its character as a quotation."<sup>419</sup> Vermes, though, does find an example.<sup>420</sup>

The use of the title "the Son of God" for Jesus by others and Jesus' own use of intimate terms like my Father and Abba, to Cullmann, makes the "Father-Son relationship between God and Christ a special and quite unique one", and "does point to Christ's coming from the Father and his deity."<sup>421</sup> Jeremias, on the other hand warns that "the fact that the address 'Abba expresses a consciousness of sonship should not mislead us into ascribing to Jesus himself in detail the 'Son of God' Christology, e.g. the idea of pre-existence, which developed very early in the primitive church. This over-interpretation of the address 'Abba is prohibited by the everyday sound of the word."<sup>422</sup> Grillmeier observes that the term Abba denotes that the "relationship of the 'Son of God' to the 'Father' is therefore not just a more or less technical circumlocution for a special election of Jesus, say, to be Messianic king: it means a real relationship of Son to Father....As revealer, the Son is mediator between God and a number of elect, but he is this precisely by virtue of his uniquely intimate relationship to the Father, which is more than that of a prophet, a king, or a faithful servant: the Son of God really is the beloved Son, to whom the father can give all things."<sup>423</sup> He further observes that the "Son of God" is a title "which, while affording a special insight into the primitive church's understanding of Jesus (cf. Mark 1.1,11;9.7;14.61; Luke 1.35;22.70; Matt.2.15;14.33;16.16;27.40,43), nevertheless has its basis in the unique consciousness of divine Sonship in Jesus himself. The consciousness (Mark 12.6;13.32; 14.6), together with Jesus' claim to be the only saving way to the Father (Matt. 11.25-27), is the decisive starting point not only for the confessions of primitive Christianity and the early church, but also for the christology which developed from them and led up to Chalcedon."<sup>424</sup>

The deity of Jesus may be more emphatically asserted in the Gospel of John.<sup>425</sup> This declares Jesus to be the Pre-existent Word, Lamb of God, the only begotten Son of God. (John 1:1-18)<sup>426</sup> Martin Luther commenting on the beginning verses of the Gospel of John observed that " From the very beginning the evangelist teaches and documents most convincingly the sublime article of our holy Christian faith according to which we believe and confess one true, almighty, and eternal God. But he states expressly the three distinct Persons dwell in that same single divine essence, namely God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Father begets the Son from eternity, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, etc. Therefore there are three distinct Persons, equal in glory and majesty; yet there is only one divine essence."<sup>427</sup> He further illustrates the birth of the Son of God: "As a human son derives his flesh, blood, and being from his father, so the Son of God, born of the Father, received his divine essence and nature from the Father from eternity. But this illustration, as well as any other, is far from adequate; it fails to portray fully the impartation of the divine majesty. The Father bestows His entire divine nature on the Son. But human father cannot impart his entire nature to his son; he can give only a part of it. This is where the analogy breaks down."<sup>428</sup> According to Calvin the reason was that the Son was to be the mediator and "it was of the greatest importance for us that he who was to be our Mediator be both true God and true man."<sup>429</sup> He further argues that " The sole purpose of Christ's incarnation was our redemption."<sup>430</sup> The Gospel of John makes this point very clear: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). According to the Gospel of John, the Son of God is God in his self-revelation.<sup>431</sup>

Hebrews 1:1-10 makes it even clearer that to use the title "the Son of God" is to equate Jesus with God or to point to his deity and absolute participation in God. It means to say that he is "one with God".<sup>432</sup> R. A. Norris rightly observes that "This is the Christology which quickly came to dominate Christian thought about Jesus. It surfaces in its definitive New Testament form in John's Gospel, where Jesus is understood as the creative Logos or "Word" of God who "became flesh" to make "grace and truth" manifest (see John 1:1-14). It appears also in Hebrews, where the Son of God is described as the one through whom God "created the world" and who "reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature (Heb. 1:2-3). In the last resort, the New Testament cannot make sense of Jesus except by seeing his human life as the historical concentration of the very power through which God originally expressed himself in the creation of the world. Only in this way, it seemed, could one account for the truly universal significance of his life, death, and resurrection, or the truly ultimate and definitive character of the salvation which he brought. What is true of the writings of the New Testament is true also of other early Christian literature."<sup>433</sup>

Jesus' deification became more imminent in the minds of early Christians as they heard witnesses of his resurrection. The risen Lord revealed to them the knowledge which could have not been revealed by " flesh and blood " (Mt.16:17) and they felt obliged to proclaim it to every one that Jesus was the only Son of God. "Jesus is the 'Son of God' is therefore certainly one of the most ancient cradle statements of the early Church."<sup>434</sup>

## **Kyrios Christology:**

Paul's favorite title is *Kyrios* meaning 'Lord' (for instance Romans 1:3, 7, ; 5:1,11; 10:9; 16:24; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 3, 7, 8, 9,10).<sup>435</sup> "The central christological ideas of Paul", observes Grillmeier, "are the notion of pre-existence (though this is more presupposed than explicitly taught) and the worship of Christ as *Kyrios*. Both, however, were already at hand for him to use. He simply deepened the ideas and adapted them for preaching in the Hellenistic communities, at the same time composing them into a universal vision of history of salvation"<sup>436</sup> The title '*Kyrios*' had been common among Jews as well as Greek circles to denote the reverence, the lordship, the master-ship, the ownership and the authority.<sup>437</sup> The New Testament's use of the word is unique in the sense that it contains more than just lordship or exaltation. In the later New Testament books it clearly takes a definite form and absolute use meaning "the Lord", "for he is Lord of lords and King of kings." (Rev. 17:14).

In the Synoptic Gospels the title is used for Jesus as well as by Jesus for himself but without any absolute tone. Passages like Mark 11:3, Matt. 7:21 (even John 13:13) can be interpreted as meaning "teacher" or "master". The Rabbi, Master or Lord Jesus and the title '*Kyrios*' received its full or absolute meanings in Pauline christology and after Jesus' death, resurrection and exaltation. "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." (1 Cor. 8:6) "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36, see also Acts 2:13-14) The pre-existent Word who was with God before the creation is now exalted to the right hand of God "to be a Prince and Saviour..." (Acts 5:31, see also Acts 7:55-56) The designation *Kyrios* or Lord, argues Cullmann, "expresses as does no other thought that Christ is exalted to God's right hand, glorified and now intercedes for men before the Father. In designating Jesus as the *Kyrios* the first Christians declared that he is not only a part of divine Heilsgeschichte in the past, nor just the object of future hope, but a living reality in the present- so alive that he can enter into fellowship with us now, so alive that the believer prays to him, and the Church appeals to him in worship, to bring their prayers before God the Father and make them effective."<sup>438</sup>

Jesus being a living reality, an object of worship and his cosmic lordship is the aspect which gives this title such a vitality and significance that is not equally present in other titles discussed earlier. This makes it the center and base of other Christological developments as is stated by Cullmann, "If we are to understand the origin and development of New Testament Christology, we must center our attention on the *Kyrios* title, just as the first Christians themselves placed it at the center of their confessions and from that center attempted to understand the other functions of Christ in the total Christ-event."<sup>439</sup> The early Christians worshipped him saying "Come Lord Jesus" (Rev.22:20) and could attribute to him all passages and hence works and attributes which the Old Testament attributes to God the Father, "One consequence of the application of the *Kyrios* title to Jesus is that the New Testament can in principle apply to him all the Old Testament passages which speak of God."<sup>440</sup> For instance, Isa. 45:23 is quoted by Paul in Phil. 2:10 in the following words, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, the glory of God the Father." Commenting on that C.F.D. Moule says, "At least, it represents Paul himself, or, at earliest, a pre-Pauline formula; and it boldly transfers to Jesus a great

monotheistic passage from Isa. 45:23, in which God is represented as declaring that he must have no rivals: it is now to *Kurios Iesous Christos* that every knee shall bow, and it is he whom every tongue shall confess. Professor M. Black is inclined to think that the same passage is intended in the name of the Lord Jesus even in Rom. 14:11. Certainly in Heb. 1:10ff. ( though this may, of course, be later ), a great, monotheistic passage in Ps. 102, manifestly intended in the original to be addressed to God the Creator, is boldly assumed to be addressed to Christ."<sup>441</sup>

Maurice Wiles observes that "It is the regular translation of the divine name in the Old Testament, and Phil. ii. 5-11 (another possibly liturgical passage) suggests that to call Jesus 'Lord' is to give him that divine name whose glory Yahweh had declared should not be shared with an other. Thus it was a title given to him in worship and continually used of him in that context which helped to give expression to some of the highest Christological affirmations in the whole of the New Testament."<sup>442</sup> Hans Kung observes: "This is a Christocentrism working out to the advantage of man, based on and culminating in a theocentrism: "God through Jesus Christ"- "through Jesus Christ to God." As the Holy Spirit came to be inserted in such binitarian formulas-as the one in whom God and Jesus Christ are present and active both in the individual and the community-they were turned by Paul at this early stage into trinitarian formulas, the basis for the later development of the doctrine of the Trinity, of the triune God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit."<sup>443</sup>

Commenting upon Phil. 2:5-11, O. C. Quick argues that "St. Paul here affirms that Christ was originally that is, before he was born on earth, "in the form of God"....The Christ therefore was from the beginning a divine person."<sup>444</sup> He further argues that "we may interpret his meaning thus: whereas before his self-humiliation Christ had the *nature* of Godhead, in the exaltation which followed the humiliation he received also the *name* of Godhead, so that all may worship him as they worship the Father. That St. Paul did definitely, if one may be allowed the expression, rank Jesus with God, is abundantly clear from evidences which extends all through his epistles."<sup>445</sup> K. Armstrong, on the other hand, argues that "The hymn seems to reflect a belief among the first Christians that Jesus had enjoyed some kind of prior existence "with God" before becoming a man in the act of "self-emptying" (*kenosis*) by which, like a *bodhisattva*, he had decided to share the suffering of the human condition. Paul was too Jewish to accept the idea of Christ existing as a second divine being beside YHWH from all eternity. The hymn shows that after his exaltation he is still distinct from and inferior to God, who raises him and confers the title *Kyrios* upon him. He cannot assume it himself but is given this title only "to the glory of God the Father."<sup>446</sup> Armstrong further argues that "Paul never called Jesus "God". He called him "the Son of God" in its Jewish sense: he had simply possessed God's "powers" and "Spirit," which manifested God's activity on earth and were not to be identified with the inaccessible divine essence. Not surprisingly, in the Gentile world the new Christians did not always retain the sense of these subtle distinctions, so that eventually a man who had stressed his weak, mortal humanity was believed to have been divine."<sup>447</sup>

Long before Armstrong, A. Harnack emphasized the point observing: "Under the influence of the Messianic dogmas, and led by the impression which Christ made, Paul became the author of the speculative idea that not only was God in Christ, but that Christ himself was possessed of a peculiar nature a heavenly kind. With the Jews, this was not a notion that necessarily shattered the

framework of the Messianic idea; but with the Greeks it inevitably set an entirely new theory in motion. Christ's *appearance* in itself, the entrance of a divine being into the world, came of necessity to rank as the chief fact, as itself *the real redemption*. Paul did not, indeed, himself look upon it in this light; for him the crucial facts are the death on the cross and the resurrection, and he regards Christ's entrance into the world from an ethical point of view and as an example for us to follow: "For our sake he became poor"; he humbled himself and renounced the world. But this state of things could not last."<sup>448</sup>

How could this radical change of direction and perspective have occurred in the minds of the early Christians, who inherited the Jewish Bible from Jesus containing passages that leave no room for any partner, equal, or rival for God. There was, as is commonly held, "no sign of any difference between their ideas of God and the ideas of their countrymen. They too worshipped the one and only God, creator and ruler of the world, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob...."<sup>449</sup> Why then some of the New Testament books attribute the creation, universal cosmic lordship, omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience and eternity to Jesus, worship him and pray to him with absolute terms like "Kyrios".

Bousset in his classic book *Kyrios Christo* and following him R. Bultmann in his *Theology of the New Testament* maintained that this radical change was an outcome of cultic veneration. When the Rabbi or Master Jesus became the object of cultic veneration the titles like Lord changed into absolute tones of glory, power and authority and became "the one Lord". This radical change took place when Christianity moved from Palestine to Antioch, from the Jewish to the Hellenistic environment. Christ worship first began there and the titles got used in a more and more absolute sense in the early Christian writings that belong to that environment. Following this thesis McGiffert argues, "In passing from Jews to Gentiles the faith of the original disciples was thus transformed and instead of a Jewish Messianic sect there came into existence a new religion, one of the many religions of personal salvation in the Roman Empire."<sup>450</sup>

Others like Cullmann and Moule, for instance, disagree with this thesis. Cullmann argues that "it can by no means be proved that the Hellenistic Churches were the first to worship Jesus as divine."<sup>451</sup> He further maintains that "this worship took place in the very earliest Church, and not for the first time in Antioch."<sup>452</sup>

He discusses at length the philology of the ancient Aramaic prayer *Maranatha* which have occurred in various New Testament passages like 1 Corinthians 22-24 and concludes that the Aramaic word 'Mar' "Lord" constitutes the clue that determines how the Hellenistic word Kyrios got used for Jesus in absolute sense. "The non-Christian use of the Kyrios name in the Hellenistic world, its relation to emperor worship, and above all its use as the name of God in Septuagint-all this certainly contributed to making *Kyrios* an actual *title* for Christ. But this development would not have been possible had not the original Church already called upon Christ as the Lord. Bousset is right in saying that the *Kyrios* title goes back to the experience of the Church's worship; but it is the experience of worship in the *original* Church."<sup>453</sup>

Moule maintains the same when he argues, "I am not for a moment denying that developed language about cosmic dimensions might be the fruit of long speculation and cogitation; but I am

inclined to believe that a good case could be made for the ingredients for such conclusions being present immediately in the experience of the risen Christ."<sup>454</sup> F.V. Filson argues that "from the first days of the Apostolic Church an explicit and high Christology was an integral part of its message, and that this Christology was basically no Hellenistic product, but had its chief ties with the Old Testament and found expression in the earliest Apostolic preaching."<sup>455</sup>

Filson and others fail to prove the point from the Old Testament itself. It seems likely that the process of treating Jesus as a Deity equal to God in attributes and works was the result of non-Jewish influences external to the environment of Jesus himself and his immediate disciples as is clear from Harnack and others. H. Anderson observes that "In the picture he draws of the "Lord Jesus Christ, "Paul unquestionably makes use of mythological concepts prevalent in the Hellenistic milieu."<sup>456</sup> The disciples may have exalted him, but what we have seen in the above quoted passages is more than just exaltation. He has been made equal to God (Rom. 1:4), and it is not robbery to become equal with God as Paul says in Phil. 2:6, "Who, being in the form of God, thought not robbery to be equal with God."

In addition to the passages quoted above there are at least two other passages in the Gospel of John that call Jesus, the Word, as "God". Cullmann argues that "Since it is clear that the New Testament arrives at the conception of Jesus' deity in the sense indicated from the standpoint of a group of basic Christological ideas, the question whether it also actually designates him 'God' is only of secondary importance."<sup>457</sup> But this designation is extremely crucial for our study of anthropomorphism because if Jesus is adorned with all the majestic attributes of divinity, eternity, absolute cosmic Lordship, equality with God, worship and is finally designated with the title 'God' itself then it becomes impossible to say that the New Testament concept of deity/Jesus is not anthropomorphic.

Jesus never called himself God, nor did the first three evangelists, the authors of the Synoptic Gospels. It is, in the opinion of Cullmann, "the Gospel of John and Hebrews (that) provide the clearest and least ambiguous evidence of the attribution of *Oeos* to Jesus."<sup>458</sup> In John 1:1 it says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and *the Word was God*." In John 20 it says, "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, *My Lord and my God*." (Jn.20:26-28)

To this designation with the absolute title 'God' the fourth evangelist presents Jesus as not responding negatively. He seems to have approved it when he is quoted to have said, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (Jn. 20:29).

If therefore, according to Cullmann, the " whole Gospel culminates in this confession, and, on the other hand, the author writes in the first verse of the first chapter, "And the Logos *was God*", then there can be no doubt that for him all the other titles for Jesus which are prominent in his

work ('Son of Man', 'Son of God', 'Lord', and in the prologue, 'Logos' ) ultimately point toward this final expression of his Christological faith."<sup>459</sup>

Outside the Johannine corpus it is only Hebrews that unequivocally applies the title 'God' to Jesus. In Hebrews 1:6-8 which has been translated in more than one way, in one of its translations it says, " And again when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM. And the angels saith, WHO MAKETH HIS ANGELS SPIRITS, AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE. But unto the *Son he saith*, **THY THRONE, O GOD, IS FOR EVER AND EVER: A SCEPTRE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE SCEPTRE OF THY KINGDOM.**" (Heb.1:6-8) Luther derives true Godhead of Jesus from these verses arguing that " Although we read that the angels were worshipped by Moses, by Lot and Abraham, and by Joshua and other prophets...yet nowhere do we read that angels worshipped any angel or man. Therefore there is firm proof that the man Christ is true God, because it is recorded that He is worshipped by the angels, not only by some but by every one of them."<sup>460</sup>

Luther translates verse 8 the way it is translated above and observes: "But everything that is said in this verse is so inconsistent with all understanding that those who want to grasp the truth of these things have need of an exceedingly robust faith. For if considered according to the outward appearance, nothing is more unlike a throne and the throne of God than the people of Christ, since it does not seem to be a kingdom but a place of exile, or to be living but to be constantly dying, or to be in glory but in disgrace, or to dwell in wealth but to dwell in extreme poverty, as everyone who wants to share in this kingdom is compelled to experience in himself."<sup>461</sup>

Perhaps this is due to the influence of Pauline and Johannine Christology that the Apostolic Fathers felt no hesitation to confess Jesus' divinity and deity. Ignatius, for instance, asserted the pre-existence of Jesus Christ in the following words. He "was with the Father before the world, and appeared at the end of time." Christ is "His Word (Logos) that proceeded from silence." Ignatius further argued, that " There is only one physician of flesh and of spirit, generate and ungenerate, God in man."<sup>462</sup> It has been observed that "Ignatius gives to Christ repeatedly the name "God", not as if He were God absolutely, yet implying proper divinity."<sup>463</sup>

It seems clear from the above discussion that some of the New Testament books, especially if understood in light of the later theological developments, have probably exalted Jesus the Christ to the status of proper divinity and made him, in certain passages, equal to God. Though there are various interpretations given to these passages, the possibility of deriving the later christological claims of absolute divinity (like that of Father in all respects) is questionable, especially in light of the monotheistic passages in the New Testament books. There are several passages, particularly in the Synoptic Gospels, that emphasize Almighty God's absolute unity and uniqueness.(see Mk.12:29-32) However, the above quoted Pauline and Johannine passages can be treated as leading to some of the later claims about proper divinity of Christ with some artificial efforts on the part of the interpreter. On the other hand, there are other passages that lead to Jesus' subordination to God the Father and his adoption at baptism.(Lk.6:12, 10:22, Mt.19:17, 11:27, Jn.7:29-33, for adoption see Mt.3:16-17, Lk.3:22). Pelikan observes that the above mentioned "divinity" passages alongwith "subordination or adoption" passages, when studied in light of the four sets of Old Testament passages, ultimately speak of "Christ as divine". These four sets of Old Testament



passages are: "Passages of adoption, which, by identifying a point in time at which he became divine, implied that the status of God was conferred on the man Jesus Christ at his baptism or at his resurrection; passages of identity, which, by speaking of Yahweh as "the Lord," posited a simple identification of Christ with God; passages of distinction, which, by speaking of one "Lord" and of another "Lord," drew some difference between them; and passages of derivation, which, by referring to the Father as "the greater" or using such titles as angel, Spirit, Logos, and Son, suggested that he "came from" God and was in some sense less than God."<sup>464</sup>

It must be added here that all the above mentioned passages do not prove the hard and absolute divinity of Jesus that has been believed by a great many traditional Christians. These passages could be interpreted as giving a divine status to Jesus, although leaving a number of important issues unresolved regarding Jesus' relationship with God and with human beings.

However, the early Church had no hesitation in assigning Jesus the proper divinity along with absolute divine titles, actions, attributes and functions.<sup>465</sup> Such an ascription to Jesus of proper divinity did not cause many problems as long as the faith was confined to the Christians interested solely in the salvation. It was God and God alone and nobody less than Him who could have brought salvation to the sin-ripped human beings. That is the implication from the oldest surviving sermon of the Christian church after the New Testament writings, saying, "Brethren, we ought so to think of Jesus Christ as of God, as of the judge of living and dead. And we ought not to belittle our salvation; for when we belittle him, we expect also to receive little."<sup>466</sup> The problem surfaced when the Church had to face the external world and prove to them the significance and wisdom of Christian teachings. For the one whom Christians had called God was also the one who was born, lived an ordinary natural life for thirty or so years, ate, drank, suffered and was relentlessly crucified, and these were the realities which the Church itself witnessed. The Alexandrian philosopher Celsus' observations pinpoint the problem. He argued that "Everyone saw his suffering, but only a disciple and a half crazed woman saw him risen. His followers then made a God of him, like Antinous... The idea of the coming down of God is senseless. Why did God come down for justification of all things? Does not this make God changeable?"<sup>467</sup> The pagan Celsus vehemently attacked the Christian concept of the Deity and dubbed it as thoroughly corporeal and anthropomorphic. He concluded that "Christianity is not merely a religious revolution with profound social and political consequences; it is essentially hostile to all positive human values. The Christians say... 'Do not ask questions, only believe'. They say, 'Wisdom is foolishness with God'... they will flee to the last refuge of the intellectually destitute, 'Anything is possible to God'."<sup>468</sup> Clement and Origen's statements regarding the difficulties of biblical anthropomorphisms and their insistence upon utter transcendence of God, as discussed above, were responses to such penetrating attacks.

In the words of Grillmeier "The hour had come for the birth of speculative theology, of theological reflection, of *theologie savante*. The confession of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the *novum* of Christian faith... demanded of Christian theology a twofold demonstration, first that it was compatible with Jewish monotheism, and secondly that it was different from pagan polytheism"<sup>469</sup> There was pressure from within too. In the first place this confusion called forth some of the earliest doctrinal controversies in the Church itself and then forced the Church to become

more precise and defend logically or in intelligible terms this seemingly contradictory position to the attacks of Jews and pagans. Within Christianity, voices like "his suffering was but a make believe" were raised by Marcion, Ptolemy and Gnostics. Marcion, for instance, absolutely denied Jesus' humanity. Jesus "was too lofty to be confined within the prison of the flesh."<sup>470</sup>

The Church while trying to defend Christs' humanity could not escape itself from the very problem it was trying to solve, the problem of `docetism', as J. Pelikan observes: " the historical principle that the line of demarcation between orthodoxy and heresy must not be drawn prematurely or too precisely is borne out by the evidence that such docetism was not confined to the Gnostics and other heretics, but was sufficiently widespread within the churches to evoke the reiterated warnings of early Christian writers. Although the overt assertion that "his suffering was but a make-believe " was the teaching of Gnostics and was early and easily identified as heretical, the example of Clement of Alexandria shows that docetizing tendencies, even among orthodox believers, must be seen as one way to "think of Jesus Christ as of God."<sup>471</sup> Bigg finds the Platonist Clement "near to the confines of Docetism".<sup>472</sup> Moltmann observes that "The more it emphasized the divinity of Christ, making use of this concept of God, the more difficult it became to demonstrate that the Son of God who was of one substance with God was Jesus of Nazareth, crucified under Pontius Pilate. Consequently, a mild docetism runs through the christology of the ancient church."<sup>473</sup>

Christianity had no choice but to be a little more precise in its' teachings regarding the relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Christ to avert the intellectual attacks of paganism, Greek philosophy and Judaism in an effort to prove them its' validity. It was difficult for non-Christian Jews and pagans to understand the assertions of strict monotheism on one hand and divinity of Jesus Christ and suffering and crucifixion of the true God on the other hand.

The Christian apologists like Justin Martyr, Theophilus, Tatian, Aristides and Athenagoras responded to this rather embarrassing situation with philosophical suppositions and concepts to vindicate the truth of Christianity.<sup>474</sup> They tried to draw a rather clear line between God and Jesus using the philosophical concepts available.

Justin, the most renowned of them, insisted that though Jesus has come from God he is not identical with God. "The ineffable Father and Lord of all," he says, "neither comes anywhere nor walks nor sleeps nor rise up, but remains in his own place wherever that may be, quick to behold, quick to hear, not with eyes or ears but with indescribable power."<sup>475</sup> Justin conceived of God "as a transcendent being who could not possibly come into contact with the world of men or things. To suppose that he had appeared in Christ, had been born of a woman, and had finally died upon the cross seemed altogether absurd."<sup>476</sup> Strong belief in God's transcendence did not stop Justin from thinking of Jesus as divine. To defend Christ's relationship with God he made use of the current Christian phraseology and called Jesus the Son of God, Logos and also the Angel. Christ, according to him, was worthy of these titles on account of his wisdom, virgin birth and because he was God's first begotten Logos: "Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee." The Son of God was not a man like other men. He is "generate- but in a special sense. He is God born of God, as fire is kindled by fire, or light is produced from the sun. That is, he is divine, but in a derivative or secondary way."<sup>477</sup> In the words of Norris "it was derivative, and for that reason infe-

rior to the one God.... In Justin's system there truly was, in the last resort, only one ultimate God. The Logos represented a slightly lower level of divinity, something between the pure divinity of God and the nondivinity of creatures. Justin had made sense of the incarnational picture of Jesus by adopting a hierarchical picture of the world-order in which the Logos stands as a kind of bumper state between God and the world, and it is this fact that makes Justin's Christology problematic."<sup>478</sup> He was pre-existent Logos, God's agent in the creation, through whom all the creatures were created. Therefore, he can be called Lord and worshipped as divine but of second rank as Justin in one of his confessions puts it: "Thus we are not atheists, since we worship the creator of this universe...and that we with good reason honour Him Who has taught us these things and was born for this purpose, Jesus Christ, Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate...having learned that He is the Son of the true God and holding Him in the second rank, and the prophetic Spirit third in order, we shall proceed to demonstrate."<sup>479</sup>

Justin could not have convinced his Jewish counterparts with such kind of hierarchical interpretations of Godhead and derivative nature of divinity. Monotheism stood in his way as an insurmountable hurdle. He adopted another way trying to prove that the Jewish Scriptures bore witness to two Gods: first the transcendent, supreme, unbegotten, ingenerate God, the ineffable Father, who never appeared on the earth, and secondly, the God of theophanies, who came down to earth on several occasions and finally became incarnate in Christ. In his Dialogue with Trypho, the Jew, he argued the matter at length, "I will give you, my friends, another testimony from the Scriptures that as a beginning before all creatures God begat from himself a certain rational power which is called by the Holy Spirit now Glory of the Lord, again Wisdom, again Angel, again God, again Lord, and Logos. Also he called himself Captain of the host when appeared to Jesus the Son of Nave in the form of a man. For he can be called by all these names since he serves the Father's will and was begotten of the Father by will."<sup>480</sup> And "when my God says 'God went up from Abraham,' or 'the Lord spake unto Moses,' and 'the Lord came down to see the tower which the sons of men had built,'... you must not imagine that the unbegotten God himself came down or went up anywhere....Therefore not Abraham nor Isaac nor Jacob nor any other man saw the Father and ineffable Lord of all and of Christ himself as well, but they saw him who according to his will was at once God, his Son, and the angel who ministered to his will, and who it pleased him should be born man by the Virgin; who also was fire when he spake with Moses from the bush."<sup>481</sup>

As the passage just quoted indicates, to Justin, the Christ was the Logos, the divine reason, the second God of the Old Testament theophanies, begotten before the creation of the world, who became incarnate in the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth. Justin also called the *Logos* as the servant, the angel, the apostle. Grillmeier observes that "In calling the Logos the servant, the apostle, the angel of the absolutely transcendent Father, Justin gives him a diminished transcendence, even if he does not make him a creature. He compares the Logos with Herms, the Logos-interpreter of Zeus... There is a *deus inferior* subordinate to the *theos hypsistos*."<sup>482</sup> The other apologists like Tatian and Hippolytus followed Justin in his ideas of God's transcendence, ineffability, immutability and otherness while maintaining his Logos Christology. Tatian, for instance, argued that "The Lord of all, who is himself the ground of everything, was alone, in so far as the creation had not yet come to pass"<sup>483</sup> Therefore there was no eternal pre-existent Logos in a distinct existence.

J.N.D. Kelly underlines the two most important points that were common among all the Apologists, "(a) that for all of them the description 'God the Father' connoted, not the first Person of the Holy Trinity, but the one Godhead considered as author of whatever exists; and (b) that they all, Athenagoras included, dated the generation of the Logos, and His eligibility for the title 'Son', not from His origination within the being of the Godhead, but from His emission or putting forth for the purposes of creation, revelation and redemption. Unless these points are firmly grasped, and their significance appreciated, a completely distorted view of the Apologists' theology is liable to result. Two stock criticisms of it, for example, are that they failed to distinguish the Logos from the Father until He was required for the work of creation, and that, as a corollary, they were guilty of subordinating the Son to the Father. These objections have a superficial validity in the light of post-Nicene orthodoxy, with its doctrine of the Son's eternal generation and its fully worked out conception of Hypostases or Persons; but they make no sense in the thought-atmosphere in which the Apologists moved."<sup>484</sup> Kelly further argues: "when, Justin spoke of Him as a 'second God' worshipped 'in a secondary rank', and when all the Apologists stressed that His generation or emission resulted from an act of Father's will, their object was not so much to subordinate Him as to safeguard the monotheism which they considered indispensable. The Logos as manifested must necessarily be limited as compared with the Godhead Itself; and it was important to emphasize that there were not two springs of initiative within the Divine Being. That the Logos was one in essence with the Father, inseparable in His fundamental being from Him as much after His generation as prior to it, the Apologists were never weary of reiterating."<sup>485</sup>

Grillmeier, on the other hand, argues that "The coming Arian struggles are no more than the consequence of the error which was introduced at the time of the Apologists. The error lay in the fact that the Stoic Logos was essentially monistic, and was understood in relation to the world. As Middle Platonism and also Alexandrian Judaism overstressed the absolute transcendence of God, his invisibility and his unknowableness, the Logos was too much restricted to the role of subordinate mediator. God the Father was thought to have such an absolute transcendence that he could not possibly deal actively with men (R. Holte). The danger of subordination was not far off. This danger was increased by the idea which linked too closely together the procession of the Logos and the creation of the world, the creation and redemption of man."<sup>486</sup>

Church Fathers like Tertullian and Origen clearly maintained the apologists positions in regards to Christ's relationship with God. Tertullian accepting Justin's mediatorial idea of Logos differentiated between God and Jesus, the Word, by arguing, "by him who is invisible, we must understand the Father in the fullness of his majesty, while we recognize the Son as visible by reason of dispensation of his derived existence."<sup>487</sup> Tertullian in his treatise *Against Praxeas* explained that the Logos first existed in God as his Reason and then was "made a second" to God, or "uttered" as the Word through whom all the things were made. There is a crystal clear demarcation line in Tertullian between God the Father and Logos emphasizing the mediatorial and secondary character of Logos and his "derivation and portion", to use his terms, from the father's divine substance.<sup>488</sup> He observes that "With regard to him (the Logos), we are taught he is derived from God and begotten by derivation so that he is Son of God and called God because of the unity of substance."<sup>489</sup>

God's transcendence and *monarchia* is preserved as the Son uses the powers and the rule given to him by the Father. The Son will give it back to the Father at the end of this world period. Moreover, as Grillmeier observes, "The Father is the guarantee of the unity of God, of the *monarchia*. The Son is assigned the second and the Spirit the third place. Here Tertullian is thinking not of a purely static threeness within God, the metaphysical Trinity, but of an economic, organic, dynamic threeness i.e. for him the second and third persons proceed from the *unitas substantiae* because they have a task to fulfill. Only the Father remains completely transcendent."<sup>490</sup> G. L. Prestige views the same organic unity in Tertullian thought: "The unity constitutes the triad out of his own inherent nature, not by any process of sub-division, but by reason of a principle of constructive integration which the Godhead essentially possesses. In other words, his idea of unity is not mathematical, but philosophical; it is an organic unity, not an abstract, bare point."<sup>491</sup> It is Tertullian who introduced the concept of 'person' in christology. He argued that the triune God is one in substance and different in person: "You have two (Father-Son), one commanding a thing to be made, another making it. But how you must understand "another" I Have already professed, in the sense of person, not of substance."<sup>492</sup> Grillmeier observes that "Tertullian's particular contribution to the problem of the unity of Christ is the introduction of the concept of person into christology, and the christological formula thus formed, which already seems to point to the formula of Chalcedon."<sup>493</sup>

Origen also emphasized the derivative, intermediary and secondary role of Jesus. "As an act of will proceeds from the mind without either cutting off any part of the mind or separated or divided from it, in some similar fashion has the Father begotten the Son."<sup>494</sup> He differs from Justin and Tertullian in saying that the Logos is the eternal self-expression of God and is of the same substance as God, "The Father did not beget the Son once for all, and let him go after he was begotten but he is always begetting him."<sup>495</sup> Origen's idea of the eternal generation of the Logos did not mean that he made the Logos equal with God. In his treatise *Against Celsus* he clearly differentiated between the Logos and the God by making the Logos subordinate to the latter and so declaring him in some sense less than God and a "second God".<sup>496</sup> McGiffert commenting on Origen's Logos Christology observes that there is marked subordinationism in Origen because he was "always more interested in the subordination of the Son to the Father than his oneness with him."<sup>497</sup> Kelly writes, that "the impact of Platonism reveals itself in the thoroughgoing subordinationism which is integral to Origen's Trinitarian scheme."<sup>498</sup> Kelly further observes that "The unity between Father and Son corresponds to that between light and its brightness, water and the steam which rises from it. Different in form, both share the same essential nature; and if, in the strictest sense, the Father alone is God, that is not because the Son is not also God or does not possess the Godhead, but because, as Son, He possesses it by participation or derivatively."<sup>499</sup> Bigg observes that "We shall however wrong Origen, if we attempt to derive his subordinationism from metaphysical considerations. It is purely Scriptural, and rests wholly and entirely upon the words of Jesus, 'My Father is greater than I', 'That they may know Thee the only true God', 'None is Good save One'. "<sup>500</sup>

Kelly further argues that "It is not altogether fair to conclude, as many have done, that Origen teaches a triad of disparate beings rather than a Trinity; but the strongly pluralist strain in his Trinitarianism is its salient feature. The Three, on his analysis, are eternally and really distinct; they are separate hypostases or even, in his crude-sounding language, 'things'. But he attempts to

meet the most stringent demands of monotheism by insisting that the fullness of unoriginate Godhead is concentrated in the Father, Who alone is 'the fountain-head of deity'... The Son and the Spirit are divine (in fact, he is remarkably reticent about the latter's status), but the Godhead which They possess, and which constitutes Their essence, wells up and is derived from the Father's being."<sup>501</sup> They are of secondary rank and merit secondary honour. Therefore " we should not pray to any generate being, not even to Christ, but only to the God and Father of the universe, to Whom our Saviour Himself prayed'; if prayer is offered to Christ, it is conveyed by Him to the Father. Indeed, the Son and the Spirit are transcended by the Father just as much as, if not more than, They Themselves transcend the realm of inferior beings; and if sometimes Origen's language seems to contradict this, suggesting that the Son is God from the beginning, very Word, absolute Wisdom and truth, the explanation is that He may appear such to creatures, but from the viewpoint of the ineffable Godhead He is the first in the chain of emanations. This conception of a descending hierarchy, itself the product of his Platonizing background, is epitomized in the statement that, whereas the Father's action extends to all reality, the Son's is limited to rational beings, and the Spirit's to those who are being sanctified."<sup>502</sup>

Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria were perhaps more traditionalists than philosophers looking for intellectual interpretations to denote relationship between Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. They differed with the apologists in their understanding of Logos Christology. To both, the Logos who became incarnate in Jesus Christ was no less than God himself. Irenaeus in his famous treatise *Against Heresies* argued that " the Logos who "existed in the beginning with God," "through whom everything was made," and who has always been humanity's companion is the one who, in the last days, at the moment preordained by the Father, was united to the creature he had shaped, and became a human being subject to hurt. Consequently, there is no place for the objection of those who say, "If the Christ was born at that moment, then he did not exist prior to it." We have shown that, since he has always existed with the Father, he did not begin to be God's Son at that particular point."<sup>503</sup> He further argued that "it was impossible for a humanity which had fallen under the domination of sin to lay hold on salvation. Therefore, the Son accomplished the both things. Existing as God's Logos, he descended from the Father and became en-fleshed and humbled himself to the point of death and completed God's program for our salvation."<sup>504</sup> While emphasizing the salvation he maintained that "the Logos of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who on account of his great love became what we are that he might make us what he is himself."<sup>505</sup> "How can they be saved unless it be God who wrought out their salvation on earth? And how shall man be changed into God unless God has been changed into man?"<sup>506</sup> Therefore, "The Logos of God became a human being, and the Son of God was made Son of man, so that humanity, having received the Logos and accepted adoption, might become Son of God. The only way in which we could receive incorruption and immortality was by being united with them. But how could we be united with incorruption and immortality unless first of all they became what we are, so that "that corruptible might be swallowed up by incorruption and the mortal by immortality" [1 Cor. 15:53-54] and so we might receive adoption as son?"<sup>507</sup>

To think of the Logos in derivative terms and to subordinate him to God or think of him as another being as Apologists did, to Irenaeus, was detrimental to his saving work and hence impossible. He identified the Logos or the Son with the Father completely. "Through the Logos himself made visible and palpable the Father was shown forth although not all alike believed in him. But all saw the Father in the Son. For the Father is the invisible of the Son, but the Son is

all saw the Father in the Son. For the Father is the invisible of the Son, but the Son is the visible of the Father."<sup>508</sup> And again "But God being all mind and all Logos what he thinks he says and what he says he thinks. For his thought is Logos and Logos is mind and mind comprehending all things is itself the Father."<sup>509</sup> In short the Logos is God but God revealed and not God unapproachable, inaccessible and apart from the world.

Clement of Alexandria, in spite of his Platonist inclinations, to Kelly "was a moralist rather than a systematic theologian",<sup>510</sup> takes an almost identical course in determining Jesus' relationship with God. Jesus to him is neither derived nor a secondary or subordinate divine being but God divine in his own rights. Bigg observes that "the idea of subordination is strictly secondary in Clement. The text 'None is good save One' does not mean to him what it meant to his scholar."<sup>511</sup> In the tenth chapter of his "Protrepticus" Clement calls him "the truly most manifest God."<sup>512</sup> The Son was not generate, "His generation from the Father is without beginning ('the Father is not without His Son'); and He is essentially one with Him, since the Father is in Him and He in the Father."<sup>513</sup> Bigg observes that "Clement's mode of statement is such as to involve necessarily the Unity, Equality, and Eternity of the First and Second Persons. It has been asserted, that he hardly leaves sufficient room for a true distinction of Hypostasis."<sup>514</sup> He further observes that "So complete is the union, that he does not hesitate to transfer to the Son the peculiar titles of the Father. If the one is 'beyond all intelligible', so also is the other; if the one is Almighty, so also is the other; and, following the example of Philo and Justin, Clement applies to the Son passages of the Old Testament, where Lord is employed as the substitute for Jehovah."<sup>515</sup> Like Irenaeus he declares the Son to be God in relations, "through the Logos God creates and governs and reveals. In himself he is far away and inaccessible, but in Logos he is near and pervades all beings."<sup>516</sup>

One can see the difficulties involved in quoting Clement as the Christian intellectual thinker who insisted upon the sheer transcendence of the Deity. To him "Jesus alone is both God and Man. He who is God became Man, that we might become gods."<sup>517</sup> It has been doubted whether he ascribed to Jesus a human soul but it is certain that he insisted that "His Flesh was not wholly like ours..."<sup>518</sup> In view of such a manifest insistence upon the unity and equality of Christ with God, it is extremely difficult to present Clement as the herald and hero of the Christian transcendental God Paradigm. Many a modern scholars seem to make such an assertion about Clement.

Kelly, however, argues that Clement "clearly distinguishes the Three, and the charge of modalism, based on his lack of any technical term to designate the Persons, is groundless; and if he appears to subordinate the Son to the Father and the Spirit to the Son, this subordination implies no inequality of being, but is the corollary of his Platonic conception of a graded hierarchy."<sup>519</sup> Grillmeier argues that "It is true that Clement has repeatedly been suspected of docetism, but he consistently maintains the reality of the human nature of Christ, though at the same time his tendency to spiritualize seems to make the reality of the incarnation merely relative. Attempts have also been made to interpret the figure of Christ which Clement presents as the union of the Logos with a mere unsouled fleshly nature, a position where the special significance of the Logos in Alexandrian christology would become manifest. Put in these terms, however, such an interpretation is mistaken. The tradition of Christ's soul is clearly still so vigorous that even the teaching of animation through the Logos cannot obscure it. Nevertheless, we find in Clement precisely that

element of the non-Christian Logos doctrine which leads to the total obscuring of the distinction between Logos and soul in his christology." <sup>520</sup>

We can conclude this part of the discussion by the observation that until the second century A.D., the Christian God Paradigm in general and the doctrine of Christ's Person were not fixed. It was flexible, fluid and confusing. The ideas of subordination, derivative and secondary rank of the Christ were common among thoughtful Christians like Justin and Origen. The traditionalists as well as the orthodox Church, if we can possibly use the term for convenience purposes, inclined more towards Unity, Equality and Eternity of the Christ, and that on par with God the Father, but not without confusions and problems. It seems like Docetism. They were accused of corporealism, anthropomorphism, and irrationalism by their opponents, as we have already seen in the case of Celsus.

### **THE MONARCHIANS :**

From the start, the belief that Christ was a god was common among many Christians, especially the Gentiles. There were many who felt it degrading to assign Jesus a secondary or subordinated position. To "associate another God with him and particularly to put another God above him offended them deeply. If it were necessary to recognize a creating as well as saving God, then the Lord Jesus Christ whom they worshipped, and faith in whom had brought them into the Christian church, was himself creator as well as saviour; they neither knew nor cared to know any other God apart from him."<sup>521</sup> There are traces of such tendencies among Christians during Justin's times who in his Apology makes explicit references to groups such as these. Writing in the early third century Hippolytus of Rome observed, "Cleomenes and his followers declare that he (Christ) is the God and Father of the universe."<sup>522</sup> They were later called "Modalist Monarchians".

J.N.D. Kelly well summarizes 'Modalistic Monarchianism' as follows: "This was a fairly widespread, popular trend of thought which could reckon on, at any rate, a measure of sympathy in official circles; and the driving-force behind it was the twofold conviction, passionately held, of the oneness of God and the full deity of Christ. What forced it into the open was the mounting suspicion that the former of these truths was being endangered by the new Logos doctrine and by the efforts of theologians to represent the Godhead as having revealed Itself in the economy as tri-personal. Any suggestion that the Word or Son was other than, or a distinct Person from, the Father seemed to the modalists (we recall that the ancient view that 'Father' signified the Godhead Itself was still prevalent) to lead inescapably to blasphemy of two Gods."<sup>523</sup> It was Praxeas (c. 210 C.E.) and then Noetus, both of Asia Minor, who gave this belief a regular theological touch around 200 A.D. They argued that the whole of God was present in Jesus. It was Sabellius (c. 215 C.E.) who became the most vocal and important theologian of the movement. Their position was quite simple. There is no God but the one creator and sustainer of the world as stated in the Scriptures. Christ was God. Then he is that creator whom people call as Father. They made use of passages of Identity like "I and the Father are one" and stressed absolute likeness and identity of Jesus with God. Hippolytus quotes them saying, "there exists one and same Being, called Father and Son, not one derived from the other, but himself from himself, nominally called Father and Son according to changing of times; and that this One is that appeared [ to the patriarchs ], and



submitted to birth from a virgin, and conversed as man among men. On account of his birth that has taken place he confessed himself to be the Son to those who saw him, while to those who could receive it he did not hid the fact that he was the Father."<sup>524</sup> Epiphanius quotes Sabellians as saying, "Do we have one God or three?" If one, then words of Isaiah 44:6 applied also to Christ: "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; beside me there is no God."<sup>525</sup>

Kelly observes that we cannot be sure of all the details of the position ascribed to Sabellius as "Most of the surviving evidence dates from a century or more after his lifetime, when his theology and that of the much more familiar Marcellus of Ancyra were hopelessly confused. One point which seems to be established is that the traditional belief that he spoke of Father, Son and Spirit as three *prosopa*, in the sense of masks or outward appearances, is erroneous. The term... was used by Hippolytus to signify the otherness, or separate subsistence, of the Son, as revealed in the economy, from the father, and it is most unlikely that Sabellius used it with a diametrically opposite meaning. Indeed, Hippolytus clearly implies that for Callistus, whom he regarded as a Sabellian, the Godhead was but a single *prosopon*, i.e. individual or Person."<sup>526</sup> It seems that Sabellians, as they were called, were interested in monotheism. "It was his interest in monotheism" observes Harnack, "that influenced Sabellius."<sup>527</sup> They accused orthodox Christians, as Tertullian reports, of polytheism, "they accuse us of preaching two and three Gods while they claim that they are worshippers of one God."<sup>528</sup> As a result, Tertullian gave them the name "Monarchians" which has clung to them to this day. Historically they are called the 'Modalist Monarchians'.

This extreme position and preciseness in regards to Jesus' relationship with God may have been an off-shoot of orthodox teachings and underlying ambiguity, as Harnack observes: "many facts observed in reference to the earliest bodies of Monarchians that come clearly before us, seem to prove that they bore features which must be characterized as pre-Catholic, but not un-Catholic."<sup>529</sup> Worshipping Jesus with absolute titles like the Lord and explicitly calling him God could have led anybody to eradicate the distinction between Jesus and God. We are told that phrases such as "God is born," "the suffering God," or "the dead God" were so widespread among Christians that even Tertullian, for all his hostility to the Modalist Monarchians, could not escape using them. Therefore, "taken as it stands, that is, as Hippolytus and Tertullian have reported it, this doctrine of the relation between Christ and God turns out to have been a systematization of popular Christian belief."<sup>530</sup> It was a bold step towards giving a precise theological color to the rather ambiguous Christian devotional language but the Church could not accept it because of its' implications. It was nothing but naive anthropomorphism and patripassianism. Though it safeguarded Jesus' deity as well as monotheism, the objective for which the Church had been aspiring, the Church could not approve of it in such bold terms because of its' subtle implications. Linwood Urban observes that "If the whole of God is present in the historic Jesus, the *transcendence* of God is nullified. The Pre-Nicene solution asserts that there is part of God which is not incarnate, and so allows for God to transcend his presence in Jesus."<sup>531</sup>

In his work *Against Praxeas* Tertullian explains the reason arguing, "How is it that the omnipotent, invisible God, whom no man hath seen or can see, who inhabiteth light inaccessible...how is it, I say, that the Most High should have walked at evening in paradise seeking Adam,...unless these things were an image and a type and an allegory? These things indeed could not have been

believed even of the Son of God, had they not been written; perhaps they could have not believed of the Father even had they been written. For these persons bring him down into Mary's womb, place him at Pilot's tribunal, and shut him in the tomb of Joseph. Hence their error becomes evident....Thus they believe that it was always one God, the Father, who did the things which were really done through the Son."<sup>532</sup> God's transcendence and ineffability was at stake, so the defenders of orthodoxy except Zephyrinus, the bishop of Rome, condemned this group of Monarchians as heretics. Then formally, in the sixth-century Synod of Braga orthodoxy decreed that "If anyone does not confess that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are three persons of one essence and virtue and power, as the catholic apostolic church teaches, but says that [they are] a single and solitary person, in such a way that the Father is the same as the Son and this One is also the Paraclete Spirit, as Sabellius and Priscillian have said, let him be anathema."<sup>533</sup> In order to preserve God's transcendence and stability, observes Urban, "Trinitarians were ready to give up the divine simplicity. Trinitarians assert that, although God is one and simple in most respects, there are some in which he is Triune."<sup>534</sup>

The Monarchian anthropomorphic position has continued to crop up even after its condemnation. For through-out Christian history "men have been frequently condemned for denying the deity of Christ but rarely for denying the distinction between the Father and the Son. To deny the former has generally seemed unchristian; to deny the latter only unintelligent."<sup>535</sup>

In spite of strong opposition, Modalism or the crystal clear anthropomorphic concept of God remained widespread, especially among the simpleminded and ordinary Christians. It was shared, as observes McGiffert, "by the majority of the common people and was in harmony with the dominant piety of the age. "What harm am I doing in glorifying Christ?" was the question of Noetus and in it he voiced the sentiment of multitudes."<sup>536</sup>

### **Dynamic Monarchianism:**

Meanwhile, another kind of Monarchianism became current both in the East and West and took the question of Jesus' relationship with God to the other extreme. In the west Theodotus (c. 190 C.E.), the leather-worker, who was afterwards "characterized as the "founder, leader, and father of the God-denying revolt," (adoptionism),<sup>537</sup> taught regarding the Person of Christ, "that Jesus was a man, who, by a special decree of God, was born of a virgin through the operation of the Holy Spirit; but that we were not to see in him a heavenly being, who had assumed flesh in the virgin. After the piety of his life had been thoroughly tested, the Holy Ghost descended upon him in baptism; by this means he became Christ and received his equipment...for his special vocation; and he demonstrated the righteousness, in virtue of which he excelled all men, and was, of necessity, their authority. Yet the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus was not sufficient to justify the contention that he was now "God"."<sup>538</sup> Such an understanding of Jesus, observes Urban, "preserved the simplicity of God, but at the price of unfaithfulness to the tradition."<sup>539</sup>

In the East this movement was significantly revived under the leadership of Paul of Samosata, the bishop of Antioch, the capital of Queen Zenobia of Palmyra's kingdom. There, says Fisher, "he exercised an authority almost equivalent to that of a viceroy."<sup>540</sup> He propounded a peculiar form of dynamic theory by opposing the already dominant doctrine of the essential natural deity of

Christ. He taught that Jesus was merely a man from beneath and not one in substance with God. The "Redeemer was by the constitution of his nature a man, who arose in time by birth; he was accordingly "from beneath", but the Logos of God inspired him from above. The union of the Logos with the man Jesus is to be represented as an indwelling by means of an inspiration acting from without, so the Logos becomes that in Jesus which in the Christian is called by the Apostle " the inner man"; ...the Logos dwelt in Jesus not " in substance but in quality".... Therefore the Logos is to be steadily distinguished from Jesus; he is greater than the latter. Mary did not bear the Logos, but a man like us in his nature, and in his baptism it was not the Logos, but the man, was anointed with the Spirit. However, Jesus was, on the other hand, vouchsafed the divine grace in a special degree, and his position was unique. Moreover, the proof he gave of his moral perfection corresponded to his peculiar equipment. The only unity between two persons, accordingly between God and Jesus, is that of the disposition and the will."<sup>541</sup>

As Jesus advanced in the manifestation of goodness and submission to the will of God, he became the "Redeemer and Savior of the human race, and at the same time entered into an eternally indissoluble union with God, because his love can never cease. Now he has obtained from God, as the reward of his love, the name which is above every name; God has committed to him the Judgment, and invested him with divine dignity, so that now we can call him "God" [born] of the virgin". So also we are entitled to speak of a pre-existence of Christ in the prior decree and prophecy of God, and to say that he became God through divine grace and his constant manifestation of goodness."<sup>542</sup> It is clear that Paul did not believe in the divine nature of Jesus. On the other hand, in addition to his adoptionism, he sought to prove that the assumption that Jesus has the divine nature or was by nature Son of God "led to having two gods, to the destruction of Monotheism."<sup>543</sup> He became God but somehow, as says, Paul Tillich,"he had to deserve to become God."<sup>544</sup> He banished from divine service all Church psalms that expressed in any sense the essential divinity of Christ.

Paul was condemned at a Synod of Antioch held in 268, two earlier synods having failed to take action in the matter. He was declared as heretical because he denied Jesus' pre-existence and his unity of substance with God or in other words his proper divinity.

Though both types of Monarchianisms were condemned as heretical they, in different ways, challenged and pushed the orthodoxy to look into the immense difficulties involved in their understanding of the transcendence and unity of God and clarify it in intelligible terms. The orthodox Fathers insisted upon their concept of relative unity of God by holding to their Logos Christology. By the end of the third century the Logos Christology became generally accepted in all parts of the church and found its place in most of the creeds framed in that period, especially in the East.<sup>545</sup>

### **Arianism:**

Though the official Logos Christology, or belief in the divine nature of Jesus, disposed of the divine-human doctrine of Dynamic Monarchianism, their doctrine did not pass without leaving a trace. Lucian and Arius were inspired, as observes Harnack, "by the genius of Paul."<sup>546</sup> Arius, to

use Kelly's term "the arch-heretic Arius", a presbyter from Alexandria, who according to W. Bright, was "a man of mark", "went about from house to house, energetically propagating opinions which caused, by degrees, a vehement excitement, in regards to the nature of the Son of God."<sup>547</sup> Miss Dorothy Sayers has neatly paraphrased the impact of Arius' views saying:

"If you want the logos doctrine, I can serve it hot and hot:  
God beget him and before he was begotten he was not."<sup>548</sup>

Arius maintained that God is one both in substance and in person. He is the only eternal and un-originated being. The Logos, the pre-existent being, is merely a creature. There was a time when he was not and then was created by the Father out of nothing. "If the Son of God is real *Son*, then what is true in all cases of paternal and filial relationship is true in this case. But what is true in regard to such relationship is, that a father exists before a son. Therefore, the Divine Father existed before the Divine Son. Therefore, once the Son did not exist. Therefore, He was made, like all creatures, of an essence or being which previously had been non-existent."<sup>549</sup> Arius, observes Norris, "was a firm believer not only in the unity of God but also in a doctrine of divine transcendence which saw God's way of being as inconsistent with that of the created order. Logically enough, therefore, his doctrine of the Logos was so formulated as to express two convictions: first, that the Logos cannot be God in the proper sense; second, that the Logos performs an essential mediatorial role in the relation of God to world. He taught, accordingly, that the Logos belongs to the created order but at the same time that he is quite superior creature, ranking above all others because he was brought into being by God "before the ages" to act as the agent of God in creation."<sup>550</sup> In Arius' words "The Father alone is God, and the Son is so called only in a lower and improper sense. He is not the essence of the Father, but a creature essentially like other creatures...or unique among them. His uniqueness may imply high prerogatives, but no creature can be a Son of God in the primary sense of full divinity."<sup>551</sup> Arius, observes Hilaire Belloc, "was willing to grant our Lord every kind of honour and majesty short of the full nature of the God-head...He was granted one might say (paradoxically) all the divine attributes- except divinity."<sup>552</sup>

God is perfect but the Son of God advances in wisdom and knowledge and hence is changeable. The Son can be called Logos but is to be sharply distinguished from the eternal impersonal logos or reason of God. The essence of the Son is identical neither with that of God nor with that of human beings. The Son, who became incarnate in Jesus, is the first of all creatures and hence higher in order than any other being whether angels or men. Jesus did not have a human soul. "The soul of Christ was the Logos; only his body was human. As a consequence all that he did and suffered was done and suffered by the Logos."<sup>553</sup> Because of what he did during his earthly life, maintaining unswerving devotion to the divine will, the Son was given glory and lordship and would even be called "God" and worshipped. But to identify him with God's essence "is to commit blasphemy."<sup>554</sup> "So stark a monotheism", observes Pelikan, "implied an equally uncompromising view of divine transcendence."<sup>555</sup> Arius then was, we can conclude with Bright, "speaking of Him as, after all, only the eldest and highest of creatures; not denying to him the title of God, but by limitations and glosses abating its real power."<sup>556</sup>

H. M. Gwatkin argues that "The Lord's deity had been denied often enough before, and so had his humanity; but it was reserved for Arianism at once to affirm and to nullify them both. The doctrine is heathen to the core, for the Arian Christ is nothing but a heathen demigod. But of the

Jewish spirit it had absolutely nothing....the Arian confusion of deity and creaturehood was just as hateful to the Jew as to the Christian. Whatever sins Israel may have to answer for, the authorship of Arianism is not one of them."<sup>557</sup> He further argues, that "their doctrine was a mass of presumptuous theorizing, supported by alternate scraps of obsolete traditionalism and uncritical text-mongering, on the other it was a lifeless system of unspiritual pride and hard unlovingness."<sup>558</sup> T. E. Pollard argues that Arius transformed the "living God of the Bible" into the "absolute of the philosophical schools."<sup>559</sup>

This "half-god", to use Tillich's term, theology of Arius was rejected by the champions of orthodox Logos Christology and finally defeated as heresy. The reason, as Harnack contends, was, the very nature of Christian religion, "the defeated party had right on its side, but had not succeeded in making its Christology agree with its conception of the object and result of the Christian religion. This was the very reason of its defeat. A religion which promised its adherents that their nature would be rendered divine, could only be satisfied by a redeemer who in his own person had deified human nature. If after the gradual fading away of eschatological hopes, the above prospect was held valid, then those were right who worked this view of the Redeemer."<sup>560</sup> That is what was achieved by Athanasius in the Council of Nicea and the Logos Christology was victorious over its opponents once for all. And "when the Logos Christology obtained a complete victory, the traditional view of the Supreme deity as one person, and, along with this, every thought of the real and complete human personality of the Redeemer was condemned as being intolerable in the Church."<sup>561</sup>

New estimates of Arius' contributions to christological discussions have been made by modern scholars. Out of these new reconstructions a different picture of Arius is evolving. Francis Young, for instance, argues that "the Arius was not himself the arch-heretic of tradition, nor even much of an inquirer; rather he was a reactionary, a rather literal-minded conservative who appealed to scripture and tradition as the basis of his faith."<sup>562</sup> Like Barnard and Norris, Young argues that "The fact is that links can be traced between Arius' views and those of earlier Alexandrians, even if a continuous or coherent tradition cannot be established. Arius doctrine of God has affinities with Athenagoras and Clement, his subordinationism belongs to the Origenist tradition, his theological method is anticipated in Dionysius of Alexandria, and his biblical literalism may be connected with bishop Peter. Arius was guilty not so much of demoting the Son as exalting the Father; for, as Stead has shown, he taught a hierarchical Trinity of the Origenist type, a fact obscured by Athanasius for his own polemic purposes but confirmed by the reaction of Eusebius of Caesarea. Athanasius emphasized the fact that Arius ranked the logos among creatures; whereas Arius' main concern was probably to avoid attributing physical processes like emanation or generation to God, a traditional point developed earlier against the Gnostics. Arius therefore expressed coherently what many Christians had long since assumed."<sup>563</sup> Kelly observes that "the general mould of their teaching was undoubtedly Origenistic, and there are many striking points of resemblance between their subordinationism and that of Origen and, still more Dionysius."<sup>564</sup> Moreover, his opponents did not stick strictly to the scriptures either and were forced to adopt the non-scriptural, utterly philosophical as well as paradoxical term *homoousios* [of the same substance] to exclude his views. We may conclude, then, with F. Young that "Indeed, the popularity of his biblical solution to the tension between monotheism and faith in Christ is beyond dispute; and there is no reason to doubt Arius' sincerity or genuine Christian intention. Though his oppo-

nents attributed his popularity to deception, it is more likely that it was a response to one who was enthusiastic in his pursuit of true meaning of the Christian confession."<sup>565</sup> C. S. Lewis speaks of Arianism as "one of those `sensible' synthetic religions which are so strongly recommended today and which, then as now, included among their devotees many highly cultivated clergymen."<sup>566</sup> In short, Arius was one of those adventurous souls who tried to get precise and find some solution to the unsolved problem of Christ's relationship with the Almighty God, the preciseness, which to the Church, would destroy the `mystery' of incarnation. This mystery was maintained by the Council of Nicea.

### **The Council of Nicea:**

The Arian controversy caused division in the church. It was feared by the emperor that this rift would split the Roman Empire whose favored religion was Christianity. In June of 325 Emperor Constantine summoned the general assembly of bishops from all parts of the empire to meet at Nicea. There are extant several lists of the bishops who responded to the Emperor's call. The first of the five lists printed by C. H. Turner has different countings; the first, 218 names, the second, 210; the third, 223; the fourth, 221; and the fifth, 195 names. A Syriac list gives 220 names and two Latin lists given by Mansi give 227 and 204 names. Constantine's own letter to the Alexandrian speak of more than 300 bishops<sup>567</sup> while Athanasius, the stalwart of Arian controversy, writing soon after 350 A.D. fixes it at 318, the number generally accepted in the Eastern as well as the Western Church. One may conclude with Harnack that, "There were present about 300 (250, 270) bishops, hardly so many as 318 as asserted by Athanasius at a late time; the correctness of this latter number is open to suspicion."<sup>568</sup>

The prominent figure in the Arian controversy was St. Athanasius who, according to G. A. Meloney, "For forty years every word he wrote was a zealous defense, against the heretical Arians and non-Christians, of the divinity and equality of Jesus Christ with the Father."<sup>569</sup> He stood firm, strong and sure of the victory of traditional orthodoxy, of which he was a staunch representative, against Arians who denied the "real" Son of God. He, observes Meloney, was "considered by the early Church as the Father of Orthodoxy who, in his witness to the truth at the great councils, and through his innumerable writings, brilliantly illumined the mind of the traditional Church."<sup>570</sup> Frances Young gives a different view of the Saint observing that "The enhanced role of Athanasius at Nicaea is one feature of the 'legend of Athanasius' which rapidly developed. This `good tradition' has affected all the main sources, for Athanasius' own apologetic works were a primary source for the historians."<sup>571</sup> She further argues that "Alongside this `good tradition' however, there are traces of a less favourable estimates of Athanasius current among his contemporaries. Certainly he must have been a politician capable of subtle maneuvers; the first seems to have been in his own election, which was definitely contested, may have been illegal, and looks as though it was enforced. There seems to have been a pitiless streak in his character - that he resorted to violence to achieve his own ends is implied by a good deal of evidence."<sup>572</sup> To have a

comprehensive discussion of the person is beyond our limitations. Therefore we will restrict ourselves just to his christology.

For Athanasius the central objective of Christian religion was "Redemption" and he subordinated every other thing to this objective. Archibald Robertson finds Athanasius' greatness in this all-pervasive view of Christ's redemption: "Athanasius was not a systematic theologian; that is, he produced no many-sided theology like that of Origen or Augustine. He had no interest in theological speculation, none of the instincts of a schoolman or philosopher. His theological greatness lies in his firm grasp of soteriological principles, in his resolute subordination of every thing else, even the formula *homoousia* [identical in nature, consubstantial], to the central fact of Redemption, and to what the fact implied as to the Person of the Redeemer."<sup>573</sup>

According to Athanasius 'Salvation' or 'Redemption' demands incarnation, "the salvation was possible only on one condition, namely, that the Son of God was made in Jesus so that we might become God."<sup>574</sup> In his "*De Incarnatione et Contra Arianos*" he discussed the matter at length: "For in speaking of the appearance of the Savior amongst us, we must need speak also of the origin of men, that you may know that the reason of his coming down was because of us, and that our transgression called forth the loving-kindness of the Word, that the Lord should both make haste to help us and appear among men. For of his becoming incarnate we were the object, and for our salvation he dealt so lovingly as to appear and be born even in a human body. Thus, then, God was made man, and willed that he should abide in incorruption; but men, having despised and rejected the contemplation of God, and devised and contrived evil for themselves ...received the condemnation of death with which they had been threatened; and from thenceforth no longer remained as they were made, but were being corrupted according to their devices; and death had the mastery over them as king."<sup>575</sup> Hence "the rational man made in God's image was disappearing, and the handiwork of God was in process of dissolution."<sup>576</sup> Therefore "The Son of God became the Son of man in order that the sons of men, the sons of Adam, might be made sons of God. The Word, who was begotten of the Father in Heaven in an ineffable, inexplicable, incomprehensible and eternal manner, came to this earth to be born in time of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in order that they who were born of earth might be born again of God, in Heaven....He has bestowed upon us the first-fruits of the Holy Spirit, so that we may all become sons of God in imitation of the Son of God. Thus He, the true and natural Son of God, bears us all in Himself, so that we may all bear in ourselves the only God."<sup>577</sup>

In "*On the Incarnation*" Athanasius argued: "For he was made man that we might be made God; and he manifested himself by a body that we might receive the idea of the unseen Father; and he endured the insolence of men that we might inherit immortality. For while he himself was in no way injured, being impassable and incorruptible and very Word and God, men who were suffering, and for whose sakes he endured all this, he maintained and preserved in his own impassability."<sup>578</sup> This human divinization was impossible if the Logos, who appeared to us in Jesus, was not the uncreated, eternal Son of God. In his "*Second Oration Against the Arians*" he argued that, "Nor again would man have been deified if joined to a created being, or if the Son were not true God, nor would man have come into the Father's presence unless he who took on a body were by nature and in truth his Logos. And as we should not have been freed from sin and the curse unless the flesh which the Logos assumed were real human flesh (for there could be no

community between us and something foreign) so man would have not been made God unless the God who became flesh were by nature from the God and was truly and properly his....For we men should not have profited had the Logos not been true flesh any more than if he had not been truly and by nature Son of God."<sup>579</sup> Athanasius was careful to differentiate between Christ's divinity and man's divine sonship. Jesus is "Son in nature and truth, we are sons by appointment and grace."<sup>580</sup>

Therefore, the Son does not have any beginning; eternally the Father had the Son, "the beginning of the Son is the Father, and as the Father is without beginning therefore the Son as the Father's...is without beginning as well."<sup>581</sup> This statement, as says E.P. Meijering, is "a contradictory statement, saying that the Son has a beginning and that the Son has no beginning at the same time."<sup>582</sup> It seems that Athanasius was not much concerned with the philosophical implications of what he was saying. His concept of the Son's origin in the Father does imply the Son's beginning and in a way subordination which he emphatically denied. Anyway, observes Harnack, "Whatever involves a complete contradiction can not be corrected and everyone is justified in unsparingly describing the contradiction as such."<sup>583</sup> On his part he argued that the Father is the Father only because he is the Father of the Son. As "the well without a river is dry well which is an absurdity in itself. Equally a Father without a Son would be an absurdity in Himself."<sup>584</sup> "The Son is the Father's image; He is the stream and the Father the source, He the brightness and the Father the light. Hence anyone who sees Christ sees the Father, "because of the Son's belonging to the Father's substance and because of His complete likeness to the Father."<sup>585</sup>

Jesus, then, is the Logos, the Son of God from eternity, uncreated, ungenerated, of the very nature and substance of the Father. McGiffert observes that it was "not necessary according to Athanasius that Christ should be personally identical with God, that he and God should be the same individual, but it was necessary that he and God should be of one substance or essence. To be equal with God or at one with him in will and purpose was not enough. He must actually possess the very nature of God himself."<sup>586</sup> It is interesting to note here that Athanasius like all other Fathers insisted upon the ineffable, invisible nature of God the Father. To him God was not apprehensible to anybody in His affable nature but apprehensible only in his works and manifestation through Christ. He argued: "As, then, if a man should wish to see God, who is invisible by nature and not seen at all, he may know and apprehend him from his works, so let him who fails to see Christ with his understanding at least apprehend him by the works of his body, and test whether they be human works or God's works. And if they be human, let him scoff; but if they are not human, but of God, let him recognize it...let him marvel that by so ordinary a means things divine have been manifested to us, and that by death immortality has reached to all, and by the Word becoming man, the universal providence has been known, and its giver and artificer the very Word of God."<sup>587</sup>

This idea of Christ being the God and that in the Son we have the Father was not new or original with Athanasius. He was sincerely following the old long tradition of orthodoxy. Harnack rightly observes that "This fundamental thought is not new, and it corresponds with a very old conception of the Gospel. It is not new, for it was never wanting in the Church before the time of Athanasius. The Fourth Gospel, Ignatius, Irenaeus, Methodius, the so-called Modalists and even the Apologists and Origen- not to mention the Westerns - prove this; for the Apologists, and Origen too, in what they say of the Logos, emphasized not only His distinction from the Father, but also



His unity with the Father."<sup>588</sup> Athanasius did differ, however, with Origen and Apologists in completely denying subordination, adoptionism, and any significant distinction between the Son and the Father. In doing so, he landed in Modalism and was accused of Sabellianism by the opponents. It is difficult to defend Athanasius of this accusation. If in the Son we have the proper, full Godhead, the true and proper nature and substance of God and Virgin Mary is the "Mother of God" then what else in the world would be more corporeal and anthropomorphic (Sabellianism) than this conception of deity. F. Young observes, that "On many occasions, Athanasius's exegesis is virtually docetic and seems to us forced and unnatural. All is subordinated to the purpose of showing that the Logos in himself had all the attributes of divinity, e.g. impassability, omniscience, etc. The texts implying weakness or ignorance he explains as merely referring to the incarnation-situation. At one point, Athanasius even goes so far as to say... he imitated our characteristics."<sup>589</sup> Norris observes: "Athanasius had to count for Jesus' ignorance by suggesting that for purposes of the incarnation the Logos restrained himself and did not exhibit his omniscience; he acted "as if" he were a human being. This in turn, however, seems- at least to the modern reader- to call into question the full reality of Jesus' humanity. Athanasius was certainly not in the ordinary sense a Docetic. He did not question the reality of the flesh which Logos took. Even so, his position suggests that Jesus was less than a complete human being."<sup>590</sup> Young further argues that "Besides this, the weight of the evidence supports those who argue that Athanasius did not think that Christ had a human soul; he was Apollinarian before Apollinarius."<sup>591</sup> It was faith and salvation which led Athanasius to this point in asserting Christ's proper and complete divinity but he, as Harnack puts it, "in making use of these presuppositions in order to express his faith in the Godhead of Christ, *i.e.*, in the essential unity of the Godhead in itself with the Godhead manifested in Christ, fell into an abyss of contradictions."<sup>592</sup> It simply was, to use Harnack's term, "an absurdity". But, "Athanasius put up with absurdity; without knowing it he made a still greater sacrifice to his faith- the historical Christ. It was at such a price that he saved the religious conviction that Christianity is the religion of perfect fellowship with God, from being displaced by a doctrine which possessed many lofty qualities, but which had no understanding of the inner essence of religion, which sought in religion nothing but "instruction," and finally found satisfaction in an empty dialectic."<sup>593</sup>

Such a lengthy discussion of Athanasius' Christology is justified by the impact it had on the latter generations. The history of Christian dogma after him is the history of Athanasius' concept of faith in God-man, as Harnack observes that "Athanasius' importance to posterity consisted in this, that he defined Christian faith exclusively as faith in redemption through the God-man who was identical in nature with God, and that thereby he restored to it fixed boundaries and specific contents. Eastern Christendom has been able to add nothing up to the present day. Even in theory it has hit on no change, merely overloading the idea of Athanasius; but the Western Church also preserved this faith as fundamental. Following on the theology of the Apologists and Origen, it was the efficient means of preventing the complete Hellenising and secularization of Christianity."<sup>594</sup>

Regarding the question how influential Athanasius was in the Council of Nicea is difficult to determine. F. Young argues that "In fact it is hardly likely that a young deacon would have had any opportunity of contributing to the discussions of such a venerable collection of episcopal dignitaries, and even if he influenced his own bishop, Alexander's part in the proceedings does not ap-

pear to have been crucial; he was certainly not responsible for introducing the key Nicene formulation."<sup>595</sup> Whatever was the case, one may certainly conclude with Fisher that, "The conclusions reached were in full accord with his convictions, and he was afterwards the most renowned and effective expounder of them."<sup>596</sup>

In the Council the creed originally presented by Eusebius of Caesarea,<sup>597</sup> a supporter of Logos Christology and a foe of Sabellianism in every form, was accepted with certain additions. The will of the Emperor was the decisive factor and decided the matter.<sup>598</sup> Constantine was so influential that R. L. Fox could write that "Among his other innovations, it was Constantine who first mastered the art of holding, and corrupting, an international conference."<sup>599</sup> Kelly observes, that "the theology of the council, therefore, ...had a more limited objective than is sometimes supposed.... There is thus a sense in which it is unrealistic to speak of the theology of the council. While different groups might read their own theologies into the creed and its key-word, Constantine himself was willing to tolerate them all on condition that they acquiesced in his creed and tolerated each other."<sup>600</sup> On the other hand W. Bright argues, "The Three Hundred, coming together, could attest in combination the belief which they had severally inherited; and the doctrine which they promulgated in conformity with that belief would secure and enshrine the elements of Apostolic Christianity. So it was that, after a thoughtful survey of the subject, in harmony with the Churchly spirit, and in fidelity to transmitted belief and worship, the great Creed was written out, and doubtless read aloud in full Council, in the Emperor's presence, apparently by Hermogenes, afterwards bishop of Cappadocian Caesarea:"<sup>601</sup> Bright's account of the Council is very traditional. The situation was a lot more complex, political, personal, confused than thoughtful or theological as portrayed by Bright, though its theological impact upon posterity is undeniable. One is tempted to agree with Kelly who observes that "the status of the Nicene creed was very different in the generation or so following the council from what we many have been brought up to believe. One is perhaps tempted to sympathize with somewhat radical solution of the problem provided by that school of historians which treat the Nicene symbol as purely political formula representative of no strain of thought in the Church but imposed on the various wrangling groups as a badge of union."<sup>602</sup> Kelly further observes that "In the light of this we can understand that, when councils were held, it was not, in the early days in anyrate, the decisions of the ecumenical synod that were in question. It was taken for granted that they were there: occasionally an act of reverence was offered to them.... But since this was the light in which it was regarded, there was no occasion to be for ever appealing to its authority."<sup>603</sup>

Unfortunately, the later traditional Christianity did give a great deal of significance and authority to the Council's decisions and terms whose religious nature was far less imminent than its political fervor. The Nicene Creed begins: "We believe in One God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things both visible and invisible: And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Begotten of the Father, Only-begotten, *That is, from the Essence of the Father*, God from God, Light from Light, Very God from Very God, Begotten, not made, *of one essence with the Father*; by whom all things, both in heaven and earth, were made; Who for us men and for our salvation came down, and was incarnate, and became man, suffered, and rose again the third day; ascended into heavens; cometh to judge the quick and dead. And in the Holy Spirit."<sup>604</sup> Then it goes on to say, "But those who say, once He was not, and-before He was begotten, He was not, and- He came into existence out of what was not,' or- That the Son of God was a different "hypostasis" or "ousia" or-

that He was made,' or-is (was) changeable or mutable are anathematized by the Catholic and Apostolic Church of God."<sup>605</sup>

The central phrase of this fundamental Christian confession, to Paul Tillich, is *homoousios* "of one substance with the Father." Though obviously a theological term, writes E. R. Hardy, "it was in a way layman's term for those who wanted to say undeniably that Christ is divine - something like the phrase of our modern Faith and Order Conference, "Jesus Christ as God and saviour," which is reasonably clear statement but not precisely the way a theologian would want to put things."<sup>606</sup> This decisive statement, observes Tillich, is "not in the scheme of emanation but in the scheme of Monarchianism. Consequently it was accused of being Sabellianism; and so were the main defenders, Athanasius and Marcellus."<sup>607</sup> Arians argued that such an analogy and identity was absolutely inappropriate in regard the relationship between God and the Logos. They forwarded three reasons to substantiate their position. "An essential property of God is that he is self-existent (unoriginated). God the Father cannot give this property to the Son since he is produced by the Father. Secondly, if the Father is unbegotten and unbegettable, then following Origen's principle, the Son whom he begot must also be unbegotten and unbegettable, but this makes no sense at all. Finally, if the Son has all the same properties as the Father, he must likewise generate a Son, and that Son another and so on ad infinitum."<sup>608</sup> The answers given by Athanasius were self-contradictory. It made the Son both unbegotten and begotten, "unbegotten as part of the whole of Deity, begotten of the Father as a relationship inside the Trinity."<sup>609</sup> Harnack rightly argues that there is "in fact, no philosophy in existence possessed of formulae which could present in an intelligible shape the propositions of Athanasius."<sup>610</sup> The same can be argued about the subsequent Christian trinitarian thought at large.

All bishops subscribed with the exception of two; Theonas of Marmarika and Secundus of Ptolemais, alongside Arius. Arians were condemned and called "Porphyrians", their works ordered to be burned because, in the words of Julius of Rome, "For theirs was no ordinary offense, nor had they sinned against man, but against our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of the Living God."<sup>611</sup> The Emperor gave his final approval arguing, "what satisfied the three hundred bishops is nothing else than the judgment of God, but most of all where Holy Spirit being present in the thought of men such as these and so ripe in years, made known the Divine will."<sup>612</sup> A majority of modern traditional Christian scholars view these historical dogmatic developments as an illustration of "how the Holy Spirit brings about a gradual increase in the Church's actual consciousness of the mysteries revealed by Jesus Christ."<sup>613</sup>

A. Harnack, on the other hand, views them as an outcome of lack of understanding and education, "As regards the composition of the Council, the view expressed by the Macedonian Sabinus of Heraclea ( Socr. 1. 8), that the majority of the bishops were uneducated, is confirmed by the astonishing results. The general acceptance of the resolution come to by the Council is intelligible only if we presuppose that the question in dispute was above most of the bishops."<sup>614</sup> Neil Buchanan, commenting on Harnack's statement, observes that " With the exception of the bishops whom their contemporaries and our earliest informants have mentioned by name, there do not seem to have been any capable men at the Council."<sup>615</sup>

Whatever was the composition of the Council, the impact it had and the high position its creed and confession enjoys in traditional Christianity is overwhelming. It is called "the greatest of all Synods" and is generally described with high remarks and lofty terms. "The Council of Nicaea is what it is to us quite apart from all doubtful or apocryphal traditions: it holds a pre-eminent place of honour, because it established for all ages of the Church that august and inestimable confession, which may be to unbelief, or to anti-dogmatic spirit, a mere stumbling block, a mere incubus, because it is looked at *ab extra*, in a temper which cannot sympathize with the faith which it enshrines, or the adoration which it stimulate; but to those who genuinely and definitely believe in the true divinity of the Redeemer, the doctrine of Nicaea, in the expanded form which Christendom has adopted, is prime treasure of their religious life, the expression of a faith coherent in itself, and capable of overcoming the world in the power of the Incarnation who is the "Co-essential," that is, as St. Athanasius was careful to explain it, the "real" Son of God."<sup>616</sup>

On the other hand, Fairbairn argues that "These gracious and sublime ideas were the aim rather than the achievement of the theology; they were more what it aspired to than what it reached."<sup>617</sup> He further argues: "It is hard to say whether the Nicene theology did more eminent service or disservice to the Christian conception of God. In contending for the Deity of the Son, it too much forgot to conceive the Deity through the Son and as the Son conceived Him. In its hands, and in consequence of its definitions and authority, the metaphysical Trinity tended to supersede the ethical Godhead. The Church, when it thought of the Father, thought more of the First Person in relation to the Second than of God in relation to man; when it thought of the Son, it thought more of the Second Person in relation to the First than of humanity in relation to God.... The Nicene theology failed here because it interpreted God and articulated its doctrine in the terms of the schools rather than in the terms of the consciousness of Christ."<sup>618</sup> He concludes observing that "The division of the Persons within Godhead had as its necessary result the division of God from man, and the exaltation of miraculous and unethical agencies as the means of bridging over the gulf. The inadequacy in these cardinal respects of the Nicene theology would be inexplicable were we to regard it as a creation of supernatural wisdom or the result of special Divine enlightenment; but it is altogether normal when conceived as a stage in the development of Christian thought."<sup>619</sup>

### **The Aftermath of the Nicene Council:**

It is obvious that there is a clear doctrine of the "Trinity" incorporated in the Nicene Creed. There is only one indefinite statement in regards to the Holy Spirit. But the deity of Christ, (the central problem for our study of anthropomorphism in Christianity) was fully conserved and rendered immune to theological as well as philosophical criticism that had discredited Modalism. All avenues leading to the Godhead of Christ, the Savior, and impulses leading to his exaltation to the highest possible place and worship as the God were given free play without convicting his worshippers of polytheism, obscurantism or anthropomorphism. On the other hand, as the Creed was carried in the Council by the pressure of Constantine against the inclinations of a great majority of bishops, it did not settled the dispute. It needed only a change of mind in Constantine himself (in 336) then his death in 337 to change the so-called Holy Spirit stamped exposition of the divine will and turn every thing upside down.<sup>620</sup> Jerome's words are not wholly exaggeration when he writes, "the whole world groaned in astonishment to find itself Arian."<sup>621</sup> It was once

again the imperial power first in the figure of Valentinian (364) and then Theodosius (380) which came to the rescue of the Nicene Creed with some alterations and additions at the Council of Constantinople in 381.<sup>622</sup>

The Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed goes: "We believe in one God Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, who was begotten of the Father before all ages, light from light, true God from True God, begotten not made, of one substance with the father, through whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin, and was made man, and was crucified on our behalf under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose on the third day according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father, and cometh again with glory to judge quick and dead, of whose kingdom there shall not be an end; and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the life-giver, who proceedeth from the Father, who with Father and Son is worshipped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets; in one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. We confess one baptism for remission of sins; we accept a resurrection of the dead and the life of age to come."<sup>623</sup> This Creed whose origination at the Council of Constantinople is questioned by F.J.A. Hort and A. Harnack<sup>624</sup> and established by scholars like Eduard Schwartz and Badcock and Kelly<sup>625</sup> was displaced everywhere throughout the East and the West in the sixth century under the name of Nicene Creed. The Creed represents more nearly the position of Cappadocians than that of the Athanasius. It represents the *homoiousionoi*, who accepted *homoiousios* (meaning "similar") but not *homoousios*. That is why it omits the words "from the same substance (*homoousios*) of the Father" which was the most important phrase to Athanasius.<sup>626</sup> Though more moderate than the earlier original Creed it aims at achieving the same goal: the proper divinity and deity of Jesus Christ hence conserving the results achieved at the Nicene Council.

It is pertinent here to mention the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil the Great (330-379), Gregory of Nazianzuz (329-389) and Basil's brother, Gregory of Nyssa (329-394).<sup>627</sup> They are known for their Trinitarian formula. Though they agreed completely with Athanasius in attributing real and proper divinity to Christ by accepting him being from the same substance and nature as of the Father,<sup>628</sup> they disagreed with him in the question of persons. According to Athanasius, the "Father, Son and Spirit are the same being living in a threefold form, or in three relationships, as many may be at the same time a father, a son and a brother. According to Cappadocians, on the other hand, Father, Son and Spirit are three like or equal beings sharing in a common nature, as different men share in the common nature of man."<sup>629</sup> This is real Trinity.

This is what Basil describes when he discusses the matter at length: "Many, not distinguishing in theology the common substance from the hypostases, fall into the same fancies and imagine that it make no difference whether substance (*ousis*) or hypostasis be spoken of. Whence it has pleased some to admit without examination that if one substance then also one hypostasis should be affirmed. And on the other hand those who accept three hypostases think themselves compelled to confess an equal number of substances. I have therefore, that you may not fall into a similar error, written you a brief discourse concerning the matter. This then, to put it briefly, is the meaning of the word: Some nouns which are used to cover many and various objects have a more general sense like man.... When we imply this word we designate the common nature... not

some particular man to whom the name especially belongs. For Peter is no more man than Andrew or John or James. Hence, as the word embraces all that are included under the same name, there is need of some mark of distinction by which we may recognize not man in general but Peter or John. There are other nouns which stand for a particular object and denote not the one nature but a separate thing having nothing in common, so far as its individuality goes, with others of the same kind, like Paul or Timothy.... Thus when two or more are taken together, such as Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, and inquiry is made concerning their substance, we do not use one word for the substance of Paul, another for that of Silvanus, and other for that of Timothy.... If then you transfer to theology the distinction you have drawn in human affairs between substance and hypostasis you will not go wrong."<sup>630</sup>

Gregory of Nazianzuz explained the formula by the following example: "What was Adam? A creature of God. What, then, was Eve? A fragment of the creature. And what was Seth? The begotten of both. Does it, then, seem to you that creature and fragment and begotten are the same being? Of course it does not. But were not these persons consubstantial? Of course they were. Well, then, here it is an acknowledged fact that different persons may have the same substance."<sup>631</sup> He further argues that "For the Father is not Son, and yet this is not due to either deficiency or subjection of essence; but the very fact of being unbegotten or begotten, or proceeding, has given the name of Father to the first, of the Son to the second, and to the third, him of whom we are speaking, of the Holy Ghost, that the distinction of three persons may be preserved in the one nature and dignity of the Godhead. For neither is the Son Father, for the Father is one, but he is what the Father is; nor is the Spirit Son because he is of God, for the only-begotten is one, but he is what the Son is. The three are one in Godhead, and the one three in properties; so that neither is the unity a Sabellian one, nor does the Trinity countenance the present evil distinction."<sup>632</sup> In connection with the complete equality of the three persons Gregory of Nazianzuz writes: "To us there is one God, for the Godhead is one, and all that proceeds from his is referred to one, though we believe in three Persons. For one is not more and another less God; nor is one before and another after; nor are they divided in will or parted in power; nor can you find here any of the qualities of divisible things; but the Godhead is, to speak concisely, undivided in separate Persons; and there is one mingling of lights, as it were of three suns joined to each other. When, then, we look at the Godhead, or the first cause, or the monarchia, that which we conceive is one; but when we look at the Persons in whom the Godhead dwells, and at those who timelessly and with equal glory have their being from the first cause, there are three whom we worship."<sup>633</sup>

Gregory of Nyssa gives the example of gold observing that "there may be many golden staters, but gold is one, so we may be confronted with many who individually share in human nature, such as Peter, James, and John, yet the "man" [the human nature] in them is one."<sup>634</sup> There is a complete operational harmony between these three distinct Persons, "We do not learn that the Father does something on his own, in which the Son does not co-operate. Or again, that the Son acts on his own without the Spirit. Rather does every operation which extends from God to creation and is designated according to our differing conceptions of it have its origin in the Father, proceed through the Son, and reach its completion by the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that the word for the operation is not divided among the persons involved. For the action of each in any matter is not separate and individualized. But whatever occurs, whether in reference to God's providence for us or to the government and constitution of the universe, occurs through the three

Persons, and is not three separate things."<sup>635</sup> He further argues that "The Father is God and the Son is God; and yet by the same affirmation God is one, because no distinction of nature or of operation is to be observed in the Godhead.... since the divine, single, and unchanging nature eschews all diversity of essence, in order to guard its unity, it admits of itself no plural significance."<sup>636</sup>

He distinguishes between Persons on the basis of causality, "the only way by which we distinguish one Person from the other, by believing, that is, that one is the cause and the other depends on the cause. Again, we recognize another distinction with rearguard to that which depends on the cause. There is that which depends on the first cause and that which is derived from what immediately depends on the first cause. Thus the attribute of being only-begotten without doubt remains with the Son, and we do not question that the Spirit is derived from the Father."<sup>637</sup> He concludes arguing that "The principle of causality distinguishes, then, the Persons of the holy Trinity. It affirms that the one is uncaused, while the other depends on the cause. But the divine nature is in every way understood to be without distinction or difference. For this reason we rightly say there is one Godhead and one God, and express all the other attributes that befit the divine in the singular."<sup>638</sup> How the uncaused first cause and the caused or derived from the Father can be the same, equal in all properties and respects is a valid question not satisfactorily answered by any of the Cappadocians.

This Cappadocian analogy is one of the two chief types of analogy that has been used throughout the course of Christian history in reference to the Trinity. The Cappadocians begin with a consideration of three persons, as we have just seen, while Augustinian analogy emphasizes coequal Trinity by distinguishing the persons in terms of internal relations within a person (e.g., memory, will, and intelligence or love, the lover (*amans*) and the object loved (*quod amatur*)).<sup>639</sup> Both of them are not satisfactory and have several flaws. The former, for instance, could lead to tritheism while the latter could lead to Sabellianism or Unitarianism. Francis Young rightly observes about Gregory of Nyssa's analogy that "No matter how much he protests their common eternity, common activity and common will, it is difficult to call a theology based on such a definition of their common nature, monotheistic."<sup>640</sup> Others like Harnack, F. Loofs, F. W. Green<sup>641</sup> have observed that this Cappadocian position was really a kind of Homoean view, or to use Harnack's words, "the community of substance in the sense of likeness (or equality) of substance, not in that of unity of substance."<sup>642</sup> To E. R. Hardy this observation is misleading and "far from fair". He argues that "*ousia* is not to be regarded merely as a universal, and *hypostasis* as a particular instance of it. That would surely lead to tritheism. The Cappadocian idea is far more subtle. The nature of the Godhead more nearly corresponds in their thought to Aristotle's idea of a particular, concrete existence (*proto ousia*), not to the *deutera ousia* which members of a species have in common. The *ousia* in the Godhead is identical in each Person: the common humanity in men is only *generic*."<sup>643</sup>

Hardy's explanation is attractive but seems a little forced and artificial. The Cappadocians seem to have used the terms in their generic forms without much specifications. It will be too much to say that the Cappadocian Fathers intended tritheism but it seems quite fair to observe that their distinction between three Persons of the Trinity and their usage of the analogy of Peter, James, and John could easily lead to tritheism as it was observed even during their own life time. Our

present understanding of the human person leaves very little room to doubt the validity of this objection. Undoubtedly to the Cappadocians, as to almost all Fathers, God is incomprehensible, ineffable, one and infinite. Gregory of Nazianzuz has made it clear by writing: "It is difficult to conceive God, but to define him in words is an impossibility, as one of the Greek teachers of divinity taught, not unskillfully, as it appears to me; with the intention that he might be thought to have apprehended him; in that he says it is hard thing to do; and may escape being convicted of ignorance because of his impossibility of giving expression to the apprehension. But in my opinion it is impossible to express him, and yet more impossible to conceive him....the darkness of this world and the thick covering of the flesh is an obstacle to the full understanding of the truth."<sup>644</sup> Gregory of Nyssa observed that "every concept relative to God is a simulcrum, a false likeness, an idol. The concepts we form in accordance with the understanding and the judgment which are natural to us, basing ourselves on an intelligible representation, create idols of God instead of revealing to us God Himself. There is only one name by which the divine nature can be expressed: the wonder which seizes the soul when it thinks of God."<sup>645</sup> In his *Life of Moses* he wrote "For God makes His dwelling there where our understanding and our concepts can gain no admittance. Our spiritual ascent does but reveal to us, ever more and more clearly, the absolute incomprehensibility of the divine nature."<sup>646</sup> It is also true that Basil and others roundly denied any suffering by or human weakness in the Godhead itself.

On the other hand, it is equally true that the understanding of God the Cappadocians aspired and propagated by their writings did not and cannot remove them from a number of problems and confusions which have been found in almost all the orthodox Fathers, such as the relationship of Christ to God. Grillmeier rightly observes that "Whereas in trinitarian doctrine...they clearly recognized that unity and distinction in the Godhead are to be sought through different approaches, they only dimly grasped a corresponding insight into christology."<sup>647</sup> He further argues that "The Cappadocians have seen something, but neither their path nor their goal is stated clearly. As a result, the solution of christological problems is made much more difficult, as will be evident in the case of Nestorius."<sup>648</sup>

Gregory of Nazianzuz in opposition to Gregory of Nyssa takes over Origen's notion of the soul as mediator between Godhead and flesh. He clearly uses the orthodox problematic terminology and also declares Christ's divine nature as dominant over his inferior human nature. "And that (the cause of his birth) was that you might be saved who insult him and despise his Godhead, because of this, that he took upon him your denser nature... having conjunction with the flesh by means of the mind. While his inferior nature, the humanity, became God because it was conjoined with God and became one (with him). In this the stronger part (sc. the Godhead) prevailed in order that I too might be made God so far as he is made man."<sup>649</sup> So if his human nature became God, then any claim of denial of suffering and weaknesses in Godhead loses ground from beneath it. It faces the same problems which have been faced by the solutions of Fathers before them.

Gregory of Nyssa takes the same route when he writes: "Yet we have no doubt, from the recorded miracles, that God underwent birth in human nature, but how this happened we decline to investigate as a matter beyond the scope of reason."<sup>650</sup> He further writes: "Our faith falters when we think that God, the infinite, incomprehensible, ineffable reality, transcending all glory and



majesty, should be defiled by associating with human nature, and his sublime powers no less debased by their contact with what is abject. We are not at a loss to find fitting answer even to this objection. Do you ask the reason why God was born among men? If you exclude from life the benefits which come from God, you will have no way of recognizing the divine.... Our nature was sick and needed a doctor. Man had fallen and needed someone to raise him up. He who had lost life needed someone to restore it.... Were these trifling and unworthy reasons to impel God to come down and visit human nature, seeing humanity was in such a pitiful and wretched state?"<sup>651</sup> Therefore the Logos mingled with manhood in Christ to raise it to his own exalted status and to transform it into pure and divine nature. Grillmeier observes that Gregory's "famous simile of the absorption of the flesh in the Godhead 'like a drop of vinegar in the sea' is extremely bold theological language."<sup>652</sup> How it happened is a mystery incomprehensible to human reason. F. Young observes that "For all the detail of his trinitarian discussions, Gregory stands ultimately before a mystery, and this is where his dogmatic theology and his so-called mysticism coalesce."<sup>653</sup>

Though the Cappadocian's Trinitarian formula of the divinity being of one essence, one nature in three forms, persons (*personae*), three independent realities, is called "the scientific" formula,<sup>654</sup> it did not provide any intelligible solution to the problem it was formulated to solve, i.e. the historical Jesus and his relationship with God. The words used to distinguish the persons in the eternal trinity are, as observes Tillich, "empty." "And what do such words mean? They are words without content, because there is no perception of any kind which can confirm their meaning. To anticipate a bit, Augustine said these differences are not expressed because something is said by them, but in order not to remain silent. This means that if the motives for the doctrine of the trinity are forgotten, the formulae become empty."<sup>655</sup> It may not lead to Docetism, Sabellianism, or Modalism of Athanasius, but it could lead to tritheism, which, in the case of the historical Christ, would also be a naive anthropomorphism.

By now it becomes clear that the above discussed orthodox Fathers insisted upon the true, perfect, full divinity and Godhead of Jesus Christ. They aspired to maintain two mutually contradictory principles i.e., the transcendence and ineffability of God in the figure of God the Father, and full incarnation of God in the human figure of Christ. All the given explanations, whether as modes, or persons, or any other interpretation certainly lead to corporealism and anthropomorphism. It is impossible to maintain the full incarnation of God in a human being who lived a true, historical and full human life and aspire to avoid or deny charges of corporealism and anthropomorphism. That becomes even more evident when we turn to the discussions about the will and nature of the person of Jesus Christ which were at the center of later controversies.

### **The Person of Jesus Christ:**

It has always been Christians' desire for redemption that had ultimately led them to proclaim the deity of Jesus Christ. From earlier Fathers to the Council of Constantinople there had been a common thread weaving them together, a common concern that was to safeguard the proper deity of Christ alongwith the transcendence of God. There always remained the question of Christ's

humanity. It was impossible to deny his humanity as, according to the Gospels, he has been a historical reality. But how to interpret the relationship between his divine and human nature? "The difficulty of thinking of Christ", writes McGiffert, "as both divine and human had always been recognized and had led to docetism on one side and adoptionism on the other. The acceptance of the real deity of Christ made the problem all the more insistent."<sup>656</sup> The Fathers before the fourth century were not conscious of this problem. Now, after the settlement of the dogma of Christ's divinity at the Nicene Council, the problem became more acute and drew more attention. "A few decades after Nicea", says Elert, "the theme of the formation of dogma shifted completely....Now the theme is not the pre-existent Son of God, but the incarnate one. Not the relation of God to God is now at issue, but the relation of God to man in the person of the earthly Christ who dwelt among men."<sup>657</sup>

It was Apollinarius (d. 390), bishop of Laodicea and a close friend of Athanasius, who proposed a somewhat rational solution to this complex problem. Apollinarianism, observes Kelly, "was in fact the most subtle and thoroughgoing attempt to work out a theory of Christ's Person in the fourth century, and carried tendencies long accepted in the Alexandrian school to their logical limit."<sup>658</sup> As said earlier, according to Athanasius and in the Nicene Creed, the proper divinity was safeguarded to ensure redemption. It was strongly held that only the true Son of God could reveal God to man. Apollinarius, following this Word-flesh Christology, argued that this act of redemption would not be possible without the deification of the man Jesus Christ. Therefore, he contended that Jesus has only one theanthropic or divine-human nature as at incarnation the Logos, a divine spirit or mind, was combined and united with the human body and soul and since then became the active personal element in Jesus while relegating the human element comprised of the body and soul to the secondary level or passive level. The frankly acknowledged presupposition of this argument, observes Kelly, "is that the divine Word was substituted for the normal human psychology in Christ."<sup>659</sup> He believed that if the divine is separated from the human in the Christ, the salvation would be imperiled. "He could not redeem us from our sins, revivify us, or raise us from the dead. How could we worship Him, or be baptized into His death, if He was only an ordinary man indwelt by the Godhead?"<sup>660</sup> In his confession he summarized this theme, "We declare that the Logos of God became man for the purpose of our salvation, so that we might receive the likeness of the heavenly One and be made God after the likeness of the true Son of God according to nature and the Son of man according to flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>661</sup> In this process of complete fusion or union the human, the historical Jesus and his humanity was "swallowed up into the divinity",<sup>662</sup> and was completely transformed by the divine Logos. He used to delight in speaking of Christ as "God incarnate", "flesh-bearing God", or "God born of a woman". He concluded saying "One and the same is the body and the God, of whom it is the body, not that the flesh has been changed into that which is incorporeal, but that it has a property which is from us..., in accordance with the generation from the Virgin, and that which is above us..., in accordance with the mixture or union with God the Logos."<sup>663</sup> He affirmed that Christ's flesh was "divine flesh" or "the flesh of God" and was proper object of worship. It was a virtually a clear docetic tendency implying that Christ was not a real man but only appeared as a man.

It means that Christ in his incarnation retained his divine soul, nature or ousia and did not adopt a human rational soul or nature. It is because of this denial of a human rational soul in Christ, says

H. A. Wolfson, that "Apollinaris, in departure from the orthodox Fathers, denied the existence in Jesus not only of two persons but also of two natures, maintaining that there was in him only one nature or ousia and that Jesus was "one incarnate nature of God the Logos...."<sup>664</sup> But Kelly recognizes that "The brilliance and thoroughgoing logic of Apollinarius' synthesis are undeniable."<sup>665</sup>

The "Monophysitism" as it was later called, was another expression of Monarchianism. Pelikan observes that "Apollinaris was expressing a common opinion when he spoke of "innumerable teachings supplied everywhere throughout the divine Scripture, all of them together bearing witness to the apostolic and ecclesiastical faith."<sup>666</sup> In Harnack's words, Apollinarius "merely completed the work of Athanasius inasmuch he added to it the Christology which was demanded by the Homousia of the Logos. They both made a supreme sacrifice to their faith in that they took from the complicated and contradictory tradition regarding Christ those elements only which were in harmony with the belief that He was the Redeemer from sin and death."<sup>667</sup> But it was widely felt that Apollinarius had safeguarded the divinity of Jesus on account of his humanity. The Cappadocian Fathers, the two Gregories and other churchmen opposed him by criticizing that his Christology failed to meet the essential condition of salvation and atonement, i.e. the unity of human rational soul, the seat of sin, with Logos. In his famous phrase Gregory Nazianzen argued that "What has not been assumed cannot be restored; it is what is united with God that is saved."<sup>668</sup> Apollinarius was condemned as heretical at the second council of Constantinople in 381.

On the other hand, the representatives of the Antiochian school challenged 'Monophysitism' or Apollinarianism with their scientific Christological dogma.<sup>669</sup> In general, the Antiochian's interest in Jesus was more ethical than redemptive. They viewed in him a perfect ethical and moral example. It could have not been possible had he not been a complete human being with free will and genuine human personality. Antiochian school, argues Kelly, "deserves credit for bringing back the historical Jesus."<sup>670</sup> Diodorus of Tarsus and then Theodore of Mopsuestia, like Paul of Samosata, advocated a moral union 'unity of grace and will' rather than unity of substance and nature. Their Christology conformed to the "Word-man" scheme rather than the Alexandrian "Word-flesh" scheme.

Theodore emphasized the perfect humanity of Christ: "A complete man, in his nature, is Christ, consisting of a rational soul and human flesh; complete is the human person; complete also the person of the divinity in him. it is wrong to call one of them impersonal."<sup>671</sup> Opposing Monophysitism, he argued: "One should not say that the Logos became flesh" but one should say " He took on humanity."<sup>672</sup> To conform his views with the Logos Christology and Nicene doctrine of Christ's proper divinity, he had no choice but to assert in the Christ two natures: one of a complete human, the other complete divine, each with a full personality and all qualities and faculties that go therewith. None of these persons or natures mixed with the other: "The Logos dwelt in man but did not become man; the human was associated and united with the divine but was not deified."<sup>673</sup> There association and closeness was essential for the salvation but not so closely to render it irrelevant to man as man or to involve the unchangeable, immutable Logos in the suffering of the cross. In Theodore's formula, "the Godhead was separated from the one who was suf-

fering in the trial of death, because it was impossible for him to taste the trial of death if [the Godhead] were not cautiously remote from him, but also near enough to do the needful and necessary things for the [human] nature that was assumed by it."<sup>674</sup> He further argued that while the scriptures distinguishes the natures, it at the same time stresses the unity between them. Therefore, he argued, "we point to difference of natures, but to unity of Person" or in other words "the two natures are, through their connection, apprehended to be one reality."<sup>675</sup>

As we see, Theodore emphatically denies the transformation or transmutation of the Logos into flesh. He also held that the divine nature did not change the human nature. Jesus, having human nature, by grace and free will could follow the divine nature. Therefore, one could say that Mary gave birth to God.

Theodore's opponents opposed this theory as leading to a "monster with two heads", a being with two personal centers and a combination of two sons.<sup>676</sup> Theodore denied this as mere accusation but, to McGiffert, "to all intents and purpose he was doing so."<sup>677</sup> Cyril of Alexandria singled him out for attack and since the Fifth General Council of Constantinople in 533 he has been labeled as a Nestorian before Nestorius. Modern scholarship vindicates him of this accusation as Kelly observes: "In modern times, especially since the rediscovery of the relatively innocuous *Catechetical Homilies*, there has been a decided reaction against this verdict. It has been emphasized, for example, that he was deeply concerned, so far as his categories of thought allowed, to establish the oneness of subject in the God-man....He can write, for example, 'Thus there results neither any confusion of the natures nor any untenable division of the Person; for our account of the natures must remain unfocused, and the Person must be recognized as indivisible'; and again, 'We display a distinction of natures, but unity of Person'. For these and similar reasons the traditional estimate has been replaced by a more appreciative one which views him primarily as a theologian who championed the reality of the Lord's manhood against Apollinarianism and strove to do justice to His human experience."<sup>678</sup> F. Young observes that "If Theodore stresses the duality, it is because for him the unity is obvious."<sup>679</sup>

Controversy came to a head in the fifth century when Nestorius, a younger member of the Antiochian school, became bishop of Constantinople (428 A.D.). He protested against the tendency very common among the masses, especially among the monks in the neighborhood of the capital, to exalt the Virgin Mary as "Mother of God" or "*theotokos*". "God cannot have a mother, he argued, and no creature could have engendered the Godhead; Mary bore a man, the vehicle of divinity but not God. The Godhead cannot have been carried for nine months in a woman's womb, or have been wrapped in baby-clothes, or have suffered, died and been buried."<sup>680</sup> H. Chadwick observes that "Nothing caused so much scandal as a remark of Nestorius that 'God is not a baby two or three months old.'"<sup>681</sup> Nestorius held that she should either be called 'mother of the man Jesus' or 'mother of Christ'. His objection was to the transference of human attributes to the divine Logos. He emphatically denied that the Logos participated in the sufferings of the human nature of Christ.<sup>682</sup>

He believed that Jesus had two natures. He maintained that before the union of the man and the Logos in Jesus, the man was a person distinct from Logos. Then "He who is the similitude of God has taken the person of the flesh."<sup>683</sup> After the union these two separate persons retained

their identity "There the person exist not without ousia, nor here again does the ousia exist without the person, nor also the nature without person, nor yet the person without ousia."<sup>684</sup> His watchword was that "I hold the natures apart, but unite the worship".<sup>685</sup> He, following Theodore of Mopsuestia who held that "When we distinguish the natures, we say that the nature of the Divine Logos is complete that His person also is complete...[likewise we say] that man's nature is complete and his person also is complete. But when we consider the union, we say there is one person only",<sup>686</sup> argued that after incarnation there resulted a new person, namely the person of Jesus, of which the Logos and man were two component parts. He believed that for true redemption, the second Adam must have been a real man. Kelly observes that "It was all-important in his eyes that the impassability of 'the God' should be preserved, and that 'the man' for his part should retain his spontaneity and freedom of action. Hence, though speaking on occasion of a 'union'..., the term he preferred was 'conjunction'..., which seem to avoid all suspicion of a confusion or mixing of the natures."<sup>687</sup> To Nestorius it was a "perfect", "exact" and "continuous" union. Unlike the Alexandrian Christological view that upheld "hypostatic or natural" union, his view of union was "voluntary". By this he meant "the drawing together of the divine and human by gracious condescension on the one hand, and love and obedience on the other. As a result of their mutual adhesion, Christ was a single being, with a single will and intelligence, inseparable and indivisible."<sup>688</sup> Addressing Cyril of Alexandria he said, "I said and affirmed that the union is in the one person of the Messiah... but thou [actest] in the reverse way, because thou wishest that in the two natures God the Word should be the person of the union."<sup>689</sup>

It is, observes Wolfson, "because of this conception of Jesus as being one person composed of the person of the Logos and the person of the man in him that at the Fifth Ecumenical Council at Constantinople (533) the Nestorians are anathematized on the ground that they "name the man separately Christ and Son, and so clearly speak of two persons, and hypocritically speak of one person and of one Christ only according to designation and honor and dignity and worship."<sup>690</sup> Cyril in his letter of 430, which was used as one of the sources in the Council, had already written 12 anathemas which were specifically pointed towards Nestorius. Cyril wrote: "(1) If anyone does not confess that Emmanuel is God in truth, and therefore the holy Virgin is *theotokos*- for she bore in the flesh the Word of God became flesh- let him be anathema. (2) If anyone does not confess that the Word of God the Father was united by hypostases to the flesh and is one Christ with his own flesh, that is, the same both God and man together, let him be anathema. (3) If any one divides the hypostases in the one Christ after his union, joining them only by conjunction in dignity, or authority or power, and not rather by coming together in a union by nature, let him be anathema."<sup>691</sup>

Cyril on the other hand, as Fisher observes, "asserted a physical (or metaphysical ) uniting of the two natures. God becomes man. After the incarnation, there are two natures abstractly considered, but in the concrete reality but one,- namely, the one incarnated nature of the divine Logos."<sup>692</sup> He contended in his letter to Nestorius that "So confessing the Word united hypostatically to flesh, we worship one Son and Lord Jesus Christ, neither putting apart and dividing man and God, as joined with each other by a union of dignity and authority-for this would be an empty phrase and no more-nor speaking of the Word of God separately as Christ, but knowing only one Christ, the Word of God the Father with his own flesh."<sup>693</sup> His formula, "out of two natures, one" led to a theanthropic person, not just God, nor just man, but throughout both in them.

In the literal sense "the Logos has assumed humanity. Hence, it can be said that 'God is born', that 'God suffered', if only it be added, 'according to the flesh'.<sup>694</sup> He also insisted that "Since the holy Virgin gave birth after the flesh to God who was united by *hypostasis* with flesh, therefore we say that she is *theotokos*..."<sup>695</sup> H.V. Campenhausen observes, that "From his theological point of view this was not only quite consistent but it thereby secured for him the wide support of the masses. From historical standpoint the victory which he was to gain over Nestorius must be regarded as the first great triumph of the popular worship of Mary."<sup>696</sup> He further argues that "In the light of later dogmatic formulations his Christology was quite inaccurate and Monophysite. But Cyril never doubted that belief in Christ could be rightly professed and defended only in the way to which he was accustomed. He abhorred all "tolerant" dilutions and discussions of the truth, and where he had power he was always ready to use it mercilessly to suppress all opposition to his spiritual dominion."<sup>697</sup>

Cyril, in view of Campenhausen, "was not greatly concerned with the truth; outwardly, however, he continued to play the part of the anxious, thoughtful leader who refuses to take action for reasons of purely personal spite, leaving the first steps to his best friends and go-between."<sup>698</sup> It was due to Cyril's efforts and political genius<sup>699</sup> that Nestorius was made guilty of heresy and deposed in the general Council of Ephesus (431) but the final settlement was reached at the Council of Chalcedon.

The views about the person of Jesus which were held by Theodore and were at bottom not much different from the orthodox Fathers caused Nestorius the stigma of heresy. Some modern scholars like J. F. Bathune-Baker, F. Loofs and M. V. Anastos<sup>700</sup> have tried to rehabilitate Nestorius' orthodoxy. Anastos, for instance, observes, "If Nestorius and Cyril could have been compelled to discuss their differences calmly and to define their terms with precision, under the supervision of a strict and impartial arbiter who could have kept them under control until they had explained themselves clearly, there is little doubt that they would have found themselves in substantial agreement theologically, though separated *toto caelo* as far as their respective archiepiscopal sees was concerned."<sup>701</sup> Kelly observes that "When we try to assess the character of Nestorius's teaching, one thing which is absolutely clear is that he was not a Nestorian in the classic sense of the word."<sup>702</sup> Grillmeier observes that "we can recognize just as clearly that he need not have been condemned had attention been paid to his care for tradition and to the new problem which he posed, despite his speculative 'impotence' (G. L. Prestige) to solve it."<sup>703</sup> F. Young writes: "Nestorius was the victim. He has become the symbol of one type of christological position taken to extremes. And for that he suffered. He could legitimately complain that his condemnation had been unfair: Cyril had plotted his downfall; Cyril chaired the synod; Cyril was his accuser and his judge; Cyril represented Pope and Emperor. Cyril was everything! Nestorius had no chance of a hearing. There can be few who would defend the proceedings at Ephesus."<sup>704</sup> P. Tillich observes, that "If we say that Nestorius became a heretic, we could say that he was the most innocent of all heretics. Actually he was a victim of the struggle between Byzantium and Alexandria."<sup>705</sup>

When looked from the perspective of our topic, it becomes evident that traditional Christianity, for the sake of salvation and redemption, has always intended to crucify God and denied all efforts to make just the human person suffer. This is crystal clear corporealism and could have not been maintained just by speculative theology or any logical effort. It needed the exploitive and

political power to suppress all rational and curious inquiries into it and that had been made available to several of the propounders of Logos theology in its traditional sense. This act of blaspheming God, to use Nestorius' term, could have not been done by the Holy Spirit as always claimed but by the political powers of secular and at times pagan emperors.

In conclusion it is worth quoting the famous passage from Nestorius, who wrote: "It is my earnest desire that even by anathematizing me they may escape from blaspheming God [and that those who so escape may confess God, holy, almighty and immortal, and not change the image of the incorruptible God for the image of corruptible man, and mingle heathenism with Christianity... but that Christ may be confessed to be in truth and in nature God and Man, being by nature immortal and impassable as God, and mortal and passable by nature as Man- not God in both natures, nor again Man in both natures. The goal of my earnest wish is that God may be blessed on earth as in heaven]; but for Nestorius, let him be anathema; only let men speak of God as I pray for them that they may speak. For I am with those who are for God, and not with those who are against God, who with an outward show of religion reproach God and cause him to cease from being God."<sup>706</sup> F. Young pays Nestorius homage in the following words: "It was a great Christian who wrote those words. There have been many who were prepared to die as martyrs for what they believed to be the truth, but Nestorius was prepared to live cursed and consigned to oblivion, as long as God was not dishonored... In tribulation he showed a greater generosity of spirit than many who have received the name saint rather than heretic."<sup>707</sup>

### **The Council of Chalcedon:**

The decisions of the general Council of Ephesus did not settle the issue of the person of Christ. Just fifteen years after the agreement patched up in 433, the quarrel broke out again in 448 when Eutyches, Archimandrite of a monastery in the neighborhood of Constantinople, vehemently opposed Nestorianism or Antiochian party's "inspired man" Christology in favor of Cyrillianism or Alexandrian God-man Christology. Kelly observes that "What Eutyches's actual doctrine was has never been easy to determine. At a preliminary examination, before the envoys of the synod, he declared that 'after the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ I worship one nature, viz. that of God made flesh and become man'. He vigorously repudiated the suggestion of two natures in the Incarnate as un-Scriptural and contrary to the teaching of the fathers. Yet he expressly allowed that He was born from the Virgin and was at once perfect God and perfect man. He denied ever having said that His flesh came from heaven, but refused to concede that it was consubstantial with us."<sup>708</sup> Flavian, the successor of Proclus, condemned him as Apollinarian. Kelly observes that Eutyches was neither a Docetist nor Apollinarian. He was "a confused and unskilled thinker...blindly rushing forward to defend the unity of Christ against all attempts to divide Him."<sup>709</sup> He actually upset the required balance in connection with Christology. R.V. Sellers argues that "if we are to understand Eutyches aright, we must not think of him as the instructed theologian, prepared to discuss the doctrine of the Incarnation. Rather does he appear as the simple monk who, having renounced the world, had also renounced all theological inquiry, and considered that it behoved him obediently to follow what had been said by the orthodox Fathers, since these were the experts in matters concerning the faith."<sup>710</sup>

Eutyches however, appealed his condemnation. Dioscorus of Alexandria accused Flavian of requiring a test of orthodoxy other than the Nicene creed. The Emperor Theodosius II summoned a council to meet at Ephesus in August of 449 to decide the matter. Pope Leo of Rome declined to participate in person but dispatched on June 13, 449 his famous Dogmatic Letter, or *Tome*, to Flavian, and clearly condemned the 'One Nature after the Union' doctrine of Eutyches. Leo said in his letter that the properties of each nature and substance were combined together to form one person, "the distinctness of both natures and substance is preserved, and both meet in one Person..."<sup>711</sup> He wrote that "when Eutyches, on being questioned in our examination of him, answered, "I confess that our Lord was of two natures before the union, but after the union I confess one nature," I am astonished that so absurd and perverse a profession as this of his was not rebuked by a censure on the part of any of his judges, and that an utterance extremely foolish and extremely blasphemous was passed over...."<sup>712</sup> He also directly attacked the reluctance Eutyches had shown in accepting Christ's consubstantiality with us. He wrote: "And he should have not spoken idly to the effect that the Word was in such a sense made flesh, that the Christ who was brought forth from the Virgin's womb had the form of a man, but had not a body really derived from his mother's body."<sup>713</sup> He further argued that "no doubt that he whom he recognizes as having been capable of suffering is also man with a body like ours; since to deny his true flesh is also to deny his bodily sufferings."<sup>714</sup> This letter was carefully phrased to shun Nestorianism on the one hand and Eutychianism on the other. But Nestorius, writes Chadwick, "reading the Tome in his lonely exile, felt that the truth had been vindicated at last, and that he could die in peace."<sup>715</sup> Leo's Tome was never read to the synod. Under imperial power Eutyches was immediately rehabilitated and his orthodoxy vindicated. The confession of two natures was anathematized. The letter of Leo, which was suppressed in this so called "Robber Synod" or "Latrocinium" (Brigandage) of Ephesus, was approved at Chalcedon. In fact the letter became decisive for the outcome at Chalcedon. The opportunity for that was provided by the death of Theodosius on July 28, 450. Marcian succeeded to the throne and cemented his position by marrying the late emperor's sister Plucheria. Marcian and Plucheria both were sympathizers of the Two Nature doctrine. The Pope persuaded them to summon the council to annul the theological work of the Robber Synod. Originally planned for Nicaea, the council was transferred to Chalcedon. The proceedings opened on October 8, 451.

The Fourth Ecumenical Council, which was actually the most largely attended synod of antiquity, solemnly approved the Nicene Creed as the standard of orthodoxy, canonized Cyril's two letters and Leo's Tome and finally, under the imperial pressure,<sup>716</sup> approved the following formula:

"Following the Holy Fathers we all with one consent teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in deity and perfect in humanity, God truly and man truly, of a reasonable soul and body, of one substance with the Father in his deity, and of one substance with us in his humanity, in all things like unto us without sin; begotten before the ages of the Father in his deity, in the last days for us and for our salvation born of Mary the Virgin, the mother God, in his humanity; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of the natures being by no means taken away because of the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one person and one hypostasis, not divided or separated into two persons but one and the same Son and only begotten God Logos, Lord Jesus



Christ; as from the beginning the prophets and the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us concerning him, and the creed of the Fathers handed down to us."<sup>717</sup>

By this formula the Council asserted against Nestorianism the unipersonality of Christ and asserted against Eutychianism Christ's possession of two natures, divine and human, each perfect and unchanged. As mentioned earlier, the victory was political rather than theological. Grillmeier observes that "It was only under constant pressure from the emperor Marcian that the Fathers of Chalcedon agreed to draw up a new formula of belief."<sup>718</sup> Kelly observes that "the imperial commissioners, in their desire to avoid a split, had to exert considerable pressure before agreement could be reached."<sup>719</sup> W. A. Wigram writes that the Council "failed to command respect, because it was imposed for political reasons, by a government that, as was too often the case, was making a fetish of uniformity. The verdict was, and was felt to be, a "government job," and not a free decision of the fathers of the Church. Had Theodosius lived longer, the Council would not have been held at all, and its decision was given, as things were, largely through the votes of Bishops who had gone with Dioscurus at Ephesus, and who shifted round readily to the opposite side, as soon as it was clear what line the Emperor was going to take."<sup>720</sup> He further observes that "in large districts, the Council was rejected at once, and in none, save only in Rome, was there any enthusiasm for its doctrine. For more than century, however, the antagonism felt for it was admitted to be that of a party in the Church, and not that of a separatist body. The word "heretic" was not applied to those who rejected Chalcedon, even by the Bishops who persecuted them. They were called "Distinguisher," or one may say "Nonconformists."<sup>721</sup>

The critics of Chalcedon like Timothy (surnamed Aelurus, 477) and Philoxenus, on the other hand, honestly believed that "in their ignorance the so-called Fathers who had assembled to define the faith `had ordained nothing other than that the impure doctrines of Nestorius should be received and preached in all the Churches of God.'"<sup>722</sup> To them the Council "so separates, and personalizes, what is divine and what is human in Christ that the hypostatic union is dissolved, and its place taken by a mere conjunction of the divine Logos and a Man."<sup>723</sup> Likening themselves to the tribe of Judah they parted company with the orthodoxy. "For how could they, who alone were worthy of the title `orthodox', offer obedience to a Council which had caused Israel to sin? Nay, a curse lay upon that Council, and upon all who agreed with it, for ever."<sup>724</sup> Therefore, with the passage of time the old theological controversies surfaced again and again. Monophysites once again asserted their old claim of Jesus having one nature and one theanthropic will or monothelism. Orthodoxy opposed this trend and in 680 at the third council of Constantinople (the sixth ecumenical council) were able to get their doctrine of 'dyothelism' approved. By this doctrine the idea that Christ had two wills, a divine and a human, was officialized and has remained orthodox ever since both in the East and West.<sup>725</sup>

At Chalcedon and later at Constantinople the human side of the picture of Christ was saved. Grillmeier argues that "If the person of Christ is the highest mode of conjunction between God and man, God and the world, the Chalcedonian 'without confusion' and 'without separation' show the right mean between monism and dualism, the two extremes between which the history of christology also swings. The Chalcedonian unity of person in the distinction of the natures provides the dogmatic basis for the preservation of the divine transcendence, which must always be a feature of the Christian concept of God. But it also shows possibility of a complete immanence

of God in our history, an immanence on which the biblical doctrine of the economy of salvation rests."<sup>726</sup> Sellers hails the Council with the following words: "in the Chalcedonian definition of her faith concerning the Person of her Lord, the Church possesses a treasure of inestimable worth-the work of an age which deliberately embarked on the task of attempting to offer an answer to the Christological problem-which she can hand down to succeeding generations of believers, as they themselves are confronted with the same problem. The form of the doctrine may vary as new thought-forms arise, but the content will remain. For, express it as we may, fundamental to the Christian faith is the confession that Jesus Christ is no mere man, but God himself living a human life, and sharing its experiences as the Saviour of the world; and, once this is accepted, there comes, itself the result of Christological inquiry, the affirmation that in his one Person are to be seen in closest union both Godhead in its supreme act of condescension and manhood in the height of its perfection."<sup>727</sup> Commenting on the significance of Chalcedon Paul Tillich observes, "To understand the steps in the christological doctrine, always keep in mind two pictures: (1) The being with two heads, God and man, where there is no unity; (2) The being in which one head has disappeared, but also humanity has disappeared. The one remaining head is the head of the Logos, of God himself, so that when Jesus acts, it is not the unity of something divine and something human, but it is the Logos who is acting. Thus all the struggles, all the uncertainties, the despair and loneliness, which the Gospels present, were only seemingly experienced by Jesus, but not really. They are inconsequential. This was the danger in the Eastern Development. The fact that this danger was overcome is due to the decision of Chalcedon."<sup>728</sup> The figure of two heads with unity is again as strange as both the others mentioned by Tillich. It is more unintelligible and exposed to more subtle questions and curiosities. It is impossible to logically determine the demarcation line between God and Man while insisting upon their unity, as the traditional dogma asserts. It is corporeal and anthropomorphic.

This concept of being with two heads or natures has remained the official doctrine of Christian orthodoxy to the present times. E. Brunner writes: "The Jesus Christ shown to us in the Scriptures accredits Himself to us as the God-Man. One who meets Him with that openness to truth which the Bible calls "faith", meets in Him One who, in the unity of His Person, is both true God and true Man. It would be good for the Church to be content with this, and not wish to know more than they can know, or more than we need, if we are to trust Him and obey Him as we should."<sup>729</sup>

It is pertinent to mention that the Council of Chalcedon was a kind of victory of Antiochene theology over the Alexandrian Logos theology. Although it addressed the old unresolved issue, and finally, drew a line between God the Son and Jesus the human by emphasizing Christ's humanity, in reality it could not resolve the issue at all. Jesus, the historical human being, was declared to have two distinct natures, perfect human and perfect divine, but one theanthropic person the Logos, the Son of God. Moreover he was unlike human beings because of his sinlessness. Brunner rightly expresses the implications: "when we agree with the verdict "He is a man like ourselves", we are also obliged to come to the exactly opposite view and say: He is *not* a man like ourselves....We know of no other man in whose life sin plays no part, whose life is pure and unstained, reflecting the holy love of God; who therefore, without hypocrisy or self-assertion could come forth to meet man as One coming from God."<sup>730</sup>

Furthermore, the doctrine of one Person and two natures as is understood in the traditional circles, in reality, leads us to the old Alexandrian Cyrillian Christology and does not help much to understand the humanity of Christ. What Dr. Mascall says about the person or human knowledge of Christ would suffice to elaborate the point. He argues, "In Christ, however, the person is really distinct from the human nature; the nature with which the Person is really identical is not the human but the divine, and in this it shares in the omniscience which is the inalienable possession of Godhead. Is it therefore unreasonable to suppose that the contents of Christ's human mind will include not only that experimental knowledge which is acquired by him in the course of his development from infancy to manhood in a way substantially the same as, though immeasurably more consistent and unimpeded than, the way in which we acquire ours, but also an infused knowledge which is directly communicated to his human nature from the divine Person who is its subject, and which is a participation in the divine omniscience and is limited only by the receptive capacity of human nature as such?"<sup>731</sup>

Now, if the person of Christ consists of two natures, two wills, and in reality identical with the divine nature and knowledge rather than the human nature, then, one is fully justified to inquire with Maurice Wiles as to how genuine is that humanity and "How genuinely human is so qualified a human will?"<sup>732</sup> Moreover, this doctrine of the absolute unity of the person and two natures faces a number of other crucial challenges. The narration of Jesus praying to God, calling upon him with the words such as "My God, My God" etc. would make no sense even if one accepts that it was Jesus' human nature that was engaged in such acts of prayer. Was the Person of Jesus calling the Person of Christ? But there is only One Person in Jesus the Christ who, according to the doctrine, is God also. Moreover, such a union of the person and wills will definitely make the Godhead suffer the agonies of crucifixion. On the other hand, if it be asserted that it was Christ's human person or nature going through pains and suffering on the Cross, then how in the world can salvation, redemption, and atonement be achieved, for which the whole myth had been brought into existence?

The world has yet to see a theologian or a philosopher who can resolve these contradictions and explain in intelligible terms the Chalcedonian doctrine of Christ's person. Brunner contends that "The aim of this doctrine is not that it may solve the mystery of Jesus. We know that when we confess Him as God-Man, and must so confess Him, we are saying something which goes far beyond anything we can understand."<sup>733</sup> W. Bright, after strongly defending the outcome of the Council of Chalcedon, finally could not escape saying, "After all, if Christ is believed in as One, yet as both truly God and truly Man-however little we can comprehend the relation thus created-that belief is all that the Chalcedonian terminology implies: to hold it is to be at one with the Fourth Council."<sup>734</sup> J.S. Whale reaches the same conclusion by observing, "Of course, an explanation of Christ's person must always be beyond our reach if by 'explain' we mean 'put into a class'. Jesus is inexplicable just because he cannot be put into a class. His uniqueness constitutes the problem to be explained. It is impossible to describe him without becoming entangled in paradoxes. The great merit of Creeds is that they left the paradox as such."<sup>735</sup>

It is unfortunate to believe in logical impossibilities and contradictions in the name of paradox. Faith can be substantiated by the facts, it cannot create facts. We conclude here with the remarks

of McGiffert who observes "The problem is metaphysical and purely speculative. Except by those interested to trace the formation of the particular dogmas involved, the whole Trinitarian and Christological development might be dismissed as unworthy of notice were it not for the profound religious difference that underlay it...."<sup>736</sup>

### **Contemporary Christian Standpoint:**

Throughout the history of Christian dogma, wrestling between various concepts and pictures of Jesus has never ceased to exist. The origin of these differences, as we have seen, can easily be traced back to the differing and mostly contradicting pictures of Christ presented by the authors of New Testament books especially the four Gospels. Crossan rightly observes that if one reads "those four texts vertically, as it were, from start to finish and one after another, you get generally persuasive impression of unity, harmony, and agreement. But if you read them horizontally, focusing on this or that unit and comparing it across two, three, or four versions, it is disagreement rather than agreement that strikes one most forcibly. By even the middle of the second century, pagan opponents, like Celsus, and Christian apologists, like Justin, Tatian and Marcion were well aware of those discrepancies, even if only between, say, Matthew and Luke."<sup>737</sup> The Church has been using "the documents it has selected in order to prove its own credentials. The documents are chosen so as to prove what the Church wants proved."<sup>738</sup> Even in these carefully selected documents there is not one single uniform picture of the person around whom the entire material revolves. Following the New Testament, Christianity has always been grappling with the question of understanding who he really is? D. Cupitt rightly observes that "More than any other religion Christianity has revolved obsessively around one particular man: it has loved him, worshipped him, mediated upon him, portrayed him, and sought to imitate him-but he slips away."<sup>739</sup> There is no single preached Christ, "An immense variety of ideals of character have been based upon the example of Jesus: an historical man who lived only one life has been made the exemplar of a great range of different forms of life. Jesus has been declared to be a model for hermits, peasants, gentlemen, revolutionaries, pacifists, feudal lords, soldiers and others. If we restrict attention to the religious life of men in the Latin West alone, the diversity is great among the ideals of Benedict, Francis, Bruno, and Ignatius Loyola."<sup>740</sup>

Even contemporary scholarship is polarized over which picture or image of Jesus is to be accepted as authentic. Daniel J. Harrington in his presidential address to the Catholic Biblical Association at Georgetown University on August 6, 1986 gave a "short description of seven different images of Jesus that have been proposed by scholars in recent years, the differences relating to the different Jewish backgrounds against which they have chosen to locate their image of the historical Jesus."<sup>741</sup> There is Jesus as a political revolutionary by S. G. F. Brandon,<sup>742</sup> as a magician by Morton Smith,<sup>743</sup> as a Galilean charismatic by Geza Vermes,<sup>744</sup> as a Galilean rabbi by Bruce Chilton,<sup>745</sup> as a Hillelite or proto-Pharisee or an essene by Harvey Falk,<sup>746</sup> and as an eschatological prophet by E. P. Sanders.<sup>747</sup> To Crossan this "stunning diversity is an academic embarrassment."<sup>748</sup>

This fact of notorious diversity of pictures, ideals, concepts and interpretations of Jesus Christ has led some to conclude that "every one who writes a life of Jesus sees his own face at the bottom of a deep well."<sup>749</sup> Moreover, we have very limited reliable narrations about Jesus which

even combined together do not give us "access to Jesus himself, but only to several different portraits of him."<sup>750</sup> One has no choice but to conclude with R.H. Lightfoot that "the form of the earthly no less than of the heavenly Christ is for the most part hidden from us."<sup>751</sup>

This perhaps is the reason that Christians throughout their history could not universally agree upon one single, logical and uniform doctrine about the person of Christ and have always been perplexed in this regard. M. F. Wiles observes, that "Christology has never ceased to puzzle and to perplex the minds of Christians from earliest times."<sup>752</sup> Almost all New Testament books and the subsequent history of dogma witness to this fact. This, too, is exactly the situation with the contemporary Christian thought. On the other hand, a great majority of Christians, while differing over the ideas of Christ's person and his relationship with God, seem to agree upon his cross and the significance of his redemptive work.<sup>753</sup> In other words, the concept of 'Incarnation' is so pervasive in most of the Christian circles and in its tradition as a whole, that Christianity is often described as incarnational faith. R. Swinburne observes that "The central doctrine of Christianity is that God intervened in human history in the person of Jesus Christ in a unique way; and that quickly became understood as the doctrine that in Jesus Christ God became man."<sup>754</sup> If there is any difference, and there are many as mentioned earlier, that is because of different understandings of 'incarnation'.

### **The Traditional Orthodox standpoint:**

The orthodox understanding of the doctrine of incarnation is that God's incarnation took place in the particular individual Jesus of Nazareth. They follow the Church Father's theology culminating in the Creeds of Nicea and Chalcedon, fully recognizing Christ's proper divinity/Godhead, co-existentiality and equality with the Father, two natures one Person and redemption. They believe as Brunner observes that "The way to the knowledge of Jesus leads from the human Jesus to the Son of God and to Godhead."<sup>755</sup>

D. M. Baillie, for instance, writes: "it was the eternal Word, the eternal Son, very God of very God, that was incarnate in Jesus."<sup>756</sup> He also observes that "while the life lived by Jesus was wholly human, that which was incarnate in Him was of the essence of God, the very Son of the Father, very God of Very God."<sup>757</sup> The traditional doctrine of Trinity, to Baillie, is "an indispensable summing-up of the Christian Gospel for the life of worship...unless we have a Christology our whole conception of God is impoverished or even perverted, and now I might say the same thing about the doctrine of Trinity. To those who know and accept the whole Christian story, this doctrine is a symbolical epitome of the truth about God, and its constant use in our worship helps to secure that we are drawing near to God as He really is- the God who was incarnate in Jesus Christ."<sup>758</sup> He explains the doctrine of Trinity in the following words: " What the doctrine of the Trinity really asserts is that it is God's very nature not only to create finite persons whom He could love, and reveal and impart Himself to them, even to the point of incarnation (through His eternal Word) but also to extend this indwelling to those men who fail to obey Him, doing in them what they could not do themselves, supplying to them the obedience which He requires them to render (through His Holy Spirit). All of this, says the dogma of the Trinity, is of the eternal nature and essence of God. He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the Son and the Spirit are

consubstantial with the Father.... Surely this doctrine is the objective expression of the same great paradox which finds its subjective expression in the confession: 'Not I, but the grace of God.'<sup>759</sup> C. Gore in his book "The Incarnation of the Son of God" has already made the Anglican position very clear. "if Christ was to be worshipped, it could only be because He was God, very God; belonging to the one eternal nature." He further argued that the doctrine of Christ's divinity did not involve more than "the first principle of the Theist's creed, that there is only one God, one supreme object of worship, that Christ is, if God at all, then the very God the Father's substance and essential nature....He was really man, so also He was really God."<sup>760</sup> He concluded arguing that "Christ then is God incarnate. In Him the human nature is assumed by the divine Person."<sup>761</sup>

This is the old 'Modalist Monarchianism', the theology of God-Man, which was at work at the bottom of the orthodox theology in the past and is still prevalent in the orthodox circles. As a matter of fact, observes McGiffert, "the orthodox Christology was built not on the life of the historic figure Jesus Christ, as reflected in the gospels, but on a theory of redemption framed in large part independently of him and translated into the terms of prevailing philosophy of the age."<sup>762</sup> Throughout our discussion of the development of Christology we have seen that for the sake of salvation, Christ has always been deified, worshipped, and exalted to complete equality and eternity with God. His humanity, though asserted superficially, has been just a lip service on the part of orthodoxy. "It is true", writes Paul Badham, "that all orthodox writers pay lip service to Christ's humanity and describe him as "consubstantial with us" in his human nature. But all meaning seems evacuated from these claims when Christ is denied any human individuality or subjectivity."<sup>763</sup> In the case of some Fathers like Irenaeus, Gregory of Nyssa, not only him but ordinary Christian believers have been deified through Jesus the Christ. It may not be inappropriate to quote Harnack here who argues, "There is an old story of a man who was in a condition of ignorance, dirt, and wretchedness and who was one day told by God that he might wish for anything he liked and that his wish would be granted. And he began to wish for more and more and to get higher and higher, and he got all he wanted. At last he got presumptuous and wished he might become like God Himself, when at once he was back again in his dirt and wretchedness. The history of religion is such a story; but it is in the history of the religion of Greeks and Eastern that it came true in the strictest sense....They became Christians and desired perfect knowledge and a supra-moral life. Finally they wished even in this world to be as God in knowledge, bliss, and life, and then they fell down, not all at once, but with fall that could not be stopped, to the lowest stage in ignorance, dirt, and barbarity."<sup>764</sup>

The thought of incarnation in its developed sense, as we have discussed, is not clearly spelled out in the New Testament. "Incarnation", observes Maurice Wiles, "in its full and proper sense, is not something directly presented in scripture. It is a construction built on the variegated evidence to be found there."<sup>765</sup> But to ensure salvation, the Greek and Alexandrian Fathers made it the sole theme of their understanding of the person of Christ from the divergent New Testament pictures of him. They brought the person of the transcendent God of the universe in the universe, in the material world of flesh and body and crucified him on the cross. Though they have always been denying this accusation of crucifying God, in reality that is what they did and intended to do for the sake of salvation. St. Gregory Nazianzus was honest enough to say it plainly that "We needed an incarnate God, a God put to death that we might live."<sup>766</sup> The salvation would have not been possible if the one crucified was not God. Athanasius said it clearly and confessed that

the body crucified was God's body. "The Word bore the weakness of the flesh as His own, for it was His own flesh, and the flesh was serviceable to the working of the Godhead, for it was in the Godhead, it was God's body."<sup>767</sup> Whether one takes it analogically or metaphorically, the language is too corporeal and anthropomorphic. Therefore, as Tillich observes, "Salvation is the problem of Christology."<sup>768</sup> If according to their own definition Jesus the historical human being was the God-Man Person who was one in substance with God, whose flesh was God's own flesh, he was co-eternal, pre-existent, proper God, Omnipotent, Omniscient, sinless, the Lord of Glory and Majesty, in whom the One divine Person was at work, the worshipped and adored one, then whatever method they adopt to stop the divine from crucifixion would be in vain because according to their own witness it was the body of God, the Jesus Christ who was crucified. Some of them had the courage to assert that. Others tried to hide it behind the garbs or to use Paul Badham's term behind the "smoke-screen"<sup>769</sup> of paradoxes and mysteries. According to Dorothy Sayers "All this was not very creditable to us, even if He was (as many people thought and think) only a harmless crazy preacher. But if the Church is right about Him, it was more discreditable still; for the man we hanged was God Almighty."<sup>770</sup>

Incarnation in the literal sense of salvation does not solve the problem of the relationship of Jesus with God at all. It ends up in contradictions and paradoxes whatever way one tries to interpret it. Moreover, its terminology as well as development owes a great deal to Greek philosophy and imperial politics. John Hick is right in observing that "There are strong reasons then for seeing the patristic development and interpretation of incarnational belief, not as gradual dawning of the truth inspired by the Holy Spirit, but as historically determined development which led to the blind alley of paradox, illogicality and docetism. It is not satisfactory to assert that nevertheless it was in the providence of God that philosophical system was available and made possible the resultant true formulations. Appeals to providence are too easily invalidated by subsequent history."<sup>771</sup> Moreover, whatever the intention, the incarnational language is so anthropomorphic, corporeal and mythological that one can easily conclude with Richard Jeffery, who in reference to Christ's crucifixion observed, "If God had been there, he would not have let them do it."<sup>772</sup> On the other hand, the real problem is that the traditional Christian religion or in the words of Whale, "the whole of Christian religion rests on the fact that God was there."<sup>773</sup>

Once 'Incarnation' was declared as the central doctrine of Christianity, observes Harnack, "The one God, whom the people have never understood, threatened to disappear, even in the views of refined theologians...."<sup>774</sup> If in Jesus the fullness of God is incarnate then "Jesus can be worshipped as God without risk of error or blasphemy. A cult of Christ as distinct from a cult of God thus becomes defensible, and did in fact developed. The practice of praying direct to Christ in the Liturgy, as distinct from praying to God through Christ, appears to have originated among the innovating 'orthodox' opponents of Arianism in the fourth century."<sup>775</sup> There is no reason then to deny the fact that incarnation in the Christian traditional sense does lead some to naive polytheism. This has been the case with a great majority of Christian believers, to use Harnack's term, the Christianity of second rank, since the end of the second century, "There existed in Christendom,...from the end of the second century, a kind of subsidiary religion, one of the second rank, as was subterranean, different among different peoples, but every where alike in its crass superstition, naive doketism, dualism, and polytheism. "Whenever religions change, it is as if mountains open. Among the great magic snakes, golden dragons and crystal spirits of the human soul,

which ascend to the light, there come forth all sorts of hideous reptiles and a host of rats and mice....There probably never was an age in which Christendom was free from this "Christianity", just as there never will be one in which it shall have been overcome."<sup>776</sup>

Jesus Christ the incarnate God was also the son of Mary. Incarnation and then the early Church Father's usage of terms like 'the Bearer of God' *Theotoka* or Mother of God' promoted worship of Mary, a mere human being. "But Mary obtained her chief, her positively dogmatic significance from the fact that the dogma of the Incarnation became the central dogma of the Church."<sup>777</sup> Nestorius cried in vain to Cyril and to the Church in general, "Do not make the Virgin into a goddess." It is an outrageous innovation. But, as observes Don Cupitt, "It brings out an odd feature of Christianity, its mutability and the speed with which innovations come to be vested with religious solemnity to such an extent that any one who questions them *himself* regarded as the dangerous innovator and heretic."<sup>778</sup> Nestorius was declared a heretic and Mary was exalted above all creatures, above Cherubim and Seraphim and got the position at the right hand of the Son. The reason, as is clear from the statement of John of Damascus, is that "The name 'Bearer of God' represents the whole mystery of the Incarnation. The Holy Spirit purified Mary with a view to the conception."<sup>779</sup> She was worshipped, called upon in prayers for support and help and her pictures and images were worshipped. Commenting on this development Harnack observes, "Pictures of Christ, Mary and the saints, had been already worshipped from the fifth (fourth) century with greetings, prostration, a renewal of ancient pagan practices. In the naive and confident conviction that Christians no longer ran any risk of idolatry, the Church not only tolerated, but promoted, the entrance of paganism. It was certainly the intention to worship the divine in the material; for the incarnation of deity had deified nature (ousia)"<sup>780</sup>

In addition to the above mentioned problems, the doctrine of Incarnation taken literally could lead to God's depiction in concrete corporeal human images. Don Cupitt rightly observes that "If it is the case that in the incarnation God himself has permanently assumed human nature, and can legitimately be depicted as God in human form, then eventually the ultimate mystery of deity will be conceived anthropomorphically, and the pagan notion of a deity as a superhuman person with gender will be restored. In due course this happened, aided by the traditional Father-Son imagery."<sup>781</sup> In the East the Church showed reservation in this matter and permitted only the depiction of the Deity in a human form different from the human form of Christ in the standard iconography of scenes like Baptism, where a hand emerges from the cloud to release the dove upon Jesus' head. But after the sixteenth century, under the influence of the West, images of God appeared in the East. The West has been less conservative in this regard. The anthropomorphic images of God became very common in the West after about 1100.<sup>782</sup> Don Cupitt is quite right in protesting against these developments: "It is my contention that the doctrine of Christ as God's divine Son has here humanized deity to an intolerable degree. The strangeness of it is seldom noticed even to this day. A sensitive theologian like Austin Farrer can dwell eloquently upon a medieval icon of the Trinity, and a philosopher as gifted as Wittgenstein can discuss Michelangelo's painting of God in the Sistene Chapple, and in neither case is it noticed there *could* be people to whom such pagan anthropomorphism is abhorrent, because it signifies a 'decline of religion' in the only sense that really matters, namely, a serious corruption of faith in God."<sup>783</sup>



In view of what has been said, it becomes evident that the traditional Christian concept of deity is anthropomorphic and corporeal, especially in terms of the language that has been used throughout Christian history to describe these concepts. It is not only paradoxical, it is contradictory. It does not solve the problem of Jesus' relationship with God, the problem for which it was invented. Finally it does not explain or achieve salvation either. D. Sayers writes: "What are we to make of that? ...if He was God and nothing else, His immortality means nothing to us; if He was man and no more, his death is no more important than yours or mine."<sup>784</sup> It is notoriously difficult to understand the two natures, one person, true human and true God, and the mode of union between them. These are mere speculations having very little impact on the practical understanding of the person of Jesus. They render, observes Sayers, "The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the whole thing incomprehensible. Something put in by theologians to make it more difficult-nothing to do with daily life or ethics."<sup>785</sup> These kinds of contradictions or mysteries might have been of some sense in the times of the early Church Fathers in the light of Platonism, Stoicism, Neo-Platonism, or other trends or schools of that day philosophy. Our present day knowledge and thought patterns make it impossible to understand literally the doctrine of "Incarnation" without landing into crude anthropomorphism and polytheism, especially the cross part of it. "That God should play the tyrant over man is a dismal story of unrelieved oppression; that man should play the tyrant over man is the usual dreary record of human futility; but that man should play the tyrant over God and find Him a better man than himself is an astonishing drama indeed."<sup>786</sup>

These difficulties are recognized by a number of modern Christian theologians. R. Bultmann, for instance, talking about traditional doctrine of 'atonement' and 'salvation' argues, "How can the guilt of one man be expiated by the death of another who is sinless-if indeed one may speak of a sinless man at all? What primitive notions of guilt and righteousness does this imply? And what primitive idea of God? The rationale of sacrifice in general may of course throw some light on the theory of atonement, but even so, what a primitive mythology it is, that a divine Being should become incarnate, and atone for the sins of men through his own blood!...Moreover, if the Christ who died such a death was the pre-existent Son of God, what could death mean to him? Obviously very little, if he knew that he would rise again in three days."<sup>787</sup> He gets more emphatic in regards to salvation theory, and describing the doctrine of God-man as Gnostic, argues that, "gnostic influence suggests that this Christ who died and rose again, was not a mere human being but a God-man...It is only when with effort that modern man can think himself back into such an intellectual atmosphere, and even then he could never accept it himself, because it regards man's essential being as nature and redemption as a process of nature." He further argues that "as far the pre-existence of Christ, with its corollary of man's translation into a celestial realm of light, and the clothing of the human personality in heavenly robes and a spiritual body- all this is not only irrational but utterly meaningless. Why should salvation take this particular form?"<sup>788</sup> He declares this as a 'myth' and calls upon the Church to reinterpret this myth in the light of modern knowledge and Kerygma. Though "Little we know of his life and personality" claims Bultmann, "we know enough of his *message* to make for ourselves a consistent picture."<sup>789</sup> Without understanding the New Testament mythology in the light of Kerygma the Christian message would be unintelligible to the modern man. "The danger both for theological scholarship and for the Church is that this uncritical resuscitation of the New Testament mythology may make the Gospel message unintelligible to the modern world."<sup>790</sup>

Paula Fredriksen argues that "After the introduction of Galileo's map of the universe, the technological advances of the Scientific Revolution, and the social and cultural revolutions that followed in its wake, modern culture no longer looks to Plato. More current systems of thought- anthropology, psychology, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, existentialism, evolutionary science, medicine- now provide the meaningful constructs that in turn effect theological ideas of personhood. Modern Christianity, in consequence, must search for new ways to express its ancient faith in Jesus Christ as true God and true man."<sup>791</sup>

Richard Swinburne tries to express the ancient Christian faith in modern terms by emphasizing the analogical and metaphorical nature of many terms used in the New Testament. He argues that "While the divine predicates-'good', 'wise', 'powerful'- are used of God in their literal senses, there seem to me plenty of words which are used (in my sense) analogically of God."<sup>792</sup> For instance, God is said to be 'angry', loving etc. the words which imply passion. "But traditional Christian theology has affirmed vigorously and constantly that God has no body, and has no inclination to act contrary to reason; and hence the use of such words in official Christian pronouncements must be so interpreted that they do not carry these latter elements of meaning."<sup>793</sup> In the same manner "God is a person, yet one without a body, seems the most elementary claim of theism."<sup>794</sup> Swinburne further argues that "despite the fact that clearly theology supposes him to be a person in much the same sense of 'person' as human are persons, he cannot be a 'person' in quite the same sense. 'Person' must be being used analogically with respect to God."<sup>795</sup> Moreover, theology like other disciplines makes use of metaphors and "Talk in all creeds of the first person of the Holy Trinity as 'the Father' and the second person as 'the Son', who was 'begotten' by 'the Father', 'not made', may also be classified as metaphorical; although this use of 'Father' was perhaps sufficiently well established and clear in Jewish thought to be regarded as analogical."<sup>796</sup> He contends that the earlier Fathers clearly recognized the inadequacy of human language and some of them recommended non-literal interpretation of some of the biblical passages. "There developed however from the sixth century onward a movement which coloured much Christian theology for the next five centuries, the *via negativa*. This, very loosely, claimed that all that could be said about God was what he is *not*, and what were the effects of his actions in the world. We could know nothing about what God was like in himself; and so all cradle claims and prayers were to be read with this restriction."<sup>797</sup> He somewhat agreeing with this negative or apophatic approach, concludes that "sentences of human language can tell us quite a bit about God; but that they are very inadequate tools for the job."<sup>798</sup>

Has Swinburne introduced something new into age long traditional Christian theology? Did the assertions of Clement and Origen made in the second century about the ineffability and transcendence of God stop the later Fathers and Christianity from crucifying the Person of God? Does emphasis upon apophatic or *via negativa* theology solve the issue at hand or make the Christian message more intelligible? There could be many questions of the same nature. The answer to all these thorny questions seem to be no! Despite some very innovative and positive contributions here, Swinburne is not bringing some very innovative elements into Christian theology.

Pseudo-Dionysius, the unknown author of the so-called Areopagitic writings: a person who had long been mistakenly identified with a disciple of St. Paul-Dionysius the Areopagite,<sup>799</sup> divided

the theology into two main categories: the *cataphatic* or positive theology that proceeds by affirmations and the *apophatic* or negative theology that proceeds by negations. Ruling out the first, he emphasized the other. "The perfect way, the only way which is fitting in regards to God, who is of His very nature unknowable, is the second-which leads us finally to total ignorance. All knowledge has as its object that which is. Now God is beyond all that exists. In order to approach Him it is necessary to deny all that is inferior to Him, that is to say, all that which is. If in seeing God one can know what one sees, then one has not seen God in Himself but something intelligible, something which is inferior to Him. It is by *unknowing* ... that one may know Him who is above every possible object of knowledge. Proceeding by negations one ascends from the inferior degrees of being to the highest, by progressively setting aside all that can be known, in order to draw near to the Unknown in the darkness of absolute ignorance."<sup>800</sup> The three Cappadocians tried to defend the apophatic basis of all true theology as seen above.<sup>801</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, St. John Damascene, the ninth-century Irish philosopher John Scotus Eriugena and the great St. Thomas Aquinas are just a few names to be mentioned in this regard. Swinburne, like these traditional theologians, despite great emphasis on metaphorical and analogical nature of God-talk, could not solve the problem of incomprehensible nature of God vs. the doctrine of Incarnation of Jesus the Christ.

Swinburne takes a route somewhat similar to that of the Fathers. Using modern concepts, Swinburne attempts to reach the conclusions that are awfully close to the traditional Christian dogmas. He defines sin as "Failure in a duty to God...If a person does what is wrong (whether or not he realizes it), he sins objectively. If he does what he believes to be wrong, he sins subjectively."<sup>802</sup> He further argues that "Each of us suffers from the burden of actual and original sin."<sup>803</sup> He contends that "Christ's life and death is indeed, as he intended, efficacious for anyone who pleads it as a perfect atonement for his actual sins and the sins of others with whom he is involved."<sup>804</sup> He observes that "God did indeed become incarnate in Christ and lived a human life so perfect that it ended in a foreseen death, and if he intended that life should be available to be used by us to make our atonement, it is indeed the sort of thing which we could offer God as our reparation and penance....Given that Christ the man who made the offering intending it to avail fully for our atonement, is also the God to whom it was offered, he will forgive us without demanding more."<sup>805</sup> The problem of logically explaining that why God is making the sacrifice to Himself is given a kind of new dimension by observing that "it is good that there be reparation and penance, it is good that these be substantial; that the atoning sacrifice be not a trivial one. And it is good that our creator should share our lot, and of his generosity make available to us his sacrificial life."<sup>806</sup> He concludes, observing that "God in Christ performs an act which makes an objective contribution to removing our guilt which we ourselves were in no position to make."<sup>807</sup> Had the guilt been absolutely eliminated from Christians after such a huge sacrifice, then, it would have been possible to make some sense out of what Swinburne is trying to argue. It is the other way around. Many of the great Bishops, Cardinals and Christians still are sinful and guilty like other human beings. To sacrifice God for the sake of such a meager accomplishment is too much a price to pay.

To what extent Swinburne uses traditional Christian terms metaphorically or analogically becomes evident in his discussion of "Could God Become Man?". He defines a human being by ar-

guing that "It is sufficient if you have a human body animated by a human soul."<sup>808</sup> It is not the bodily continuity or continuity of memory or character that makes for the identity of a human being. It is the soul. "The soul is the subject of experience and initiator of action; and is the essential part of any human being or other person, whose possession makes any future individual that individual."<sup>809</sup> He contends that "if we don't draw the limit of the human too strictly, certainly God can become man. He would do this by acquiring a human body (joining his soul to an unowned human body), acting, acquiring beliefs, sensations and desires through it. Remaining God, he would have become man by acquiring an extension to his normal modes of operation."<sup>810</sup> Using Freud's theory of divided mind Swinburne argues that "If God's human actions are done only in the light of his beliefs, then he will feel the limitations that we have. God in becoming incarnate will not have limited his powers, but he will have taken on a *way* of operating which is limited and *feels* limited. So using the notion of divided mind we can coherently suppose God to become incarnate while remaining God, and yet act and feel much like ourselves."<sup>811</sup> He concludes, arguing that "The Chalcedonian definition is not merely self-consistent but consistent with the New Testament picture of Christ as acting in ignorance and weakness, and subject to temptation. God could become man in a rather fuller sense than the traditional interpretation allowed."<sup>812</sup>

Swinburne seems to be confusing the issue even more than the Monarchians. In certain ways they spared God's nature from human corruptions, limitations and qualifications. Swinburne seems to be committing this mistake. He is making God pay a very high price for little accomplishment. What kind of divine nature would adopt the human limitations and what kind of human nature would the two minded person of human Jesus be? The figure would not be just with two heads but also with two minds though quite confused and diffused ones. Therefore, Swinburne's interpretation of Christ's relationship with God has its own limitations. It has to solve the problem of Jesus' human soul and true humanity, issue of his true will, problem of an unusual person neither complete God nor complete man, and the issue at hand of anthropomorphism in the light of God's suffering and feeling of pain etc. in a human body. Though interesting enough, his interpretations may not be fully intelligible either to the liberals or to the orthodoxy.

It is John Hick, who by his revolutionary but controversial book "*The Myth of God Incarnate*", has taken long strides in the direction of recognition and then reconstruction of this issue. He has brought the old theological controversies back to the Christian intelligentsia, the theologians as well as philosophers, in a view to make Jesus intelligible and acceptable to the people of the modern world. He starts his article "Jesus and the World Religions" with the recognition of the problem in the following words: "If we start from where we are, as Christians of our own day, we begin amidst the confusion and uncertainty which assail us when we try to speak about Jesus, the historical individual who lived in Galilee in the first third of the first century of the Christian era. For New Testament scholarship has shown how fragmentary and ambiguous are data available to us as we try to look back across nineteen and a half centuries, and at the same time how large and how variable is the contribution of the imagination to our 'pictures' of Jesus. In one sense it is true to say that he has been worshipped by millions; and yet in another sense, in term of subjective 'intentionality', a number of different beings, describable in partly similar and partly different ways, have been worshipped under the name of Jesus or under the title of Christ."<sup>813</sup> He believes that the traditional or 'Incarnational' interpretation of Jesus is mostly the work of Greco-Roman

world which produced this unique Christ-Figure to meet their spiritual needs. Here in this strange environment, he argues, the Christian theology "made the very significant transition from 'Son of God' to 'God the Son', the Second Person of Trinity."<sup>814</sup>

In his *"God and the Universe of Faiths"* he observes that "What seems to have happened during the hundred years or so following Jesus' death was that the language of divine sonship floated loose from the original ground of Jewish thought and developed a new meaning as it took root in Graeco-Roman culture....Thus the meaning of the Christ-event was first expressed by saying that Jesus was a Messiah, to whom in the Old Testament God has said, 'Thou art my beloved Son'; and then this divine sonship was later understood as his being of one substance with God the Father."<sup>815</sup> He further argues that "If, however, Christianity had happened to expand eastwards, so that its basic thinking had been done within an Asian instead of a European culture, its intellectual interpretations would inevitably have taken very different forms."<sup>816</sup> For him "Christianity is an ongoing movement of life and thought, defined by its origin in the Christ-event and by its consciousness of that origin. It cannot be defined in terms of adherence to any doctrinal standard, for its doctrines are historically and culturally conditioned and have changed as the church has entered new historical and cultural situations. Accordingly it is impossible to predict or to limit the developments that will take place in the future history of this movement."<sup>817</sup>

Regarding the deity of Jesus and incarnation of God in him, Hick observes that "The Christian's faith in the deity of Christ is an interpretation of a human life and personality as being more than human, as being continuous with the life of God. This interpretation both involves and transcends an ethical valuation of his personality. The deity of Christ was mediated first through his moral character."<sup>818</sup> He further argues that because of "threefold sense of a divine purpose and love and forgiveness embodied in Christ was later reflected in the thought of the Church as the dogma of Christ's deity....The disciples' innate tendency to interpret their experience religiously was powerfully evoked by and focused upon the person of Christ, and it deepened into a consciousness that in some infinitely significant and momentous sense Jesus Christ was God incarnate."<sup>819</sup> On the other hand, he claims that "it seems pretty clear that Jesus did not present himself as being God incarnate. He did not present himself as the second person of a divine trinity leading a human life. If in his lifetime he was called "son of God," as is entirely possible, it would be in the metaphorical sense that was familiar in the ancient world."<sup>820</sup>

To him, the problem lies in the Fathers' literal interpretation of the New Testament's metaphorical as well as mythological language about the person of Christ and stripping him of meaning, "the fateful development that created what was to become orthodox Christian belief for many centuries occurred when this poetry hardened into prose and the metaphorical son of God, with a small s, was transmuted into the metaphysical God the Son, with a capital S. The philosophers then developed the explanatory theory that Jesus had two complete natures, one human and the other divine, and that in his divine nature he was of the same substance as God the Father, while his human nature he was of the same substance as humanity."<sup>821</sup> He argues that this traditional two-natures Christology of Nicea and Chalcedon was a literal understanding of Incarnation. "If we distinguish between, on one hand, a literal statement (whether it be empirical or metaphysical), and on the other hand metaphorical, poetic, symbolic and mythological statements, the Nicene formula was undoubtedly intended to be understood literally. It asserts that Jesus was liter-

ally (not mere metaphorically) divine and also literally (and not mere metaphorically) man. As divine he was not analogous to God, or poetically-speaking God, or as-if God; he was, actually and literally God-incarnate. And again, as human he was really, truly and literally a man."<sup>822</sup> He goes on arguing that "orthodoxy has never been able to give this idea any content. It remains a form of words without assignable meaning. For to say, without explanation, that the historical Jesus of Nazareth was also God is as devoid of meaning as to say that this circle drawn with a pencil on paper is also a square. Such a locution has to be given semantic content: and in the case of the language of incarnation every content thus far suggested has had to be repudiated."<sup>823</sup> The problem with the traditional Christian belief, to quote V. A. Harvey, is that "in contrast to all other texts, it sets aside our present critically interpreted experience when it comes to interpreting the New Testament. It assumes that in this case alone what our critically interpreted experience tells us is "impossible" is not only possible but probable and certain."<sup>824</sup>

According to Hick's understanding, the doctrine of 'Incarnation' is a mythological idea and literally not true at all and "a Christian does not have to accept those philosophical and theological theories of the third and fourth centuries."<sup>825</sup> Like every other myth it was introduced to "evoke an attitude."<sup>826</sup> The real significance of Jesus does not lie in his divinity or incarnation but in his example and model. For "He is the one in following whom we have found ourselves in God's presence and have found God's meaning for our lives. He is our sufficient model of true humanity in a perfect relationship to God."<sup>827</sup> Though the concept of "sufficient model of true humanity" should be understood in the light of such a data available in the New Testament books, the limitations of which have already been discussed above.

Paul Badham takes a different route to reach the same conclusion as that of Hick. He rejects the literal interpretations of the doctrine of 'Incarnation' due to two valid theological reasons. He observes that, "all attempts to speak out the doctrine of the incarnation as literal proposition face the following conundrums:

(a) if the historical Jesus had access to divine knowledge or power then he cannot truly be described as God incarnate for he did not, in terms of our present understanding of what it means to be human person, genuinely become a "man like us in all respects save sin";

(b) If Jesus was a "man like us in all respects save sin" no grounds can be adduced for supposing him to be God incarnate."<sup>828</sup>

Badham disagrees with Hick that the Fathers took the incarnation literally, "I find this quite impossible to accept."<sup>829</sup> I think it is an oversimplification of the issue. The traditional phraseology, concepts of atonement and salvation, understandings about the deity, person, nature, union and body of Christ, the outcome of these understandings in regards to Jesus' worship, images and also images of Mary and God, in short all history of the 'Incarnational Thought' points to the validity of Hick's thesis and denial of what Badham himself argues as valid theological reasons. In the light of what has been discussed in the previous pages, it becomes fairly difficult to accept Badham's thesis.

The same Cappadocian Father, St. Gregory of Nyssa, whom he quotes saying that "every concept our minds can form relative to God is a simulacrum, a false likeness, an idol. There is only one name by which the divine nature can be expressed; the wonder which seizes the soul when it thinks of God".<sup>830</sup> Same is the Father who also uses such an anthropomorphic and corporeal language as that of saying that "Yet we have no doubt, from the recorded miracles, that God underwent birth in human nature. But *how* this happened we decline to investigate as a matter beyond the scope of reason."<sup>831</sup> He also writes, "...since *God infused Himself into perishable humanity* for this purpose, namely, that by this communion with Deity mankind might at the same be deified, for this end it is that, by dispensation of His grace, He disseminated Himself in every believer through that flesh whose substance comes from bread and wine, blending Himself with the bodies of believers, to secure that, by this union with the immortal, man, too, may be a sharer in incorruption."<sup>832</sup> The Cappadocians and others whom Badham quotes, in my opinion, seem not to deny the literal meanings of the incarnation. They perhaps are just recognizing and expressing the impossibility of knowing the essence of God the Father and also recognizing the difficulty of putting what they believe *vis-a-vis* incarnation in a logical and intelligible way by observing: "if explanation be sought let us acknowledge that it is a marvel...what God can do let us own we cannot probe."<sup>833</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, in one of his sermons, observed that "the very incomprehensibility of the dogma of the Trinity brings us up against the absolute mystery of God; it reminds us that we must not hope to understand him."<sup>834</sup>

Therefore, it seems plausible to argue that the doctrine of incarnation is not meaningless because the Fathers did not mean it literally but because of what Badham himself observes, "that the doctrine of the incarnation cannot be presented as a factual hypothesis because all efforts at spelling it out do violence either to the notion of humanity or divinity."<sup>835</sup>

Finally, rejecting the terms like 'myth', 'story', 'poetry', because of their negative implications, Badham chooses the concept of 'metaphor and symbol' to envisage the meanings of incarnation. Thus he arrives at the same conclusion as John Hick when he argues, "if I say "I am on fire with love," I am using the metaphor of fire to indicate the intensity of my emotions. Likewise, to call Jesus divine is to say that in him we see the personality of God insofar as that can be expressed in a human life...Jesus can stand as a symbol for God because, Christians believe, his life exemplifies God-like behavior."<sup>836</sup>

Here Badham is committing the same mistake that he makes Hick responsible for. The mistake of putting his views forward "in conscious opposition to the mainstream of Christian orthodoxy."<sup>837</sup> He, like Hick, does not believe that Christ is from the *ousia* (substance) of God; that he enjoys divine nature, proper Godhead that of equal to God in power and majesty. Badham further maintains the human person of Jesus before and even after the so-called incarnation. He should reflect upon the fate of Paul of Samosata and Nestorius to know how much in line he is with the orthodox view point. I see in this "ideal example" or "model" Christology an echo of the old Antiochian theology which, in spite of its scientific treatment of the issue, was condemned as heretical.

Although the perfect "example" Christology draws a clear-cut line between God and Jesus, saves Christianity from crude anthropomorphism and shadows of paganism, and makes Christian faith in line with and meaningful to other universal faith groups, nevertheless it does not comply with the set rules of traditional Christianity as Brunner observes, "The view of Jesus as the perfect Ideal of ethical or religious truth would then correspond to one part of the Christian creed, namely, the statement that Jesus is not only *a* true man, but that He is *the* true Man. But the exceptional position assigned to Jesus-an absolute and not a relative one-which is implied in the Christian doctrine of Real Humanity of Jesus, presupposes that Jesus, True Man, the Sinless One, could only be True Man because He was more than man; because He was also-God."<sup>838</sup> The 'Traditionalists' reject this interpretation because in this solution "the Person of Jesus has no constitutive significance."<sup>839</sup>

The traditional Christianity wants to have God. But how is this possible? Paul Tillich answers that, "Because of the incarnation, for in the incarnation God became something which we can have, whom we can see, with whom we can talk etc."<sup>840</sup> Throughout their history, the Christians have been trying to save the transcendent God from corporeality and anthropomorphisms, but their desire for salvation has very often resulted into the opposite. This probably was among the factors that the Islamic version of transcendence and monotheism, observes K. Armstrong "spread with astonishing rapidity throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Many of its enthusiastic converts in these lands (where Hellenism was not at home ground) turned with relief from Greek Trinitarianism, which expressed the mystery of God in an idiom that was alien to them, and adopted a more Semitic notion of the divine reality."<sup>841</sup>





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- 1 <sup>1</sup>See George Leonard Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, SPCK, London, 1952, 2f
- 2 <sup>2</sup>Quoted from Charles Bigg, *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, The 1886 Bamton Lectures, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1968, 93
- 3 <sup>3</sup>Ibid, 92-3; also see John Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne Publishers Inc., NY, 1974, 126ff; see more details in Clement's *Stromata* Book 2, Chapter 16 "How we are to explain the passages of Scripture which ascribe to God human affections" in A. Roberts & J. Donaldson (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, W. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1962, vol. 2: *Fathers of the Second Century*, 363-4
- 4 <sup>4</sup>Clement of Alexandria, in Prestige, *Ibid*, 55-
- 5 <sup>5</sup>R. A. Greer, *Origen*, Paulist Press, N.y., Ramsey, Toronto, 1979, 127
- 6 <sup>6</sup>Bigg, *Ibid*, 19
- 7 <sup>7</sup>Greer, *Ibid*, 12
- 8 <sup>8</sup>Ibid, 128; see more details in Origen, *Contra Celsum* VI:65 in H. Chawick, *Origen, Contra Celsum*, CUP, Cambridge, 1965, 38
- 9 <sup>9</sup>See his "Confessions" in Whitney J. Oates, *Basic Writings of St. Augustine*, Random House, NY, 1948; also R. W. Battenhouse, et al., *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, NY, 195
- 10 <sup>10</sup>See V. Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, NY, 197
- 11 <sup>11</sup>See E. L. Mascall, *Existence and Analogy*, Longmans Green, London, 194
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