

GOD AND THE TRINITY IN THE FATHERS – II

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Arianism

ARIUS put forward a one-sided solution to the half measures of the subordinationism of pre-Nicene theology. His starting point was the Christian kerygma and his continual concern was to clarify the tensions evident in the subordinationism of the pre-Nicene theology. Elevated to the priesthood he was commissioned to expound the Scriptures probably at Baukalis in Alexandria; his character was that of a person capable of making vigorous supporters and vigorous enemies.

In a letter to the emperor Constantine, Arius says he derives his belief in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit from the Gospels. This is quite true, in fact the whole of the controversy centered round a number of Scripture passages differently interpreted. These interpretations depended more or less on one's particular understanding of monotheism. Influenced by Middle Platonism, pre-Nicene writers developed a subordinationist theology, which was considered orthodox till Arius appeared. What produced the change from a tolerable, unclarified subordinationism to intolerable Arianism?

We have Arius' doctrine explained in a letter he wrote to Alexander of Alexandria in 320 where he writes:

“We have only one God uncreated, unbegotten – *agennetos* – who alone is eternal, alone without origin, alone possesses immortality, who alone is wise, who alone is good; the sole ruler, the judge of all, the ordained and governor, unchanging and immutable, righteous and good, the, God of the Law and the prophets of the New Covenant, who brought forth the only-begotten Son before eternal times (this expression here, is certainly not intended to express true begetting) by whom he created the aeons and all things; he did not bring him forth in appearance only, but in truth, as being in his own will as unchanging and immutable, as God's perfect creature, but not as one of the creatures; brought forth but not as others are brought

forth; not like Valentinus, who represented the one who was brought forth from the Father, as an emanation; not like Sabellius, who divided the monad and called it 'Father-Son'. He was not, as Hieraclos (assumed), kindled as a torch from a torch or as a lamp (from a lamp), so that two would arise (in God himself).¹

"Nor (do we know the Son)-as one-existing in an earlier mode of existence (i.e. undifferentiated in God) and later begotten or created (in God himself) as Son, views which you, blessed Pope, have of ten condemned in the midst of the Church and in the council. But we say, created by the will of God before the times and aeons, who received life and being from the Father and (the designation of) honour, so that the Father exists together with him. For the Father did not rob himself when he gave to him as a heritage all that he bears uncreated in himself. For he is the source of all. So there-are three hypostases. And God i.e. God the Father is the cause of all, quite alone with origin, but the Son was brought forth timelessly (i.e. before there was time) by the Father and created and founded before the aeons, and was not, before he was brought forth. He was brought forth timelessly before all things, and he alone received his existence from the Father. For he is not eternal or as eternal or as uncreated as the Father, nor does he have identical being with the Father, as some say of 'that which is related to something', thus introducing two uncreated archai. Rather, as monad and arche of all, he (the Father) is God before all.

"So he is also before the Son, as we have also learned from you and as you have proclaimed in the midst of the church.

1. According to Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses II*, 4,3), Valentinus lived in Rome during the years 140 and 160 A.D.; he was born in Egypt, and studied at Alexandria, and began spreading his teachings before he left Egypt for Rome. He was one of the most important Christian Gnostics, and Irenaeus gives us a detailed description of his doctrine in his book I of the *Adversus Haereses*.

Heradas was head of the Didaskaleion or School of Alexandria after the departure of Origen and later became patriarch of Alexandria. His patriarchate saw the emergence of Sabellius, who seems to have taught Modalism, namely that there is only one and the same Person in God, but called Father, Son or Holy Spirit, according to the various manifestations of God's various attributes. Subsequently Sabellianism underwent important modifications and in the 4th century took on a very subtle form.

Manicheism was originally a pagan sect; later, borrowing a great deal from Christianity, it became a son of heresy. The essence of Manicheism is dualism: there are eternal kingdoms, the kingdom of light governed by God, and the kingdom of darkness governed by Satan. Coming out of darkness to fight God, Satan conquered man, created by God with pure elements, and implanted in him the seeds of darkness. Manicheism exercised a great influence in both the East and the West, and lasted up to the Middle Ages.

Now as he has being and (the designations of) honour and life from God, and all things are delivered over to him, to this degree God is his origin. He rules over him as his God and the one who was before him.

But if 'from him' and 'from the womb' and 'I proceeded and came forth from the Father' (I Cor 8,6; Ps. 109, 3; John X, 42) is understood as a part or as an emanation of the same substance as him, then according to this view the Father is composite and divisible and changeable and corporal, and accordingly the incorporeal God is both corporeal and capable of suffering."²

Briefly Arius held:

i) the Father is the first and only *arche*. Arius does not explain this in philosophical terms but through negative remarks. He excludes the teachings of Marcion who distinguished between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament; he excludes Gnosticism which held the Logos to be an emanation of the Father, he is not in favour of the two stages of the Logos – the *logos enthiatetos* and the *logos proforikos*; he excludes Sabellianism, and speaks of three hypostases, but only the first hypostasis is really God, the other two hypostases belong to the sphere of creatures, they are divine only by participation.

ii) the Son is *Particeps primanus* of the Father, and he is given the *epinoiai*³ God, Logos, Sophia, Dunamis, only *per gratiam*.

iii) because of his narrow understanding of monotheism, for Arius the Son is not true God but God only analogically; he is alien to the Father, dissimilar from him. For Arius the gulf between creation and the transcendent God is unbridgable because the Son too is on the side of created things, and therefore cannot know the Father as he is in himself but only as a creature can know Him. For Arius the Son is seen mainly as mediator of creation.

In Origen God is creator from eternity and the Logos is from eternity the point

2. The confession of Arius forms part of a letter he addressed to the patriarch of Alexandria, Alexander. The confession is quoted from chap. II of section I in A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. I, revised 2nd edition, (London 1975).
3. *epinoia*: 'aspects' which explain the Son's twofold relation to the Father and to the world; these 'aspects' stand for the manifold characters which the Word presents in His eternal Being (Wisdom, Truth, Life) and as incarnate (Healer, Shepherd, Priest, first-born of the dead).

of reference to which God's creative will and activity refer, but creation is not from eternity. In Arius the Logos is already part of the process of creation; God first gives the Logos subsistence by a free decision of his will before the creation of the world.

Before Nicaea no distinction was made between *agennetos* = unbegotten and *agenetos* = uncreated. The concern of the pre-Nicenes was to show that the transcendent Father was *agennetos* i.e. without origin and without change; being without origin, he was unbegotten and uncreated. The pre-Nicenes did not distinguish between *agennetos* and *agenetos*. Arius considered the two terms identical and so argued that once the Son was not *agennetos*, he was a creature – for Arius being begotten implied division in the Godhead.

The Logos was created when God willed the creation of the world, for the Son had to be the mediator of creation and the instrument of God's creative action.

An *Expositio fidei* of ST. GREGORY THE WONDERWORKER (*Thaumaturgos*) handed down to us by Gregory of Nyssa completely contradicts Arius.

The following is the *Expositio fidei*:

- i) one sole God the Father of the living Logos, of subsistent Wisdom, of Power, of the imprint and image of the divinity, who perfectly begot a perfect Son,
- ii) one Lord, unique, God from God, imprint and image of the divinity, active Logos, Wisdom maintaining together the whole universe, Power which has created all things. True Son of the true Father, invisible from the invisible, incorruptible from the incorruptible, immortal from the immortal, eternal from the eternal;
- iii) and one Holy Spirit having existence from God, and appearing through the Son, image of the Son, perfect from perfect, principal life of all living, holiness giving sanctification, in whom is manifested God the Father who is God above all, and God the Son who is everywhere.
- iv) Perfect Trinity, which is not divided, or alienated in glory, eternity and sovereignty.
- v) There is therefore nothing created, nothing slave-like, nothing from outside,

which did not exist before and come into existence afterwards, in the Trinity, for neither the Father ever was without the Son, or the Son without the Spirit, but the Trinity has always been the same, without transformation or change.⁴ Analysing this *Expositio fidei* we notice

i) the “one God” is presented as Father of the living Logos, who is at the same time subsistent wisdom as well as the power (*dunamis*) and image of the Father from eternity. Arius could never agree that the Logos, this *Sophia* and *dunamis* should be thought as completely immanent in God and yet different from the Father. But the key-statement is not this; it is that the perfect Father begot the perfect Son. For Arius the Wisdom which is immanent in God is identical with the Father. For Arius Wisdom came through wisdom, through the will of the wise God i.e. Wisdom which exists outside God is “created” wisdom.⁵

ii) In fragments which have survived from the works of Arius, we can find statements which seem to be contrary to those of Gregory: v.g. “unique from the unique” – Arius: “the unique one created the one unique one – but only the Son come into being (directly) from the one God”.

Arius could admit the statement “God from God”, but only analogically; for Arius held that Christ “is not the true and only Logos of the Father himself;” “Christ is not true God”, he is not true Son of the Father, and invisibility belongs only to the Father, the Son necessarily belongs to the visible sphere.⁶

iii) in the fragments which have survived no particular remarks are met with which could refer to this section of the *Expositio fidei*

iv) “perfect Triad” – for Arius “there is one Triad” which is not equal in honour, for its hypostases are not mixed with one another, one is higher in honour than the other to an infinite degree” (*Thaleia*) “The substances (*Hypostases*) of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit are divided in nature and alienated from one another and separate from one another, mutually different and without participation”

4. Cfr Grillmeier, 1c. W. 234ss.

5. This sentence, quoted by Athanasius in his letter on the synods of Rirmini and Seleucia, written in the year 345, is a quotation from *Thaleia* (Banquet), of which only small fragments survive, mostly short sentences quoted by Athanasius in his various writings against Arius. Arius wrote *Thaleia*, partly in metric form to describe his heresy.

v) “There is nothing created slave-like in the perfect triad” – ... nothing which did not exist before and came into existence afterwards” – These two statements contradict the position of Arius, for Arius “There was a time when He (the Son) was not.” Arius completely contradicts the concluding statement of the *Expositio*; for him the triad was not always Father, Son and Spirit.

Arius acknowledges the incarnation of the (created) Logos, “who descended and assumed flesh, suffered and died and rose again and ascended into heaven and will come again to judge the living and the dead”. Arianism, it seems, embraced a *Logos-sarx* christology, denying the existence of a human soul in Christ; but the human soul of Christ at this period was not yet a subject of theological discussion, and therefore the denial of a human soul in Christ was not considered a stumbling block against tradition.

Arian Christology seems to have developed step by step according to how the controversy developed. The clearest Arian formula on the incarnation is given to us by Eudoxius, who states that “We believe in the one Lord, the Son who became flesh but not man, for he took no human soul but became flesh so that God was revealed to us man through the flesh as through a curtain; not two natures since he was not complete man, but God in the flesh instead of a soul; the whole is one nature by composition.”

Some hold that the heresy of the creatureliness of the Logos was occasioned by the doctrine of the incarnation. According to Athanasius, at one point the Arians asked how could the Logos, if he were true God of true God, become man. The Arians understood that if there had to be a real incarnation, the Logos that comes from heaven must enter into a substantial conjunction with the flesh and become its life-principle. Such a conjunction for a “divine” Logos was inconceivable. A really transcendent Logos cannot enter into a body-soul conjunction with the human *sarx* of Christ, into a physical conjunction – not confusion – with the body in such a way that a *syntaxis*, a *constitutio*, one entity arises from the two.

The Theology of Nicaea

The statements made at the Council of Nicaea on the relationship of the Logos-Son to the Father had been prepared by earlier tradition, but had required the emergence of Arius to provide the stimulus to bring them into the creed of the Church and the general consciousness of believers, although this took a long

process. We have already mentioned the *Exposition fidei* of Gregory the wonder-worker, which in content is very near to the central theme of Nicaea, as we have seen.

The Nicene Creed drafted at the council, a creed which had to be subscribed by all the bishops said: “We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, creator of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth. Who because of us men and because of our salvation came down and became incarnate, becoming man, suffered and rose again on the third day ascended to heaven, and will come to judge the living and the dead. And in the Holy Spirit.”

“But as for those who say that there was a time when he was not, and that before he was born he was not, and that he came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is from a different hypostasis or substance, or is created, or is subject to alteration or change – these the catholic anathemizes.”⁷

In this creed the most important Arian theses are taken up and rejected. The fathers of Nicaea took a baptismal creed (that of Eusebius’ church of Caesarea, or that of Jerusalem or another Palestinian Church – scholars are not in agreement) and inserted in it a number of clauses directed against Arius. The concern of the fathers of Nicaea was to confess in one God the true Father and Creator of all things and his true Son; about the Spirit no more is said than was offered in the creed adopted. The council’s aim was a declaration that Jesus was the one true Son of the Father. This is made clear by a number of statements:

The Son is begotten, only-begotten. The pre-Nicene tension between *agennetos-gennetos* and *ktizein* is now resolved; the Son is *gennetos*, but the term cannot be any longer translated “created” when applied to the Son; it must be translated only as “begotten”. With Athanasius *gennetos* – begotten – is clearly distinguished from *genetos* – created. The Father is *agennetos* i.e. uncreated and unbegotten.

6. This sentence from *Thaleia* is quoted by Athanasius in his *Epistula ad episcopos Aegypti et Libyae*, 12.

The Son is begotten from the substance of the Father. Arius to safeguard monotheism, regarded the Son as created by a pure act of the will of the Father – and therefore through physical begetting or separation or emanation – and alien in substance to the Father.

The Arians could accept the statements God from God, light from light, but they could never accept true God from true God. This last statement rendered impossible all equivocal uses of the term God. The Father could still be designated as *ho theos*, but the term was now safeguarded from Arian misinterpretation. By saying that the Son was begotten, the fathers of Nicaea implied that the Son was of the same substance of the Father.⁸

At this point the term *homoousios* was inserted – one in substance with the Father⁹ – By introducing the term *homoousios* the fathers had no intention of hellenizing the concept of the God of revelation by introducing a philosophical and technical concept of *ousia* (substance). – Their concern was simply to clarify what the Scriptures said about the Son. Some scholars think that the introduction of the word *homoousios* might have been occasioned by Arius himself – he was the first to use the term which is met with in a fragment of *Thaleia*: “The Son has not the characteristics of God in his individual substance, for he is not like him nor indeed is he *homoousios*”. With this statement Arius wants to imply that the Son does not have the same being as the Father, nor does he belong to the same level of being as the Father, he is middle-being who once was not and received his being through an act of the will of God; he is not the real and own Logos of God but he is Logos only in bearing the name.

When Arius rejected *homoousios* his concern was to ward off an inadequate conception of God, above all the conception of the corporeality of God, as though the Son, as part of the divine being, could be an emanation or a separate part of God. On the other hand the use of *homoousios* had the same aim: stressing the incorporeality of the Logos and therefore rejection of any division of the *ousia*. For the fathers of Nicaea, the sense of the Scripture allowed two ways of

7. Quoted from J.N.D.Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, (London 1958), chap. IX.

8. The fathers at Nicaea did not discuss how the three Persons could be distinct and yet participate in the one and undivided nature of the Godhead.

9. Any manual of Church History could be consulted for an account of the controversy about the term *homoousios*.

proceeding from God, one immanent in God and the other *extra deum*; this second proceeding is twofold, by creation and by the sending of the Son of God into the world. Arians could conceive only *creatio, extra deum*, the Son's proceeding from the Father to come into the world could only be a *creatio*; for them begetting could only be understood in corporeal terms. Christian monotheism is in sharp contrast with the concept of God in Judaism and middle Platonism: Christianity accepted a begetting within the Godhead and true identity of substance and real difference between Father and Son (and Holy Spirit).

Without having thought about all the implications and problems which could arise from their statements, the fathers of Nicaea, had the courage to maintain the tradition of the 'Son of God' (found in the Bible) with all its strictness; expressing the sonship in philosophical terms was a secondary problem for them; they only wanted to remain within the framework of the baptismal kerygma and so they did not add any explanation of the way the term *homoousios* had to be understood. The meaning they were giving to the term can only be gathered from what was written after the Council v.g. Athanasius defines *homoousios* in contrast to the 'godless talk' of the Arians as

- a) summing up what Scripture has to say about the Son. The term means that the Son is not only 'similar' to the Father, but, as one who has come forth from the Father, quite equal to him;
- b) it says that the son is not separate from the substance of the Father.

After Nicaea there was a hard struggle to see how the oneness of substance of the Father and Son and the distinction between them could go together. The Church needed a whole century to arrive at the formula *mia ousia treis hypostaseis*. The Nicene triad is understood strictly within the Godhead although seen also in equally close conjunction with the work *ad extra* i.e. creation and salvation.

The Arian triad is totally different: the *monad* above, then come the *nous* and the *pneuma* outside the Godhead, both belonging to the created order. The Arians could quite easily speak of three hypostases, something which the Nicenes could not easily accept as they were taking *ousia* and *hypostasis* as synonyms – only later, when the two terms were distinguished from each other could these terms be accepted.

After Nicaea

The Nicene council was followed by a protracted period of controversy, and two decades had to pass before the Nicene doctrine was firmly and securely established. On one side we have Athanasius and a small group, fully backed by the Church in the West: they were devoted advocates of the *homoousios* and had fully understood that the identity of substance must necessarily follow from the doctrine that the Father and Son share the same Godhead. They were not Sabellians, though accused of Sabellianism for being reluctant in accepting the formula “three hypostases”, – they were reluctant to accept this formula as it could be understood prejudicial to divine unity, but by refusing this formula they were not ignoring the personal distinction within the Godhead.

Against this small group was a much larger group holding different standpoints: a very small group was definitely Arian, although hiding their identity; but the rest were definitely not Arian; Origenists in their outlook spoke in terms of three *hypostases*, and the term *homoousios* imperilled the doctrine of the three hypostases in God. In both groups there were extremists and moderates.

An extremist among the Nicenes was MARCELLUS of ANCYRA; he played a prominent part in the development of the theology of the 4th century, and in the first years after Nicaea the theological initiative lay with him. An enthusiastic supporter of the *homoousios* he grounded his teaching on the Scriptures and apostolic tradition.

Marcellus begins from what was for him a fundamental position, the ‘one hypostasis of God’. The error of the Arians he says is that they teach another *Logos* and another *Sophia* and *Dunamis* alongside the real and true *Logos* and therefore speak of another *hypostasis* separate from the Father. Marcellus presents the one God the ruler of all, as three in one, understanding the triad as a *homoousios* from a number of aspects; there is more stress on unity than on trinity, but the trinity is not dissolved: “We do not say that the Father is the Son or that the Son is the Father, but the Father is Father and the Son Son.” To understand the relationship of the Father, Son and Spirit in the Godhead, according to Marcellus, one must begin with the distinction which Marcellus makes between *dunamis* and *energeia*. Before all ages the *Logos* was in God as his immanent reason, identical with him. The *Logos* was immanent in God as *dunamis* (potency): because the *Logos* is in the full sense of the word, he cannot be begotten. But the *Logos* was also externalized as God’s

active energy (*energeia*) for creation and revelation since everything the Father does or says is accomplished by his Logos whose precise function is God's self activation and self revelation. Marcellus distinguishes two forms of existence. Only in so far as the Logos leads a life as *energeia* does he separate himself from God, unite himself with men, and return to God, having shown his purpose for the world. But during all this time he remains united with God in so far as he is *dunamis* i.e. in so far as he is the power which rests in God, the capability of what he achieves as *energeia*. The Logos is both latent and effective power: he leads a double life, a divine life and one related to the world; but he himself does not lead the latter, less than the former. In other words Marcellus has a combined view of the Trinity: an immanent trinity and an economic trinity.¹⁰

The Logos of God becomes the subject of the incarnation in that he acts on the flesh with his active energy (*energeia drastike*). The *energeia* of the Logos becomes active in creation, but this takes place in view of the incarnation.

Marcellus speaks of a separation of the Logos from God for the sake of the flesh, but this should be understood only as *energeia*; thus at the incarnation we do not simply have an indwelling but a creative activity in the assumption of the body in the flesh. Grasped by the divine *energeia* the man Jesus – not the Logos – becomes the *eikon* of the invisible God, of the whole Godhead. Marcellus insists that the *eikon* is not the Logos *qua* Logos – because by that he would be made a creature – but the flesh of Christ.

Briefly Marcellus, though denying that the Logos had a beginning, nevertheless held that the Logos became Son only with the Incarnation. In an attempt to prove that Arianism was simply veiled polytheism, he taught a monotheism which knows only an economic trinity, not identical with, but related to the dynamic Monarchianism of the earlier centuries. It is this tendency which led him to say that before the creation of the world the Logos was only in God and that at the end he will be only in God. The Logos is *homoousios* with the Father, but he is not begotten, nor a person. Only the God-man Christ is a person, he alone is called and is really Son of God; there was no Son of God before the incarnation.

In Marcellus we might see also the beginnings of a christological anthropology. The Arians believed that the Logos was changeable, and became unchangeable

10. In other words, Marcellus considers the Trinity both in itself (immanent) and in its *operationes ad extra* with reference to the *oiconomia* or God's plan for the salvation of man.

only through grace. To ward off all weakness from the Logos *qua* Logos Marcellus introduces the will of the *sarx* (flesh). We have here a first assertion of two wills in Christ as a contrast to the Arian doctrine of a mutable will of the Logos which made him a creature. Not to overburden the Logos with the suffering in Gethsemane, as the Arians did, Marcellus contrasts the divine will of the Logos with the will of the flesh of Christ.

Marcellus seems to have rediscovered the human soul of Christ, but this is not so; the human soul of Christ is not a theological factor in Marcellus; the redemptive act of the will of Christ does not come from the will of the flesh but from the divine will. Marcellus' soteriology required a *Logos-sarx* framework, while his christology insinuated a *Logos-anthropos* framework – Marcellus did not reconcile these two aspects of his Christology.

The Christological anthropology we saw in Marcellus is presented in a sharper form in EUSTATHIUS of ANTIOCH, accused unjustly as being a follower of Paul of Samosata and a precursor of Nestorius. Only fragments of his writings remain, but they are enough to show the falsity of the charge against him. In his theological letter on Melchisedech referring to St. John the Baptist he says: *Ioannes autem ipsum Verbum caro factum, manibus suis complexus deduxit in aquas*. In an oration *coram ecclesia* he says of the Jews: *manifeste deprehensi sunt qui Verbum occidissent et cruci affixissent*; he uses the term *theotokos* without any reservations – in other words he clearly accepts the *communicatio idiomatum*.

Eustathius was the first to attempt a *Logos-anthropos* Christology, against the prevalent *Logos-sarx* Christology. He saw the danger of the *Logos-sarx* Christology in the fact that the Arians could use it to show that the Logos assumed a human body without a soul, and so attributing all changes to the Logos himself and so denying his divinity. For this reason he resorted to a *Logos-anthropos* Christology making a sharp distinction between the two natures in Christ, and sometimes seemingly denying the *communicatio idiomatum*. In his emphasis on the whole man Christ he coined formulas v.g. *homo deifer*, *anthropos theophoros* which were misunderstood and brought against him the charge of being the father of Nestorianism.

Arianism was based on a *Logos-sarx* framework, but this framework was also accepted by many of the orthodox Fathers; the *Logos-sarx* theology was more or less the theology of the school of Alexandria, although such a statement would be a simplification.

The two great names associated with the *Logos-sarx* theology are ATANASIUS and APOLLINARIUS. Although Athanasius was the champion of orthodoxy and Apollinarius defended a heretical doctrine, they had a common element between them, an element – the *Logos-sarx* theology – which both received but developed in a different way, or to be more exact, the negative elements of the *Logos-sarx* theology in Athanasius appear only in a very limited extent, while in Apollinarius they arrive at their logical conclusion.

Athanasius was no scientific theologian and did not contribute anything speculative to the development of dogma although the history of dogma in the 4th century is identical with the history of his life. A true disciple of Origen he uses forms and concepts of Greek thought filling them with a content taken from revelation; in other words he makes use of philosophy to unfold and clarify the doctrine of the Church and not to penetrate the mystery of the divine essence with his human mind; opposing the rationalistic tendencies of the Arians, he proclaims the priority of faith over reason. By nature a controversialist, he possessed an accurate, but not broad, mind; inflexible in his logic, he was able to separate Greek thought and Christian revelation whenever there was the danger that the truth of the Gospel might be darkened or falsified. He defended not only the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, but also explained the nature and generation of the Logos better than any of his predecessors, laying the foundation of theological development for centuries after him, for his ideas are basic in the trinitarian and christological doctrine of the Church.

As regards the Trinity the doctrine of Athanasius can be summarised as follows: "There is a Triad, holy and complete, confessed to be God in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, having nothing foreign or external mixed with it, not composed of *one that creates and one that is originated*, but all creative; and it is consistent and in nature indivisible, and its activity is one. The Father does all things through the Word in the Holy Spirit. Thus the unity of the Holy Triad is preserved ... it is a Triad not only in name ... but also in truth and actuality. For as the Father is he that is, and so also his Word is one that is and God over all, and the Holy Spirit is not without actual existence, but exists and has true being."¹¹ The words

11. First letter to Serapion of Thmuis, written in 359, when Athanasius had taken refuge with the monks in the desert of Egypt. This letter, together with three other letters to Serapion, written during the same period, deal with the divinity of the Holy Spirit, a question intimately connected with the question of the divinity of the Son and the Arian controversy.

in italics in the quotation clearly show that Athanasius does not hold the belief (shared by Arians with Origen and Philo) that God needed the Logos to create the world. He refutes the Arians who held that God had first to create his Son and Word, so that through him as a medium he could create the world: "If they (the Arians) shall assign the toil of making all things as the reason why God made the Son only, the whole creation will cry out against them as saying unworthy things of God ... If God made the Son alone as not deigning to make the rest ... this is unworthy of God, for in him there is no pride ... If it be not unworthy of God to exercise his providence even on things so small as a sparrow or grass of the fields, also it was not unworthy of him to make them."¹²

Arius considered the Son as a creature, a work of the free will of the Father – Athanasius refuted this by saying that the very name 'Son' presupposes his being generated: but being generated implies being of the Father's essence and not of his will. Generation belongs to nature and not to will, and therefore the Son cannot be called a creature of the Father; he has in common with the Father the fulness of the Godhead and the Son is entirely God. Athanasius continually recalls the comparison of light coming from the sun, (so familiar to the school of Alexandria) to show that the begetting in God is different from human begetting: "Since he is God's Word and own Wisdom, and being his radiance, he is ever with the Father, therefore it is impossible, if the Father bestows grace, that he should not give it in the Son for the Son is in the Father as the radiance in the light ... for where the Father is there is the Son, and where the light is there is radiance"¹³: for this reason the Son is eternal as the Father. Father and Son are two distinct persons, but they are one in substance for they have the same nature (*phusis*): "They are one, not as one thing divided into two parts and these nothing but one, nor as one thing twice named, so that the same becomes at one time Father at another his own Son (Sabellianism), but they are two for the Father is Father and is not also Son, and the Son is Son and not also Father, but the nature (*phusis*) is one...and all that is the Father's is the Son's. Wherefore neither is the Son another God, for he was not procured from without otherwise there would be two gods. The Son is other as offspring, but he is the same as God ... he and the Father are one in propriety and peculiarity of nature, and in the identity of one Godhead (as radiance

12. *Oratio II contr : Arianos* 25. The three *Orationes contra Arianos* are Athanasius' chief dogmatic work: he first gives a summary of the teachings of Arius from *Thaleia*, and then defends the definition of Nicaea.

13. *Oratio II contra Arianos* 3

and light) ...Since they are one and the Godhead itself is one the same things are said of the Son which are said of the Father except his being said to be the Father.”¹⁴

There can be only one Son since, taken by himself he suffices to exhaust the Father’s fecundity: “The offsprings of men are portions of their fathers since the nature of their bodies is not uncompounded.... but composed of parts; men lose their substance in begetting and gain substance by eating. On account of this men become fathers of many children, but God being without parts is Father of the Son without partition or passion, for there is neither effluence of the immaterial nor influx from without as among men; being uncompounded in nature he is Father of one only Son.”¹⁵

There is no room of any subordination in this doctrine of the Logos, and Athanasius explains the words of Christ “The Father is greater than I”, often quoted by the Arians in support of their teachings, saying: “The Father is greater because he is the origin, while the Son is the derivation. Eternally begotten the Son is of the Father’s substance; he is *homoousios*, consubstantial with the Father”.

Athanasius rejects *homoios* as unsatisfactory: “Saying ‘like according to essence’, is very far from saying ‘of the essence’: a wolf is like a dog, but a wolf cannot be accounted as the offspring of a dog.”¹⁶

Athanasius’ doctrine on the Logos is based on his idea of the redemption: “The Logos was made man that we might be made gods, and he manifested himself by a body that we might receive the idea of the invisible Father, and he endured the insolence of men that we might inherit immortality.”¹⁷ “The Word perceiving that the corruption of men could only be undone by death, because it was impossible for the Word to suffer death being immortal, he took to himself a body capable of death.”¹⁸ In other words Athanasius infers the necessity of the incarnation and death of Christ from God’s redeeming will, we would not have been redeemed if God did not become man, if Christ were not God. If Christ, were

14. *ibid* 4.

15. *Epistula de decretis Nicaenae synodi*, 11

16. *Epistula de synodis Arimini et Seleucia in Isauria celebratis*, 41

17. *De incarnatione et contra Arianos*, 54

18. *ibid* . 9

not God by nature, but by participation he could never have formed the likeness of God in anyone." By partaking of him, we partake of the Father since the Word is the Father's own; but if he himself was by participation, and did not have the Father his essential godhead and image he would not deify, being deified himself, for it is not possible that he who merely possesses by participation, should impart of that participation to others, since what he has is not his own."¹⁹

While discussing the relation of the Son to the Father, Athanasius also discussed several strictly christological problems. Upholding the real distinction between the divinity and the humanity of Christ after the incarnation, he nevertheless emphasised the personal unity of Christ. But in his picture of Christ, there is or seems to be no place for the human soul of Christ, although Athanasius never denied its existence. The soul of Christ plays no part in Athanasius' economy of salvation, and is not even a factor in the inner human life of Christ; briefly, in Athanasius the human soul of Christ is not a 'theological factor'; this means that for Athanasius the human soul of Christ was not a principle which he found necessary for the interpretation of the being and the work of Christ in every passage where he gives a positive interpretation of the person of Christ, his being, his redeeming work, Athanasius never included the human soul in a really visible way.

Athanasius is clearly influenced by the Stoic-Alexandrian Logos doctrine, which makes the Logos the force from which all life and all movement comes; the Logos acts as a life-giving principle towards the world, but Athanasius does not identify the Logos with the world-soul as the Stoics did; but influenced by the Stoic concept of the world as a body, he considered the human rational soul as the most perfect copy of the Logos within creation: it fulfils towards the body the function which the Logos has in the cosmos – the soul is the Logos in microcosm, and therefore also a way to him and to the Father. The soul is a copy of the Logos, but when the original appears the copy recedes into the background, surrenders its function, even if not giving it up altogether. In Christ Athanasius sees an analogy between the relationship of the Logos and the world, and the relationship of the Logos with the human body of Christ. If the Logos can give life to the whole-*soma*, how much more can it give it to a part of it. Although the life-giving action of the Logos is present everywhere, it can be concentrated in one particular place. Athanasius with his Christian Stoic notions, sees that if the Logos dwells in a single body which at the same time is 'his own', it follows

19. *Epistula de synodis Arimini et Seleucia in Isauria celebratis*, 51

that it mediates life and power to it in full. The Logos would be the *hegemonikon*. But would it be the only life-giving principle? Athanasius speaks of the life-giving functions of the Logos in such a way that he completely forgets the human soul of Christ: the Logos is not only the personal subject of Christ's bodily life, but also the real physical source of all the actions of Christ; often there is no clear distinction between the mediation of natural and supernatural life.

Athanasius regards the Logos as the real personal agent in those acts which are decisive for redemption, the passion and death of Christ; but Athanasius also considers the Logos not only to be the *principium quod* (the personal agent of), but also the *principium quo* (the physical principle which achieves) the act. Athanasius in all his writings throws into relief the physical activity of the Logos even though it is mediated through the bodily reality of Christ's human body. Athanasius does not deny that the *sarx* of Christ performs its natural functions, but these are also attributed to the Logos although in a different way from the actions proper to the Godhead.

Athanasius by making the Logos the first and – it seems – the sole physical subject of all Christ's life, has great difficulties in explaining the sufferings of Christ.

A supporter of Nicaea could not have the Logos as subject of the physical sufferings of the passion, for it was on this point that the Arians based all their arguments against the divinity of Christ, of the Logos.

The Arian arguments against the divinity of the Logos were the following;

(I) Christ received gifts from the Father, (II) inward distress and suffering prove that the Son could not be the Father's own power; (III) if the Son advanced in wisdom he could not be the Father's own wisdom; (IV) destitution, prayer, ignorance of the day of judgement prove that the Son was not the Father's Word.

To refute the Arians Athanasius had to show that these human characteristics of Christ did not prejudice his transcendence and immortality; he had to find a subject for the sufferings of Christ's humanity to shield his inviolable Godhead. This could be easy with regard to purely bodily weaknesses and limitations, but the Arians also referred to the human psychology of Jesus: ignorance, prayer, weariness are spiritual phenomena with physical connections; the Arians spoke

of sufferings of the soul because for them the Logos took the place of the human soul in Christ. Athanasius could have easily refuted these arguments by appealing to the human soul of Christ, but he refrained from doing this, and instead tried to weaken the character of certain inner experiences of Christ: his ignorance was not a real ignorance, but an *ignorantia de iure*, i.e. that proper to human nature from the start: he makes the flesh of Christ the physical subject of the experiences which normally have their place in the soul: ignorance in Christ is the ignorance of the *sarx*.

Even in his explanation of the death of Christ, there is little trace of the human soul: the death of the Lord is explained as a separation of the Logos from the *sarx* (flesh).

For Athanasius, the human body of Christ is the instrument *organon* of the Logos. Christ became man, says Athanasius, and for this reason he needed the body as a human instrument. With these words Athanasius wanted to make two points: (i) the unity of the subject in Christ and (ii) the difference between the instrument and the agent. The *organon*-concept allows him to stress the living power of the Logos in redemption and at the same time to emphasize his transcendence. "When we see him doing or saying anything divinely through the instrument of his own body we may know that he so works, being God, and also if we see him suffering or speaking humanly we may not be ignorant that he bore flesh and became man and therefore he so acts and so speaks."²⁰

A passage in the *Tomus ad Andochenos* written in 362, is sometimes brought forward as a proof that Athanasius did believe in a human soul of Christ. The decisive passage in the *Tomus* is the following: "The saviour did not have a body without a soul (*apsukon*), without perception, without intelligence, for it was not possible, when the Lord had become man for us, that his body should have been without reason, nor was the salvation effected in the Word himself a salvation of body only, but of soul also."²⁰ Although the passage seems to be a clear statement of the existence of a human soul in Christ, it is not so as we will now see.²¹

i. The passage has a clear statement of the main argument of the anti-Apollinarian period, an argument developed by Gregory of Nazianzus: *quod*

20. *Oratio III contra Arianos*, 54

21. *Tomus ad Antiochenos*, 7

non assumpsit, non redemit. Actually the argument is already met within Origen and Tertullian. But in the above passage we do not have the clear form of the soteriological and christological argument expressly mentioning the soul of Christ, which we meet with later. The above passage does not derive the redemption of the whole man from the fact that the Logos had taken a human soul, but simply from the fact that the Logos was the cause of the redemption: the salvation of the soul and body are worked out in the Logos himself.

ii. Furthermore the sentence: “for it was not possible, when the Lord ... without reason,” clearly means that when the Logos became man his body was not without reason. But this sentence simply states that Christ’s body was endowed with reason, but not that reason was communicated to the body by a created soul.

Athanasius’ position is that of the school of Alexandria; the incarnation brought about a participation in the divine nature and reason of the Logos; reason in Christ was not primarily grounded and exclusively grounded in a created soul, but in the Logos – he is the ultimate principle of reason in Christ. Nevertheless this does not exclude the existence of a human soul in Christ. Now if we take the term *apsukon* in the first sentence of the quotation as meaning “without a soul”, the passage would be recognising a created soul in Christ; but the term could also be translated as *lifeless* and it is this interpretation which Apollinarius gave to the passage. Apollinarius could do this, once, with the whole Alexandrian school, he was admitting that the Logos was the *hegemonikon* of the *sarx* i.e. the moving principle of all life in Christ – this idea, while not excluding a human soul in Christ in the orthodox Fathers, was led to its logical conclusion in Apollinarius. An orthodox theologian would have understood *apsukon* as meaning “without a soul”.

The *Tomos ad Antiochenos* and the letter to Epictetus though orthodox do not stress the reality of the human soul of Christ as it was stressed later by the opponents of Apollinarius. The two works of Athanasius speak only of the subject to be redeemed, man, who is wholly redeemed; but when the cause of the redemption is given, only the Logos is mentioned and not explicitly the assumption of body and soul in Christ. In these two works, written when the problem of the human soul in Christ had come up to discussion, the human soul is still not a theological factor, but only a physical factor, and this could not be otherwise in the Soteriology and Christology of Athanasius so deep is the *Logos-sarx* framework built into Athanasian Christology: in his picture of Christ, just as it

is in that of other Alexandrians, the bright light of the Logos swallows up any created light.

There could have been a certain development in the thought of Athanasius following the discussions which took place in 362, and so one might think that Athanasius originally did not think that in Christ there was a human soul, this being substituted by the Logos, for, otherwise, in his controversies with the Arians, he would have used it as an argument. On the other hand, it is not enough to accuse Athanasius of denying a human soul in Christ because he never mentions it. In his writings there are no positive indications that he denied a human soul in Christ; certainly he attributes redemption to the Logos and lays strong emphasis on the two main factors Logos and *sarx*, but he never speaks with complete clarity positively or negatively about what lies between, so despite the fact that for him the soul of Christ is not a theological factor, we can still say that for him it was a physical factor.²²

With Athanasius we have the first theological speculations with regard to the Holy Spirit. The HOLY SPIRIT must be God for if he were a creature we would have no participation of God in him: "If by participation of the Spirit we are made sharers of the divine nature (2Pt 1,4) we should be mad to say that the Spirit has a created nature and is not by nature God ... if he makes men divine it is not to be doubted that his nature is of God."²³

The Holy Spirit is of the Trinity and since the Trinity is homogenous the Spirit is not created but is God: "It is madness to call him creature, for if he were a creature he could not be ranked with the Triad, for the whole Triad is one God ... nothing foreign is mixed with the Triad: it is indivisible and consistent."²⁴ The Spirit is consubstantial with the Father, and "proceeds from the Father"²⁵, but Athanasius nowhere states explicitly that the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, though his teachings imply this truth.

It was Athanasius who took the lead in defending the *homoousios* of the Spirit, but the task was completed by the Cappadocians. Athanasius and Cyril of

22. See Grillmeier, 1c, section I chap. V, 3e with regard to the whole question of a human soul in Christ in the writings of Athanasius.

23. Letter to Serapion of Thmuis, 1, 23

24. *ibid* 1, 27

25. *ibid* 1, 2

Jerusalem²⁶ acknowledge the full deity of the Spirit although they do not call him God. Besides Athanasius in a synod of Alexandria in 362 had secured the acceptance of the proposition that the Spirit is not a creature but belongs to and is inseparable from the substance of the Father and the Son, against the unsatisfactory formula presented by Basil of Ancyra at the synod of 358 which simply stated that the Spirit is given to the faithful from the Father through the Son and has his being from the Father through the Son. But uncertainty still remained so much so that Gregory of Nazianzus in 380 could still say that there were various views regarding the Spirit: some held the Spirit to be a force – *energeia* – others a creature, others God, and finally others refused to commit themselves basing themselves on the vagueness of the Scriptures: besides among those who believed that the Spirit was God, some held it to be a pious opinion to be held in private, others proclaimed it openly, while others seemed to believe that the Godhead was possessed in different degrees by the three Persons.

The development of the doctrine on the Spirit can be seen quite easily in the writings of the Cappadocian Fathers.

BASIL THE GREAT in his treatise *De Spiritu Sancto* never calls the Spirit God although, as Gregory of Nazianzus says in his panegyric on Basil, he acknowledged that the Spirit was God, preached this truth whenever he had the opportunity and eagerly confessed it when questioned in private. But he avoided calling the Spirit consubstantial with the Father on purpose, “in his *oikonomia*” as Gregory of Nazianzus expresses himself – to win over the hesitants: “to the weak he becomes weak to gain the weak” as Athanasius expressed himself in a letter to some monks who had accused Basil of being a semi-Arian in view of this.

GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS has no hesitation in stating that the Spirit is God. As early as 372, in a sermon he calls the Spirit God and adds: “How long shall we hide the lamp under the bushel and withhold from others the full knowledge of the divinity of the Spirit? The lamp should be put on the candlestick that it might give light to all churches, souls, and to all the world, no longer by means of metaphors, or intellectual sketches but by distinct declarations.”²⁷

26. *Catech. mystag.* 3, 1-3. The mystagogical catecheses of Jerusalem are generally attributed to St. Cyril, although many scholars today think that they belong to his successor John.

27. *Oratio XII*, 6. There are 45 extant *Orationes* or discourses, mainly belonging to the time when he was bishop of Constantinople. His theological orations (27-31) preached in 380 in defense of Christian dogma against Eunomians and Macedonians earned for him the title of Theologian.

Though defending Basil's prudence, he claims for himself freedom of speech. In his 5th *Theological oration* dedicated to the Spirit he writes: "Is the Spirit God? Most certainly. Is he consubstantial? Yes, if he is God."²⁸

GREGORY OF NYSSA follows in the footsteps of the two other Cappadocians.

A problem which the Cappadocians had to face was to differentiate between the mode of origin of the Son and the Spirit. BASIL says that the Spirit comes from the Father not by generation but as the breath of his mouth²⁹; his manner of "coming to be" is "ineffable": besides the natural goodness, the inherent holiness and the royal dignity are extended from the Father through the Son to the Spirit.³⁰ If the Scriptures call the Spirit, the Spirit of the Son, they also call him Spirit of the Father³¹; Spirit of Christ but not because the Son is the only source of the Spirit, as Eunomius held.³²

GREGORY OF NAZIANUS simply states with St John that the Spirit proceeds from the Father but he cannot explain how this "procession" takes place just as no one can explain the unbegottenness of the Father and the generation of the Son.

GREGORY OF NYSSA gives an explanation which was to become a definitive statement. This he does in the treatise *Quod non sint tres dii*. Influenced by the platonic doctrine of ideas Gregory seems to see even in finite things a numerical unity of essence or nature; confusing the abstract which excludes plurality with the concrete which exacts plurality, he states that *man* designates nature but not the individual, such that Peter, Paul, John are one man but three individuals. He thus attributes reality to the universal idea to explain the Trinity better and refute the charge of tritheism. According to him the three Persons are to be distinguished by their origin, the Father being the cause and the two others the caused; the two others can be further distinguished for one is directly produced

28. *Oratio XXIII*, 10

29. *De Spiritu Sancto* 46, 38

30. *ibid* 47

31. *ibid.* 18, 45

32. *Adversus Eunomium*, 2, 32

by the Father while the other proceeds from the Father through an intermediary. The Son is thus the only-begotten, while the Spirit derives his being from the Father through the Son. In *De Spiritu sancto* Gregory compares the Father, Son and Spirit to three torches, the first imparting light to the second, and then through the second imparting light to the third.³³

Apollinarianism

Although Apollinarianism historically came after Arianism, logically it had to come first – Christology might well have made a transition from Apollinarianism to Arianism but not vice-versa, for Arianism is simply a development of the basic principle of Apollinarianism. BOTH are based on the Logos-sarx framework which aimed at a unity of the Word made flesh so close and so deep as to avoid the divisive Christology of Paul of Samosata. To combat this Christology, APOLLINARIUS³⁴ drew the Logos-sarx Christology to its logical conclusion. Once the Logos, the transcendent Logos was the *hegemonikon* in Christ, it absorbed the human soul of Christ. Arius, following this logos-sarx theology, vitiated the transcendence of the Logos, devaluated the Logos, and made him a creature. Apollinarius was an outstanding champion of the Nicene doctrine against the Arians although his theology, as we have just said, would have logically led to Arianism if he had preceded Arius. His foremost motive was to defend the absolute unity of the Godhead and the manhood in Christ and the divinity of the Redeemer. He saw a potential danger to these truths in the Arian teaching of the moral growth and development in Christ's life. His fear of separating the two natures in Christ and his endeavour to grasp the unity of the incarnate Logos as deeply as possible, dominated his entire thought. For this reason he had recourse to the acts of the synod condemning Paul of Samosata, but his theory was no solution at all for he mutilated Christ's humanity. For Apollinarius the God-man is a compound unity in human form. His aim is to describe the way in which the Godhead and the manhood were united in Christ.

33. *De Spiritu Sancto*, 3

34. Apollinarius is the author of the first great Christological heresy; born in Laodicea about 310 he was a great friend of Athanasius, and was bishop of the Nicene community of Laodicea from 361 till his death in 390; a very successful teacher, he combined classical erudition with rhetorical ability. Jerome was a pupil of his at Antioch in 374. He fought side by side with Athanasius and Basil against Arianism, only to be later condemned as a heretic himself.

The indwelling of God in man is not enough to explain the incarnation; incarnation comes about when the divine *pneuma* (spirit) and the earthly *sarx* (flesh) together form a substantial unity in such a way that the man in Christ first becomes man through the union of these two components. The independent constitution of the humanity of Christ should not be presupposed either temporarily or ontologically for the realisation of the incarnation. The humanity of Christ is only constituted as such by the union of the divine *pneuma* and the earthly *sarx*. Apollinarius distinguished between to 'take' man and to 'become' man. So Apollinarius concludes that incarnation means that the Logos joined himself to a human nature to form a substantial unity and through the union constitute a human being. i.e. of body and spirit. Therefore the incarnate is a 'heavenly man'. Christ is a 'heavenly man' in so far as the Logos enters into a substantial conjunction with the *sarx* to make a human being. Apollinarius conceives the two natures in Christ as parts of a whole; for him the human nature in Christ is incomplete i.e. without a soul. The two 'parts' of the God-man Christ cannot be considered as equivalent. The divine *pneuma* maintains a preeminence throughout, it is the life-giving spirit, the effectual mover of the *sarx*. The real metaphysical basis of the unity in Christ ultimately lies in the fact that the whole of the power which gives life to the God-man is in the Logos *qua* Logos. Because a man whose union with God is only accidental, and therefore is a man apart from God, maintaining his individuality by carrying the principle of his physical life within himself, so one cannot say that the Logos became flesh unless one held that the Logos had complete control over all life *qua* Logos. For Apollinarius man's salvation rests on the fact that an invincible *nous*, an inalienable will and a divine power are ensouled in Christ in the *sarx*, making him sinless.

From here comes the original meaning which Apollinarius gave to the formula *mia physis*. If we speak of two *physis* we would be destroying the unity of Christ, but in Christ there is no such duality, for the body is not a *physis* as it cannot give life. The Logos not united with the *sarx* does not dwell in the world, only when united with the *sarx* does the Logos dwell in the world.

The concept of *physis* can only be applied to something which contains the power which gives life, which can be considered as a real source of life in any sphere of being. In Christ it is the Logos who provides all the life giving power, and therefore the body cannot be a *physis*.

Apollinarius, is taking the term *physis* as meaning the self-determining being:

self-determination, which has its seat in the *hegemonikon* is the decisive element in the *physis*. This meaning is different from that given to the term later on. Taken in the meaning given to it by Apollinarius, *physis* could be within any Christology of an exclusive and explicit Logos-*sarx* framework. EPHRAEM also speaks of a *mia physis* but in the sense of one concrete nature i.e. person, while at the same time speaking of two “natures”, Godhead and manhood in Christ.³⁵

Another term *ousia* could be regarded as equivalent or approximate to the concept of *physis*. The God-man is one *physis*, one *ousia* because one lifegiving power which completely permeates the *sarx*, goes out from the Logos and unites the two in a living functional unity. Christ is one because he is a living unity of Logos and *sarx*. The *communicatio idiomatum* i.e. the exchange of predicates, is not merely a logical-ontological matter because of the unity of person in Christ, but is based on the vital conjunction of the two kinds of being in Christ as envisaged by Apollinarius.

Apollinarius was the first to use the term *hypostasis* to interpret the unity of person in Christ, though the term is already found in Hippolytus. For Apollinarius the *compositum* Christ is one *physis* and *hypostasis* and *ousia* because the Logos, as determining principle, is the sole source of all life. Through the symbiosis with the *sarx* a “unity of nature” is achieved; for these reasons and in the same sense Apollinarius speaks of one *prosopon* being assumed in Christ, and the word is used to express unity of person. Apollinarius speaks of one *prosopon* in Christ because he sees in him one living being.

Apollinarius was accused of being the precursor of monophysitism, but this is not so; monophysitism arose when the term *physis* had acquired a new meaning. For Apollinarius *physis* is a vital dynamic concept, while later the term indicated something static, and came to be almost identical in meaning with abstract nature or *essentia*.

35. The key-terms in the Christological controversies of the 4th century were *physis*, *ousia*, *hypostasis* and *prosopon*; originally the terms were interchangeable as their meaning was not fixed and this led to a lot of misunderstandings and confusion. Only later the terms received a fixed meaning and each term was clearly distinguished from the others, thus opening the way for a solution of the controversies.

Briefly surveying in retrospect the Logos-*sarx* christology³⁶, we must notice that Apollinarianism and Arianism stand on opposite sides, both showing how unorthodox it is and how little it can be united with a true and complete picture of Christ. The difference between the two extremes lies in their different attitude towards *homoousios* i.e. their respective denial or acceptance of the Godhead of the Logos and his identity of substance with the Father. They agree in assuming a unity of life and being, between *sarx* and Logos through which the Logos is made the soul of the *sarx*. The incarnation of the Logos is effected by the conjunction of the Logos with the *sarx*, a process in which the "man Christ" is first constituted physically as such.

The Arians saw through the character of this conjunction and quite consistently made the Logos a creature and a soul. The Apollinarians rejected this conclusion but did not deny its premises.

There is also a Logos-*sarx* christology which is orthodox: its characteristic is a silence on the soul of Christ, it delineates a picture of Christ in such a way that the soul does not appear. Athanasius avoids any formal emphatic mention of the soul of Christ just as he avoids a denial of the soul of Christ, and refrains from any further development of the Christological implications of the Logos-*sarx* Christology, and thus clearly distinguishing himself from Apollinarius.

The two heretical forms of the Logos-*sarx* christology represent probably the most serious and dangerous influx of Hellenistic ideas into the traditional conception of Christ; they represented a misunderstanding of the whole manhood and human psychology of Christ. The Logos-*sarx* Christology led some of the Fathers to have an unsatisfactory picture of Christ in which his manhood was not given its due place; on the other hand the Logos-*sarx* Christology gave a decisive place

36. Generally the Logos-*sarx* Christology is identified with the school of Alexandria, while the Logos-*anthropos* Christology with that of Antioch, but this would be simplifying the matter too much. The two Christologies indicate two different approaches to the mystery of Christ: the Logos-*sarx* Christology approaches the mystery from the side of the Logos, who assumes a human body (*sarx*) and stresses the unity of the Person in Christ. The Logos-*anthropos* Christology approaches the problem from the man Christ to safeguard the complete humanity of the Redeemer. Both Christologies are correct, but both could lead to heresy; in fact the Logos-*sarx* Christology led Apollinarius to denying a human soul in Christ, to safeguard the unity of the Person, while the Logos-*anthropos* Christology by stressing too much the humanity of Christ could arrive at admitting two persons in Christ, and this is what Nestorius was accused of.

to the Logos in the picture of Christ making him the really final subject of the human nature.

The powerful propaganda staged both by Arians and Apollinarians to promote their ideas called for a reply, but there was little inclination in the Church to restart the unfruitful and detrimental word-splittings of the period during which the Arian crisis was at its peak. It was felt that the Nicene Creed was enough, and any further Christological expansion would certainly have been firmly resisted; Basil the Great was of this opinion, and he only conceded the addition of a doxology to the Holy Ghost which was lacking in the Nicene creed.

But the Apollinarian writings could not pass unnoticed and Pope Damasus bewailed the negligence of the East in this important matter.

Apollinarius had the initiative; to oppose him a *Logos-anthropos* Christology began to develop fully when belief in the divinity of Christ, against the Arians, and belief in the human soul of Christ against Apollinarians was brought into the open.

The development was by stages and different groups contributed to the process. During the whole process the various conceptions and analogies (derived from platonic, neoplatonic, stoic and aristotelian philosophical presuppositions) were unconsciously applied to the unity of Christ.

As this development was taking place, it became continually clearer that unity and distinction had to be sought in different levels: the difficulty was in separating these two levels.

From Apollinarianism to Nestorianism

Between the period of the Apollinarian controversy and the controversy brought about by Nestorius we meet with a great variety of views with regard to Christology.

With DIDYMUS OF ALEXANDRIA³⁷ we have one of the most significant

37. Didymus of Alexandria, surnamed the blind, was one of the most important heads of the School of Alexandria; born about 313, he lost his sight at the age of four, nevertheless he amassed an amazing treasure of erudition and was a prodigy of encyclopaedic learning. He died in 398.

examples of the new trend in 4th century Christology, but he acknowledged the full reality of Christ's humanity. He insisted on the reality of the incarnation. The Logos assumed a whole man, body, soul and spirit; the body was all-holy for it was conceived by the Holy Spirit and the soul was without sin. Although in Didymus the soul is still considered as a physical factor, he strives to see it also in its theological aspect: its functions of bearing the original image of God and of offering complete obedience to God are recognised, but the principle *quod non assumpsit non redemit* is hardly mentioned. Against the Arians, Didymus insists on the reality of Christ's human soul: it is the changeable spirit of Christ's spiritual sufferings, temptations and trials.

Didymus was the first to have the deepest recognition of the significance and activity of Christ's soul as is evident from his Commentary on the psalms.

Christ's soul is endowed with true human understanding, and by its nature it is completely subordinated to the laws of creatureliness and in fact experienced human weaknesses because Christ's soul was of the same nature as our soul and so it did not share the immutability and impassibility of the Godhead, and could even be in a state of real, although incipient weakness, or *propatheia*. This state of incipient weakness occurs before the onset of the real *passio* (*pathe*), when the soul leaves a state of equilibrium and is subject to sin. The idea of *propatheia* was a legacy of Philo and Origen, although Origen never made use of it, but Jerome did: *illud quod supra diximus de passione et de propassione, etiam in presenti capitulo ostenditur, quod Dominus ut veritatem probaret assumpti hominis vere quidem contristatus sit, sed ne passio in animo illius dominaretur per propassionem coeperit contristari. Aliud est enim contristari, aliud incipere contristari.*³⁸ Didymus connects the *propatheia* i.e. the possibility of temptation and testing with the sinlessness of Christ, but he attributes Christ's sinlessness to the Origenistic idea of the soul's pre-existence. The aim of Didymus was to make clear against the Arians and the Apollinarians that there were two realities in Christ, divinity and humanity. He thus speaks of two *prosopa* in Christ but in an orthodox sense. Outside Alexandria we meet also with traces of further development, although progress was not the same everywhere. The greatest contribution came from the three great Cappadocian Fathers, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa. The main interests of the

38. In *Matth.* 4

Cappadocians was in trinitarian speculation, and it was through them that Greek theology for the first time applied trinitarian concepts to the christological formula, although within the limits of a popular terminology. BASIL'S teaching is mainly centred around the defense of the Nicene doctrine and his main concern was the return of the semi-Arians to the Church and in definitely fixing the meaning of the terms *ousia* and *hypostasis*. Athanasius used *ousia* and *hypostasis* as synonyms and for him the two terms meant nothing more than simply being. This was also confirmed in the synod of Alexandria of 362 presided over by Athanasius: this decision led to endless misunderstandings and controversies. Basil was the first to insist upon the distinction one *ousia* and three *hypostases* in God, and to maintain that the formula *mia ousia treis hypostases* was the only acceptable formula

For Basil *ousia* meant the existence or essence or substantial entity of God, while *hypostasis* means existence in a particular mode, the manner of being of each of the Persons. *Ousia* corresponds to the Latin *substantia* as the essential being which the Father, Son and Spirit have in common. Basil defined *hypostasis* as denoting a limitation, a separation of certain circumscribed conceptions from the general idea corresponding to the Latin *persona* in legal terminology. *Ousia* is "that which is common to individuals of the same species possessed in the same manner by all, so that the whole class is given one name, not having particular reference to the individual." *Ousia*, to have real existence, must be determined by special characteristics; thus determined it is the person or *hypostasis*, a concrete differentiated being. The definition does not clearly distinguish between person and individual, but it prepared the way for this clearer distinction.

Basil regarded *hypostasis* a better term than *prosopon* as Sabellius had used this second term to express distinctions in the Godhead which were merely temporal and external i.e. different appearances of the same Godhead. (*Prosopon* like *persona* in Latin could mean both a mask, a representation, and a person, but in Greek, the term *prosopon* has more the notion of impersonation than the notion of autonomous personality).

Basil has been accused of using *homoousios* in the meaning of *homoiousios* namely holding the consubstantiality of the three persons only in the sense of *homoiousios*, reducing the unity to a mere matter of likeness; but all evidence proves the opposite. Basil quite clearly states the numerical unity of God: "he who fails to confess the community of essence or substance falls into polytheism." He

did not hold the *homoion* opinion that there were three forms of existence, of like nature with one another, existing permanently in three distinct forms of existence. The reason for the charge brought against Basil can be explained from the fact that the new Nicenes, as they have been called, made more emphasis on the three divine Persons than on the unity of substance, as the old Nicenes did.

With regard to Christ, Basil is more concerned in distinguishing the divine and human characteristics of Christ than of speaking of the unity of person in Christ. Christ's humanity with a created soul is the subject of human suffering, growth and progress etc.; there is no suffering in the Godhead itself; the subject of the *pathe* is the flesh endowed with a soul, or just the soul in as far as it makes use of the body. Some of the passions are natural and necessary to the living being, others are brought on by a perverse will or lack of training in virtue. Christ had the former but not the latter. For Basil the soul is therefore a theological factor in Christ, although he does not transfer to the soul all the spiritual decisions which are decisive for our redemption.³⁹

In GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS the defense of the TRINITY is one of the themes which constantly appears in his discourses. Comparing the teachings of Gregory with those of Basil, we see a much stronger emphasis on the unity and the *monarchia*, the one sovereignty of God on the one hand, and on the other a clearer distinction of the divine relations. In *Oratio 34* he clearly states that there is complete identity among the three Persons except for the relations of origin.⁴⁰

Gregory's main merit is that of having given for the first time a clear definition of the distinctive characteristics of the three Persons. He declares that the distinctive characteristics of the three Persons are *agennesia* (unbegottenness), *genesis* (generation), *ekporeusis* (procession)⁴¹ and thus goes further than Basil who was unable to express the property, the distinctive characteristic of the Spirit. Gregory's Christology is even more advanced than his Trinitarian doctrine. In his exposition he does not use difficult concepts and clearly states the distinction of natures in Christ by extremely simple terms, producing a parallel with the trinitarian dogma. In Christ there is not *unus et unus* but *unum et unum*. On the

39. Cfr J. Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. III, (Utrecht 1960) chp. III

40. This idea finds its echo in the scholastic analysis of the Trinity which the Council of Florence in 1141 formulated as follows: *in Deo omnia sunt communia nisi obstat relationis oppositio*.

41. *Oratio XXV*, 16; *XXVI*, 19

other hand in the TRINITY the relationship is reversed: the interchange between the masculine and the neuter is a step forward towards a conceptual distinction between person and nature.⁴²

We have already referred to GREGORY OF NYSSA's trinitarian doctrine speaking of the teaching of the Cappadocian fathers on the Spirit. With regard to Christology, Gregory of Nyssa preaches the *mysterium Christi* in his sermons while in his other works he tries to interpret Christ, speculatively. To explain the unity of Christ, he says that the Logos takes up the "servant form" born of the Virgin, divinizing it: the Godhead absorbs the flesh as a drop of vinegar in the ocean. This explanation goes counter to his other statements with a strong emphasis on the distinction of the natures in Christ which seem to call to mind Nestorian formulas v.g. *si unus cum Patre factus est Christus, quomodo unus cum Deo qui in ipso est non evasit? Ita et homo Christus, alius existens, Deo qui in ipso coniunctus fuit.*⁴³

Gregory tries to express his idea of the unity of Christ within correct limits, but is not so successful as he builds the unity on a relationship of nature to nature. The flesh mingled with the Godhead does not remain within its limitations but is taken up into the heights of the divine nature; only with careful consideration can we distinguish the properties of the flesh and the Godhead in an unmingled state when each nature is examined by itself.

According to Gregory the transformation of the manhood into the Godhead begins with the conception itself; after his earthly life and passion there follows a still more rapid transformation, and therefore Christ's second coming does not take place in human form.

The Cappadocian's trinitarian doctrine was more developed than their Christology; one would not be going astray, saying that the Cappadocian's theological speculations were based on Stoic philosophy. Stoic philosophy held that on one side we have an undetermined passive undefined matter, the *hupokeimenon*, on the other we have what determines this matter, namely quality, form, etc. Undetermined matter is determined by the specifying quality and so becomes a *species*;

42. Cfr Grillmeier 1c. pp. 368ss

43. *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarem*, 58

when the particular character is added we have the individual – applying these notions to the Trinity, we have the community of substance (the Godhead -*species*) standing over against the particular characteristics of the identifying peculiarities (the distinguishing characteristics of the Three Persons), thus interpreting unity and distinction in the Trinity.

The distinction between the universal substance and the particularising characteristics is also applied to the human nature of Christ to refute the Apollinarian charge that by admitting a human soul in Christ, one would be admitting two Sons. Two sons are excluded precisely because a human *physis* is admitted in the exalted Christ, a human *physis* but without the particularising characteristics which make it an individual, a separate person.

Christ's humanity is not dissolved in the Godhead, but it does not have its earthly *idiomata*, namely all that makes the universal human *physis* an individual. The human element in Christ is no longer shown in natural properties – *quod humanum est, non in proprietatibus naturae esse ostenditur*: all is filled with the glory of the Godhead.

Gregory himself felt that his explanation was open to great difficulties, for it does not fit with Christ's lowliness; his interpretation of the unity of Christ is therefore unsatisfactory.⁴⁴

The Western Contribution

In the 4th century the Western Church began having a more marked life of its own, but in the interchange between the East and West, the East generally contributed more than the West, although this was not always so. Interchange increased during the Arian crisis through the great 'displaced persons' of the Arian crisis Athanasius, Hilary, Lucifer of Cagliari, Eusebius of Vercelli.

The Western contribution reached its climax in Augustine, but before him we have Hilary, Jerome and Ambrose to mention the more important writers.

HILARY had a special contribution to make: he incorporated in his trinitarian doctrine the doctrine of the incarnation; for him the incarnation is a revelation of

44. Cfr Grillmeier 1c. pp. 370ss

the triune God, especially of the sonship in God. Because the Arians did not believe in a pre-existent and true Son of God basing their arguments on the weaknesses of Christ, Hilary developed his christology refuting them. Christ, true God and true Man, is still only “one” in the duality of his manhood and his Godhead: *non alius filius hominis quam qui filius Dei est; neque alius in forma Dei quam in forma servi perfectus homo natus est*.⁴⁵ He criticizes those *tripartientes Christum* i.e. those separating the Logos, body and soul in Christ as well as those who make Christ a mere man.⁴⁶ For him Christ is the revelation of God in the flesh on all levels of his reality; nevertheless a distinction in Christ is necessary, in his constitutive elements and in the times before and after incarnation. (i) Christ’s existence does not begin with the incarnation, for he is the preexistent Son of God and so stresses the distinction of the natures in Christ: *ut cum aliud sit ante hominem Deus, aliud sit homo et Deus, aliud sit post hominem et Deum totus homo totus Deus*.⁴⁷ (ii) Hilary distinguishes three times: preexistence, *kenosis*, exaltation. He speaks so strongly about the *kenosis* for Christ, that some have thought he held that at the *kenosis* Christ abstained from showing himself completely in his identity of substance with the Father, his *splendor gloriae*, although this splendour shone through his humanity when performing miracles: the divine *virtus* is preserved in the *kenosis*, but there is an *habitus demutatio*.⁴⁸ Hilary though admitting a human soul in Christ failed to give it a full theological factor, and sought to keep sorrow and grief from Christ’s soul, taking refuge in a forced exegesis: claiming impassibility not only for the Logos but also for Christ’s body and soul, he is led to say that Christ’s human nature was capable of suffering only through a miracle. In Hilary we thus have a transfiguration theology similar to that of the Alexandrians; but we meet with a different Hilary in his commentary on the psalms and in *De Synodis* where he recognises the workings of grief in Christ’s body. Briefly, although Hilary clearly distinguished the natures in Christ, emphasised the human soul of Christ, and recognised the personal unity of Christ, he did not arrive at a complete solution of the Christological problem, for every time he considered, and seriously considered, earthly-human events he immediately displayed a divine side in each earthly feature of Christ, v.g. Christ was born of a virgin, but conceived of the Holy Ghost; he hungered, but used his divine power against the tree that bore no fruit when he had

45. *De Trinitate*, X, 19

46. *ibid* IX, 6

47. *ibid* IX, 38

48. *ibid*. X, 67

no food; he felt himself abandoned on the cross but promised heaven to the good thief ...⁴⁹

His tendency to stress the divinization of the human nature of Christ led him to emphasize and expound Christ's exaltation, pressing it almost to the point of paradox: the *susceptus homo* is *in naturam divinitatis acceptus*; the *forma servi* is taken up in the *forma Dei* – Christ's humanity has an eternal existence and becomes completely incorruptible *regnat autem in hoc eodem glorioso iam suo corpore; quod carnale ei est, in naturam spiritus devoratur*. Christ before the incarnation is merely God – *ante hominem Deus*; after the incarnation he is God and man – *homo et Deus*; after his exaltation he is *et homo et Deus, totus homo totous Deus*.

Jerome's picture of Christ is more realistic than that of Hilary and he stresses the fact that Christ's human nature had its sufferings and its desires; he also spoke (as we have seen) of the *passiones* and *libidines corporis* in Christ but as *propassiones*, for these *passiones* do not gain mastery over Christ. In Jerome we also meet with some features of a transfiguration theology; although *despectus et ignobilis dum pendebat in cruce*, nevertheless his Godhead shone forth at the earthquake as it shone forth on other occasions during his earthly life.⁵⁰

In AMBROSE the human soul is both a physical and a theological factor, and is the real principle of suffering, of progress of our redemption, not separated from the Godhead but in union with it. Ambrose makes a clear distinction of the two natures, Christ is one, *ipse igitur utrumque unus*; there is not one who is of the Father and another who is of Mary, but he who is of the Father took flesh from the Virgin: *non enim alter ex patre et alter ex Maria, sed qui erat ex patre carnem sumpsit ex virgine*. Christ's duality is *in operis distinctione non in veritate personae*.⁵¹

Compared with Eastern theology, Western theology was not aware of several problems: it was only with Augustine that the Western Church became aware of them: we will see later on, after discussing the problems which the Eastern Church faced and solved at Ephesus and Chalcedon.

(to be continued)

49. *ibid* IX, 6

50. Cfr Grillmeier, 1c. pp. 395ss

51. *In Ps.* 61, 5