**The Bishopric of Damiette, Kafr El Sheikh and Barary**

**Serious Theological Issues**

**Deifying Energy And Grace**

**Responses To Claims On Deification Of Man**

**By Metropolitan Bishoy of Damiette**

**Introduction**

I found myself obliged to publish a series on “Serious Theological Issues” since our Christian doctrine is facing many inner threats besides the outer ones. Some of these threats are not recent but I only discovered them by the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty first. We are confronted with dreadful doctrinal disasters in publications, this, from our side, need a stop and review to all our previous estimation of the doctrines of other Christian denominations.

Such disasters will never discourage our persistence, endeavor and effort for the Orthodox and the Christian unity. However, we should be fully conscious of the doctrinal background of some of those whom we are having dialogue with. Their theological schools started to spread in a way that induces us to be alert, because unfortunately, some of their doctrines crept to some writings and sermons in our church.

May our Lord keep us in His sound faith handed down from the fathers, by the prayers of His Holiness Pope Anba Tawadros II.

Feast of the Apostles 

& Martyrdom of Governor Marcos Metropolitan of Damiette, Kafr el Sheikh and Barary

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Recently, I discovered a very serious issue; i.e. some of the Chalcedonian Eastern Orthodox declare and write that God is not only His Essence (ousia) but also His energies (energia). **They even add, since God’s energies are God, consequently, when we receive grace we are united to Him and deified**. A newly published book titled, “***The Deification as the Purpose of Man’s Life***”, by Archimandrite George Capsanis, Abbot of the Monastery of Gregorios of Mt. Athos, explains this viewpoint. Referring to a group of Orthodox Chalcedonian theologians like Maximus the Confessor and Nicodemus of Athos the author writes:

**“God’s energies are divine energies. They, too, are God Himself, without being His essence. They are God and hence they deify man**.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

The author, according to what he called ‘*the teachings of the fathers of the church*’ (meaning the fathers of the Chalcedonean churches) adds:

**“God is not essence only, as the Western “Church” claims, but energy as well. If God was only essence, our union, our communion with Him would not be possible since God’s essence is awesome and unapproachable to man: “You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live (Exod. 33:20)**.**”**[[2]](#footnote-2)

Citing the teaching of Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessaloniki, Greece, in the fourteenth Century and one of the Chalcedoneans whom the author considers saints, wrote:

“**Summarizing Patristic theology (he) says that the Panagia has second place after the Holy Trinity, that she is god directly after God.**”[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Here, we would like to pose the following questions regarding the energies granted from God:**

**First:** How were the tongues of fire that sat upon the disciples on the Pentecost divided? Can God be divided?

**Second:** Are the energies from the divine essence to the creation granted through the will of the Holy Trinity or not?

**In response we say that St. Paul the Apostle said:**

“*For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith… Having then* ***gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us****: if prophecy, [let us prophesy] in proportion to our faith*” (Rom 12:3,6).

“*But to each one of us grace was given* ***according to the measure*** *of Christ's gift*” (Eph 4:7).

“*But one and the same Spirit works all these things,* ***distributing to each one individually*** *as He wills*” (1Cor 12:11).

**From the Church Rituals:**

In the second fraction to the Father, the priest says:

“O God Begetter of the light, author of life, granter of knowledge, **creator of grace**, benefactor of our souls, treasure of wisdom.”

This proves that grace is created and not God Himself.

**Next**, we shall depend upon sayings of the Holy Church fathers and teachers:

**Distinction between the Divine Essence and Divine Energy in the Sayings of the Fathers:**

**The sayings of the fathers clearly distinguish between the simple and unapproachable divine essence, and the numerous apprehended energies, created grace granted by God, attributes or properties of God. Energies or attributes can never be God’s essence, but through them we can just know the unapprehendable God. Also, to distinguish between His divine essence and His attributes. Of course, the properties and attributes are not God. Some examples for these sayings are the following**:

**In The Liturgy of St. Cyril of Alexandria the priest says**:

Who is **single in His nature and manifold in His working,** the fountain of divine graces; who is of the same essence with You; who proceeds from You. (The prayer of the descent of the Holy Spirit. The Divine Liturgies, Los Angeles and Southern USA, p. 344-345, first print 2001).

**St. Athanasius** wrote that God is “**uncompounded in nature**”, of an “**impartitive nature**” [[4]](#footnote-4) and that “**He is simple essence**”.[[5]](#footnote-5)

**St. Basil the Great** **wrote that the divine essence is simple but the powers various**:

“…distributing Its energy according to ‘the proportion of faith;’ **in essence simple, in powers various.**”[[6]](#footnote-6)

Highlighting the difference between energies and attributes on one side and essence on the other, **St. Basil also wrote**:

“We say that we know the greatness of God, His power, His wisdom, His goodness, His providence over us, and the justness of His judgment; but not His very essence… our idea of God is gathered from all tire attributes which I have enumerated. But **God**, he says, **is simple**, and whatever **attribute of Him** you have reckoned as knowable is of His essence… For they confess themselves that there is a **distinction between the essence and each one of the attributes enumerated**. **The operations are various, and the essence simple, but we say that we know our God from His operations, but do not undertake to approach near to His essence. His operations come down to us, but His essence remains beyond our reach**”.[[7]](#footnote-7)

He added:

“So knowledge of the divine essence involves perception of His incomprehensibility, and the **object of our worship is not that of which we comprehend the essence, but of which we comprehend that the essence exists**”.[[8]](#footnote-8)

**St. Gregory of Nazianzen** wrote that we know God through His attributes:

“For neither has any one yet breathed the whole air, nor has any mind entirely comprehended, or speech exhaustively contained the Being of God. But **we sketch Him by His Attributes**, and so obtain a certain faint and feeble and partial idea concerning Him”[[9]](#footnote-9)

On the properties of the Father and the Son, **St. Athanasius wrote**:

“The Father is eternal, immortal, powerful, light, king, Sovereign, God, Lord, Creator, and Maker. These **attributes** must be in the Image.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

Then, **St. Gregory of Nazianzen clearly differentiates between essence and attributes as follows**:

“**Are immortality and innocence and immutability also the essence of God? If so God has many essences and not one; or Deity is a compound of these. For He cannot be all these without composition, if they be essences**.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

**Therefore, the divine energy can never be God Himself..**

Energy is produced by will… Energy is divided and distributed… Energy is granted and given in time but God is eternal…

Energy is not God… God is an unapproachable essence as emphasized in the previously mentioned sayings of the fathers. Therefore, when God wanted to give Himself a name He said to Moses, “***I Am Who I Am***” (Ex 3: 14) i.e. He is the Being.. When referring to Himself he said “He is Jehovah” meaning “the being”. He did not say I Am the energy. **In “*I Am*”, He referred to the divine essence. In this respect St. Athanasius wrote:**

“For though to comprehend what the essence of God is be impossible, yet if we only understand that God is, and if Scripture indicates Him by means of these titles, we, with the intention of indicating Him and none else, call Him God and Father and Lord. When then He says, ‘***I Am that I Am***,’ and ‘*I Am the Lord God*,’ or when Scripture says, ‘*God*,’ we understand nothing else by it but the **intimation of His incomprehensible essence Itself**, and that He Is, who is spoken of. Therefore let no one be startled on hearing that the Son of God is from the Essence of the Father; but rather let him accept the explanation of the Fathers, who in more explicit but equivalent language have for ‘from God’ written ‘of the essence’.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

**An additional point**: When the Father from heaven spoke to the Son while in the Jordan River or on the Mount of Transfiguration saying, “*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” (Matt. 3:17 NKJ), were the Father’s words or voice, God Himself? Any voice is an energy.. Is this energy the Son Himself? Of course not!

Is there a fourth Hypostasis called energy yet not a hypostasis?!

Energy evne,rgeia is produced according to purpose and grace

i.e. according to will not nature

However, the begetting of the Son and the Procession of the Holy Spirit

**are not by the will of the Father.**

**On the divine dispensation of creation according to the divine will, St. Paul the Apostle and St. James the Apostle wrote**:

* “*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called* ***according to His purpose***” (Rom. 8:28 NKJ).
* “*for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that* ***the purpose of God*** *according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls*” (Rom. 9:11 NKJ).
* “*In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things* ***according to******the counsel of His will***” (Eph. 1:11 NKJ).
* “*having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself,* ***according to the good pleasure of His will***” (Eph. 1:5 NKJ).
* “*having made known to us* ***the mystery of His will****, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself*” (Eph. 1:9 NKJ).
* “*who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own* ***purpose and grace*** *which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began*” (2 Tim. 1:9 NKJ).
* “***Of His own will******He brought us forth*** *by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures*” (Jas. 1:18 NKJ).
* “*that in* ***the dispensation of the fullness of the times*** *He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth-- in Him*” (Eph. 1:10 NKJ).
* “*if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of* ***the grace of God*** *which was given to me for you*” (Eph. 3:2 NKJ).

**Distinguishing between the natural generation of the Son and the creative energy by His will, St. Athanasius wrote**:

“For if He be not Son, neither is He Image. But if there be not a Son, how then say you that God is a creator? since all things that come to be are through the Word and in Wisdom, and without This nothing can be, whereas you say He hath not That in and through which He makes all things. **For if the Divine Essence be not fruitful itself, but barren, as they hold, as a light that lightens not, and a dry fountain, are they not ashamed to speak of His possessing framing energy? and whereas they deny what is by nature, do they not blush to place before it what is by will**? But if He frames things that are external to Him and before were not, by willing them to be, and becomes their Maker, much more will He first be Father of an Offspring from His proper Essence. For if they attribute to God the willing about things which are not, why recognize they not that in God **which ties above the will?** **Now** **it is a something that surpasses will, that He should be** **by nature, and should be Father of His proper Word**.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

**He also wrote:**

“Son implies something proper to His and truly from the blessed and everlasting Essence; **But what is from His will, comes into consistence from without**, and is framed through His proper Offspring.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

The begetting of the Son is by nature, while creation is by will, on this concept **St. Athanasius** wrote:

“**His own Word begotten from Him by nature**, **concerning Him He did not counsel beforehand**; for in Him the Father makes, in Him frames, other things whatever He counsels; as also James the Apostle teaches, saying, ‘***Of His own will begat He us*** *with the word of truth*’ (Jm 1:18). Therefore the Will of God concerning all things, whether they be begotten again or are brought into being at the first, is in His Word in whom He both makes and begets again what seems right to Him.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

**St. Athanasius also wrote** :

“A man by counsel builds a house, but by nature he begets a son; and what is in building began to come into **being** **at will, and is external to the maker**; but the Son is proper offspring of the Father’s essence, and is not external to him; wherefore neither does he counsel concerning him, lest he appear to counsel about himself. As far then as the Son transcends the creature, by so much does **what is by nature transcend the will**.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

**This means that what is *by nature* is God but what is *by will* is not God but His energies and gifts, because what is *by nature* transcends what is *by will***.

He also wrote:

“It is by nature that He is good, much more is He, and more truly, **Father of the Son by nature and not by will.**”[[17]](#footnote-17)

**St. Cyril the Great** wrote about the begetting of the Son by nature:

“For He Who is **Son by nature** and in truth, and the Only –begotten, when He became like unto us, is specially declared to be the Son of God, not as receiving this for Himself-for He was and is, as I said, **very son**.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

**He also wrote:**

“For the created and subject nature is called to what is above nature by the mere nod and will of the Father; but the Son and God and Lord will not possess this being God and Son, by the will of God the Father, nor in that He wills it only, but **beaming forth of the Very Essence of the Father, He receives to Himself by nature what is Its own Good**.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

**Distinction Between Orthodoxy and Arianism:**

The sharp point that clearly set the Orthodox faith apart from Arianism was: Is the Son born by the will of the Father or by nature?

The purport of the Arian controversy is that the Father made His Son by His will, then He created everything by Him. The Son came into existence from nothing. The Son is not like the Father in essence.. There was a time when God was not the Father. The Word of God did not always exist, but there was a time when the Son of God *was* not, because He was created and made… Arians used Proverbs 8:22 as their evidence, “*The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old*”.

The issue of His being eternal or not is not the great problem.. In the Book of Revelation it is written the angel, “*sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that* ***there should be time no longer***” (Rev. 10:6 KJV). Everlasting life is merely the flip side of eternal life.. Since some people will enter everlasting life this means they shall surpass time. This superiority over time does not denote a divine essence. Through grace we surpass time, are liberated from it, we become timeless, entering everlasting life; thus liberated from authority of time.

If someone told you that he believes that Christ is born of the Father before all ages, even before time began, but by the Father’s will and purpose, you should immediately reject the concept.

Origen fell into this error, as recorded by Philip Schaff, one of the most notorious church historians. Schaff mentioned Origen said the Son is distinct in essence from the Father, that He is second God but distinct in essence, His birth is eternal, but, by the Father’s will.[[20]](#footnote-20) Meaning that Origen accepted that the Son is beyond time but did not accept that He is of the same essence of the Father.

**The Decisive Point in the Case:**

Energy is distributed, and given to creation in time. This is Divine energy, it is Divine grace.

We say grace is given in time. Someone might respond quoting Saint Paul the Apostle, "*but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*” (2Ti 1:9-10 NKJ). In other words, grace is eternally prepared, even if granted in time.

This verse proves our concept: Is grace produced by the will of God or without His will? The reply is, grace is produced with the will and purpose of God, since St. Paul says, "**in accordance with the purpose and grace**."

**Clement of Alexandria has clarified that the goodness of God is voluntary, saying:**

**“God is not involuntarily good, the way a fire is involuntarily hot. Rather, in Him, the imparting of good things is voluntary…. Therefore, God does not do good by necessity, but He benefits others from His free choice.**”[[21]](#footnote-21)

**We conclude, the energies and grace of God, expressing the attributes of His essence are produced by God’s free choice or will.**

This brings us back again to the following question:

**Is the Son born by the Father’s will, or apart from His will?**

If someone believes that the Son is born by the will of the Father, this person is an Arian. The cause of the conflict between Pope Alexander of Alexandria and Arius was that **Arius** stated the **Son was born by the will of the Father. Pope Alexander and his disciple St. Athanasius stated the Son is born by nature and not by will**. Their argument in response to the Arian heresy was that if the Son was born by the will of the Father then He is a creature even if this birth was before time as claimed by Origen and the Arians. If the Father willed to have a Son even before He created time, the Son would be a creature! The true faith is: whoever surpasses time, or is eternal has no former or later. Hence, to say the Father generated the Son by His will is totally unacceptable.

The whole struggle between St. Athanasius and the Arians was that Arians claimed the Father generated the Son by His will. All the orthodox churches which rejected Arianism at that time, justified the Son was born by nature without any intervention of the Father’s will. Once *will* intervened, as the Arians say, the Son would be made, first creation, or created, even if that occurred before time.

Therefore, even though grace was prepared according to the foreknowledge of God before eternity, "*Known to God from eternity are all His works*” (Act 15:18 NKJ), this does not mean grace is God!

**Is it possible to say that the works of God are God? Does God make Himself?!!**

**In the eternal dispensation there is purpose and grace. Grace proceeds with the purpose of God. God is the source, and the decision-maker: to create or not, to save or not, to bless or not, to appoint or not, etc.**

**Here we reach the key to our reply regarding this strange concept**

**As Church Fathers stated, Grace exists and proceeds with the will of God, while hypostaseis according to nature because there is no Father without Son, nor Son without Father.**

**Was grace prepared before the ages of time?**

Yes, nothing prevents the grace from being prepared before the ages of time, "***Known to God from eternity are all His works***” (Act 15:18 NKJ), as stated above.

Origen said that according to essence the Son is separate from the Father, and the son is a second God, but, by will the Father generated the Son before all ages. Arius learned from the teachings of both Origen of Alexandria and Lucian of Antioch, and thus came out with his heresy. Anyone who enters into the depth of the Arian heresy will discover that Arians were not insistent of the fact that the Son was created in time, since He is the Creator of all things, including time. The Arian Council of Antioch 341 A.D. stated the Son is born of the Father, before all ages,[[22]](#footnote-22) yet insisted that the Son came into existence out of nothing by the will of the Father.. Arius insisted that the Father created the Son by His will. If studied thoroughly, the historical references show the Arian-Orthodox conflict confined to this point: Was the generation of the Son by the will of the Father or by nature? According to the Orthodox faith the Son is born of the Father by nature, so the will of the Father did not interfere at all in the Son’s existence, otherwise the Son would be a creature.

**Thus, we found the key which solves this problem**.

As previously stated, Saint Paul the Apostle says, *"according to His own* ***purpose and grace*** *which was given to us in Christ Jesus* ***before time began***" (2Ti 1:9 NKJ). He also says, "***according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself***" (Eph 1:9 NKJ). "*Purpose*" in the previous text means will. Meaning that before time began, the Heavenly Father purposed all the grace that will be granted in time to the creation through His beloved Son.

**The divine economy is not temporal, it is eternal**..

**The energy granted by the Trinity to the creation has its origin from the Father, is perfected through the Son, by the Holy Spirit.**

Granting the divine energies is a common Trinitarian act, which starts from the Father, proceeds through the Son and is perfected in the Holy Spirit.

**St. Gregory of Nyssa** said:

“Every operation which extends from God to the Creation, and is named according to our variable conceptions of its origin from the Father, and proceeds through the Son and is perfected in the Holy Spirit.” [[23]](#footnote-23)

**St. Athanasius** often wrote:

“The Father creates all things through the Word in the Holy Spirit.”[[24]](#footnote-24)

And said also:

“The Father does all things through the Word in the Holy Spirit.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

In speaking about the divinity of the Holy Spirit, we find a beautiful passage written by **St. Athanasius** in which he explains how life was given by God to all creation:

“It is clear that the Spirit is not a creature, but takes place in the act of creation. For **the** **Father creates all things through the Word in the Spirit**; for where the Word is, there is the Spirit also, and the things which are created through the Word have their vital strength out of the Spirit from the Word. Thus it is written in the thirty-second Psalm: “By the Word of the Lord the heavens were established, and by the spirit of His mouth is all their power.”[[26]](#footnote-26)

**The eternal love between the three Persons is an attribute of the divine essence. Love is the core of the veracity of the divine essence since God is Love.**

**On this eternal love between the hypostaseis of the Holy Trinity, St. John the Evangelist wrote:**

* "**The Father loves the Son**, and has given all things into His hand” (Joh 3:35 NKJ).
* "For **the Father loves the Son**, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel” (Joh 5:20 NKJ).
* "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as **You have loved Me**” (Joh 17:23 NKJ).
* "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for **You loved Me before the foundation of the world**” (Joh 17:24 NKJ).
* "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which **You loved Me** may be in them, and I in them" (Joh 17:26-1 NKJ).
* "the only begotten Son, which is **in the bosom of the Father**, he hath declared him” (Joh 1:18 KJV).
* At the Jordan River and Mount of Transfiguration there was a voice from heaven, saying, “This is **my beloved Son**, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat 3:17  17:5 KJV).
* "who saved us from the power of darkness and take us to the kingdom of **his dear Son**" (Col. 1:13).

Regarding the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son, **St. Athanasius the Apostolic chanted**:

“And subsistence existing, of course there was forthwith its Expression and Image; for God’s image is not delineated from without, but God Himself hath begotten it; **in which... He has delight, as the Son Himself says, “I was His delight”**. When then did the Father.. not delight, that a man could dare to say, ‘the image is out of nothing’, and ‘The Father had not delight before the image was originated’.”[[27]](#footnote-27)

On the **Son’s eternal being in the bosom of the Father**, **St. Athanasius** wrote:

“For He is ever with the Father, for He is in the bosom of the Father, nor was ever the bosom of the Father void of the deity of the Son.”[[28]](#footnote-28)

**St. Ambrose** wrote:

“The Bosom of the Father”, then, is to be understood in a spiritual sense, as a kind of innermost dwelling of **the father’s love and of his nature in which the Son always dwells**. Even so, the Father’s womb is the spiritual womb of an inner sanctuary from which the Son has proceeded just as from a generative womb.”[[29]](#footnote-29)

**The divine properties of essence, including love, are not associated with the existence of the creation:**

**The love of the Father to the Son, or of the Son to the Father are not connected with the creation because love is an attribute of essence in God, “*God is love*” (1Jn 4: 8). God’s attributes of essence like love, life, wisdom etc. are not related with the creation.**

**Our Lord Jesus Christ said about the divine life:**

**“*For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself*” (Jn. 5:26 NKJ).**

**St. Athanasius the Apostolic** emphasized this concept in his commentary on “*All things that the Father has are Mine*” (Jn. 16:15 NKJ) saying:

“For if Creation is meant, the Father had nothing before creation, and proves to have received something additional from Creation; but far be it to think this. For just as He exists before creation, so **before creation also He has what He has**, which we also believe to belong to the Son (John 16:15).”[[30]](#footnote-30)

**The Son beholds the Father and knows Him**:

**St. John the Evangelist** wrote that the Son beholds the Father:

“*Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God;* ***He has seen the Father***” (Jn. 6:46 NKJ).

“*And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time,* ***nor seen His form***” (Jn. 5:37 NKJ).

**St. Cyril the Great** on his commentary on the gospel of St. John, on “*He has seen the Father*” wrote:

“For the Divine and incomprehensible Nature hath retired and is withdrawn not from our eyes only, but also from those of the whole creation: for in the word No one, he comprehendeth all things, and in declaring that He Alone is of God, and hath seen the Father, He putteth Himself outside of all, whereof the ‘no one’ may be understood declarative. **But since He is apart from all, and while none hath seen the Father, He Alone misseth not the seeing Him**, how shall He not henceforth be conceived of, not among all, as one of them, but external to all, as above all?...**He Alone seeth the Father** **because He is of God**: deeming aright we shall understand the words of God, to be of the Essence of the Father, in respect of Him Alone… of the Son, on another and truer sense will His being of God, be demonstrated, as being of Him by Nature. Wherefore He, not numbered among the all, but being external to all, and above all with the Father, will not share the infirmity of all, in that He is excepted from affinity with them, but mounting up unto the Nature of Him that begat Him, **will surely see Him from Whom He is**.

**But how or in what manner, either He beholds the Father, or is seen of the Father, it pertains not to our tongue to say: we must nevertheless conceive of it in a God-befitting manner**.”[[31]](#footnote-31)

In his commentary on “*For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does*” St. Cyril the great wrote that the Father sees in the Son his attributes of nature, he wrote:

“**And God the Father seeth the Son in Himself, the Son again seeth the Father in Himself**. Therefore he saith, I am in the Father and, the Father in Me. **But, “to see” and “to be seen” must here be conceive of after a Divine sort**.”[[32]](#footnote-32)

**St. John Chrysostom** wrote:

“But what God really is, not only have not the prophets seen, but not even angels nor archangels. If you ask them, you shall not hear them answering anything concerning His Essence, but sending up, “Glory to God in the Highest, on earth peace, good will towards men.” (Luke 2:14) If you desire to learn something from Cherubim or Seraphim, you shall hear the mystic song of His Holiness, and that “heaven and earth are full of His glory.” (Isaiah 6:3) If you inquire of the higher powers, you shall but find that their one work is the praise of God. “Praise ye Him,” saith David, “all His hosts.” (Psalm 148:2) **But the Son only Beholds Him, and the Holy Ghost**. How can any created nature even see the Uncreated?”

“As then many have seen Him in the mode of vision permitted to them, but no one has beheld His Essence, so many of us know God, but **what His substance can be none knoweth, save only He that was begotten of Him**.”

“For he that merely “seeth” hath not an in every way exact knowledge of the object, but **he that “dwelleth in the bosom” can be ignorant of nothing**.”[[33]](#footnote-33)

**Cyril of Jerusalem** wrote:

What then, some man will say, is it not written, The little ones’ Angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven? Yes, but the Angels see God not as He is, but as far as they themselves are capable. For it is Jesus Himself who saith, Not that any man hath seen the Father, save He which is of God, He hath seen the Father. The Angels therefore behold as much as they can bear, and Archangels as much as they are able; and Thrones and Dominions more than the former, but yet less than His worthiness: for with **the Son the Holy Ghost alone can rightly behold Him: for He searcheth all things, and knoweth even the deep things of God: as indeed the Only-begotten Son also, with the Holy Ghost, knoweth the Father fully**: For neither, saith He, knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him. For He fully beholdeth, and, according as each can bear, revealeth God through the Spirit.”[[34]](#footnote-34)

About the Arians, **St. Athanasius wrote**:

“Rash they are indeed, and self-willed, not trembling to form opinions of things which angels desire to look into (1 Peter 1:12), who are so far above them, both in nature and in rank. For what is nearer [God] than the Cherubim or the Seraphim? And yet **they, not even seeing Him**, nor standing on their feet, nor even with bare, but as it were with veiled faces, offer their praises.”[[35]](#footnote-35)

**The Trinitarian Economy**:

**Economy indicates there is a kind of negotiation -if this is the correct expression to use- between the three hypostaseis. The Holy Scriptures state**:

“*Then God said, "****Let Us*** *make man in Our image, according to Our likeness*” (Gen. 1:26 NKJ).

"***Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language****, that they may not understand one another's speech*" (Gen. 11:7 NKJ).

A known linguistic fact in the Hebrew language is: there is no use for the plural in a hyperbolic sense, as is the case with the Arabic language. Therefore, the use of the plural in the abovementioned verses is numerical.

Theologically, it is well known that **salvation is a Trinitarian dispensation**, in conformity between the three hypostasies. In the Tuesday Theotokia of the midnight praises, we sing:

“***For of His own will, and the pleasure of His Father, and the Holy Spirit,***

***He came and saved us***.”

In the psalm it is written:

“*The* ***counsel of the LORD*** *stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations*” (Ps. 33:11 NKJ).

**St. Athanasius the Apostolic wrote**:

“**The Son is not a work, but in Essence indeed the Father’s offspring, while in the Economy, according to the good pleasures of the Father, He was on our behalf made, and consists as man**.”[[36]](#footnote-36)

**According to His Humanity the Son offered obedience to the Father**

**The Son offered full obedience to the Father**. St. Paul wrote:

“*Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered*” (Heb. 5:8 NKJ). Meaning that although He is Son by nature, having the same nature of the Father, “*who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross*” (Phil. 2:6-8 NKJ).

In other words, He learned or exercised obedience when He incarnated, in humbling our nature in His person to the divine will.

This obedience is not offered from the man Jesus Christ, as claimed by Nestorius, but from the Son Himself, according to His Humanity, to the Father. Through this obedience He offered Himself as sacrifice to the Father for the salvation of our race.

The church chants a marvelous hymn “Fai Etafenf”, on great Friday, “*He Who offered Himself, as an acceptable sacrifice, upon the Cross, for the salvation of our race. His Good Father, smelled Him, in the evening, on Golgotha*.” The same words are chanted every week in the Sunday Theotokia.

**The Son beholds the Father, knows the Father, communes with the Father, councils with the Father regarding the dispensation of man’s salvation. The Son has free will according to the Trinitarian economy of emptying Himself, taking the form of man and offering Himself sacrifice to the Father.**

In the Tuesday Theotokia we say “*For of His own will, and the pleasure of His Father, and the Holy Spirit, He came and saved us*”. Meaning that the salvation is through a Trinitarian dispensation.

Love amidst the three hypostaseis is exchangeable: it is attained between the Father and the Son, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit and the Father. From the Father to the Son, to the Holy Spirit, to the Father; and from the Holy Spirit to the Son, to the Father, to the Holy Spirit.

In the relationship between God and creation, love is from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. The Love of the creation is in the Holy Spirit through the Son to the Father. This is reached when the creation reacts to the love of God that the Holy Spirit pours into their hearts. However, the love of the creation is never equal to the love of God to the creation.

Love amidst the three hypostaseis is equal, with a dynamic Trinitarian equilibrium. Note that the divine essence can never be designated of being in a static mode as Nestorius imagined. He rejected the unity between the divine essence and human essence in Christ, considering that His humanity would fractionalize divinity if united to it.

Nestorius, in the second of his twelve anathemans against St. Cyril of Alexandria, wrote:

“If anyone asserts that, at the union of the Logos with the flesh, the divine essence moved from one place to another; or says that the flesh is capable of receiving the divine nature, and that it has been partially united with the flesh; or ascribes to the flesh, by reason of its reception of God, and extension to the infinite and boundless, and says that God and man are one and the same in nature; let him be anathema.”

**The generation of the Son is not an event but a fact and a continuous mode.**

**The procession of the Holy Spirit if not an event but a fact and a continuous mode.**

**St. Gregory the Nazianzen wrote:**

“Neither did the Father cease to be Unbegotten because of His begetting something, nor the Son to be begotten because He is of the Unbegotten (how could that be?), nor is the Spirit changed into Father or Son because He proceeds.”[[37]](#footnote-37)

**St. Athanasius** comparing the continuous mode of the generation of the Son from the Father to the flow of water in a channel from the well saying:

“But just as a river, produced from a well, is not separate, and yet there are in fact two visible objects and two names. For neither is the Father the Son, nor the Son the Father. For the Father is Father of the Son, and the Son, Son of the Father. For like as the well is not a river, nor the river a well, but **both are one and the same water which is conveyed in a channel from the well to the river**, **so the Father’s deity passes into the Son without flow and without division**. For the Lord says, ‘I came out from the Father and am come’ (John 16:28). But He is ever with the Father, for He is in the bosom of the Father, nor was ever the bosom of the Father void of the deity of the Son.”[[38]](#footnote-38)

**Concepts regarding the Divine Incarnation and the Eucharist:**

The Chalcedonian orthodox who follow these theological opinions do not believe in the unity between the divine essence and the human essence in the divine incarnation. In “*The Deification as the purpose of Man’s Life*” its author wrote:

“**God’s energies are divine energies. They, too, are God Himself, without being His essence.** **They are God and hence they deify man**.”[[39]](#footnote-39)

He also said:

“If God was only essence, our union, **our communion with Him would not be possible** since God’s essence is awesome and unapproachable to man.”[[40]](#footnote-40)

He also said:

“If God is the divine essence only, without His energies, He would remain a self-sufficient God, **withdrawn from and unapproachable** by his creatures.”[[41]](#footnote-41)

He concluded by saying:

“The Lord wants and desires our deification. Moreover, it was for this purpose that He became man and died on the cross: to shine as the Sun amidst suns, as God amidst gods.”[[42]](#footnote-42)

**We recently discovered that the union between the divinity and humanity in the incarnation of the Word according to some Eastern Orthodox is according to energy kat’ evne,rgeian and not according to nature kata fu,sin.**

**The humanity of Christ to them was deified by energy and not by unity between the divine essence and human essence, i.e. by unity between the divine nature and human nature.**

In Damascus, during a meeting of the commission of liturgical dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox Church, **Professor Vlassios Phidas** told me that no one in their churches will accept the “natural union” e[nwsij fusikh, or e[nwsij kata fu,sin.

Professor Phidas is a friend of mine, he is a professor at the University of Athens. He taught many of our students in their theological colleges, he signed the theological agreement between the Eastern Orthodox Church and our Oriental Orthodox Churches. The signed agreements at the Monastery of St. Bishoy, Egypt 1989, and Chambesy in Geneva 1990 included the phrase “natural union” between the divinity and humanity in the incarnation. Later, around year 1994 in Damascus he told me no one from their side would accept “**natural union**”. I retrospect: what would the union between the two natures mean then? Was there no union? Then I found out that, of the fifteen Eastern Orthodox Churches only three accepted the signed text of the Christological agreement, i.e. the churches of Alexandria, Antioch, and Romania (but are obliged to wait for the approval of the rest of family of churches), the other twelve churches did not approve until now; like the churches of Russia, Greece and the monasteries of Mount Athos. I pondered over it, until 2010 AD when **I read a book written by the greatest theologian in Mount Athos, Father Gregorios Capsanis**, **(translated into Arabic by Father Ibrahim Dabour**, a renowned person and priest in the Eastern Orthodox Church in Jordan). Gregorios Capsanis wrote **the unity in the incarnation of the Word is according to energy and not essence or nature**. To reach this result he stated that **energy is God, God is not essence only**. Essence is unapproachable, while His energy is God that we can unite with. He wrote, “***Therefore, we unite with God through His uncreated, divine energies and not through His essence***”.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Unfortunately, in a book titled “***Orthodoxy: A Creed for Today***”, by **Anthony M. Coniaris**, translated in Arabic by Monk Yoel of the Monastery of St. Macarius, it is stated that the divine incarnation is similar to the unity of the faithful with the divine energy. He wrote:

“The same Word who became flesh in Jesus, must become flesh in us. In a mysterious way the union of the human and the divine can be repeated in the life of every believer… You and I as sons and daughters of God receive power to become extensions of the incarnation... We may become in this world other Christs, extensions of His incarnation.. The Word who became flesh in Paul can become flesh in us.” **[[44]](#footnote-44)**

**The Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church, presided over by the late thrice blessed Pope Shenouda III, in its session dated 27 May 2007 AD judged this text. In the report of the Synod’s Commission of Faith, Teaching and Legislation presented to the Holy Synod for consideration and action against the erroneous teachings mentioned in the abovementioned book, quoted this text in particular firstly with several other quotes. The Holy Synod judged these erroneous teachings and decided to publicize them.**

**When speaking about the divine incarnation we should remember God’s declaration about Himself from the unconsumed burning bush, when the only begotten Son manifested to Moses in Mount Sinai: “***And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed… Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father-- the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God*” (Exod. 3: 2, 6 NKJ)

Even the **Chalcedonian Definition** stated:

“Our Lord Jesus Christ, is perfect God and perfect man. As God, he is consubstantial with God the Father; and as man the same is consubstantial with us. He is unlike us only in that He is absolutely without sin.”[[45]](#footnote-45)

**St. Cyril the Great wrote**:

“The same one is consubstantial with the Father according to his divinity and consubstantial with us according to his humanity.” [[46]](#footnote-46)

It is well known that humanity is composed of two essences and natures; the human body and the human soul, together they form the one human nature and essence. The Lord Jesus Christ is consubstantial to us according to his humanity without sin. The natural union leads necessarily to a union according to essence.

The incarnation as explained by the fathers, and above all St. Cyril the Great the Pillar of faith, is a union between a divine nature and a human nature without mingling, confusion, change or separation, the result of which is ‘***one incarnate nature of the Word of God’***. St. Cyril often emphasized the **natural and hypostatic union** between the two natures in Christ elucidating the mystery of the divine incarnation.

In his third letter to Nestorius, par. 9, **St. Cyril wrote**:

“Neither do we say that the Word of God dwelled, as in an ordinary man, in the one born of the Holy Virgin, in order that Christ might not be thought to be a man bearing God. For even if the Word both “dwelt among us,”(Jn 1:14) and it is said that **in Christ** “**dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily**,”(Col 2:9) **we do not think that, being made flesh, the Word is said to dwell in him just as in those who are holy, and we do not define the indwelling in him to be the same**. But **united *kata phusin* kata fu,sin***,* and not changed into flesh, the Word produced an indwelling such as the soul of man might be said to have in its own body.”[[47]](#footnote-47)

Certainly, it is understood that the indwelling of the soul of man in its own body composes one human essence from two essences and one human nature of two natures.

In par. 10 of the same letter he wrote:

“The Word of God united, as we already said before, to flesh **according to *hypostasis*** **kaq u`po,stasion** is God of all and is Lord of all, and neither is he servant of himself nor master of himself.”[[48]](#footnote-48)

**St. Cyril the Great** in his letter to Accacius of Meletine (letter 40), par. 14 wrote the following:

“Wherefore, we say that the **two natures were united**, from which there is the one and only Son and Lord, Jesus Christ, as we accept in our thoughts; but after the union since the distinction into two is now done away with, we believe that, there is **one *physis***of **the Son, as one, however, one who became man and was made flesh**.”[[49]](#footnote-49)

**St. Cyprian the Martyr** wrote:

“Christ is both man and God, **compounded of both natures**, so that He could be a Mediator between us and the Father. In Jermiah: “And he is man, and who will know him?” Also, in Numbers: “A star will arise out of Jacob and a man will rise up from Israel.”[[50]](#footnote-50)

In his letter to Eulogios the priest (letter 44) par. 4, St. Cyril the Great, in trying to clarify the concept of the union between two natures, used the illustration of the flesh and soul forming the one human nature. He wrote:

“For we, when asserting their union, confess one Christ, one Son, the one and same Lord, and finally **we confess the one incarnate phusis of God**. It is possible to say something such as this about **any ordinary man, for he is of different natures, both of the body, I say, and of the soul**. Both reason and speculation know the difference, but when combined then we get one human phusis. Hence knowing the difference of the natures is not cutting the one Christ into two.”[[51]](#footnote-51)

**Of course the unity between the soul and flesh in man is not according to energy, but according to essence and nature because they both form the one human nature!!**

In his first letter **to Succesnsus** (letter 45) par 6, St. Cyril wrote:

“Accordingly when we assert the **union of the Word of God the Father to his holy body** which has a rational soul, a union which is ineffable and beyond thought and which took place without blending, without change, without alteration, we confess one Christ, Son and Lord, the Word of God the Father, the same God and man, not one and another, but one and the same, being, and known to be, God and man... While skillfully examining the manner of his dispensation with flesh and finely probing the mystery, we see that the **Word of God the Father was made man** and was made flesh and that he **has not fashioned that holy body from his divine nature** but rather took it from the Virgin Mary. Since how did he become man, if he has not possessed a body like ours? Considering, therefore, as I said, the manner of his Incarnation we see that **his two natures came together with each other in an indissoluble union, without blending and without change**, for his flesh is flesh and not divinity, even though his flesh became the flesh of God, and likewise the Word also is God and not flesh, even though he made the flesh his own according to the dispensation. Therefore, whenever we have these thoughts in no way do we harm **the joining into a unity by saying that he was of two natures**, but **after the union we do not separate the natures from one another**, nor do we cut the one and indivisible Son into two sons, but we say that there is one Son, and **as the holy Fathers have said, that there is one Phusis of the Word [of God] made flesh**.”[[52]](#footnote-52)

In the second letter **to Succensus** (letter 46) par. 6 he wrote:

“The nature of the Word has not passed over into the nature of the flesh. Neither has the nature of the flesh passed over into the nature of the Word, **but remaining** and being **considered in the propriety according to the nature of each ineffably and inexplicably united**, in accordance with the reasoning just given by us, thishas shown forth for us the **one *phusis* of the Son; but, as I said, incarnate**.”[[53]](#footnote-53)

**The Eucharist:**

In the Eucharist we unite with Christ **according to energy** therefore the priest says in the last confession in the holy liturgy “**eternal life** to whoever partakes of it”. In the Eucharist we take grace but we do not unite with the essence of Christ; neither the essence of his humanity nor the essence of His divinity, rather we unite with grace energetically or according to energy.

**St. Ignatius the Theophorus wrote**:

“I desire the bread of God, the heavenly bread, the bread of life-which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, the Son of God…. And I desire the drink of God, namely His blood, which is **incorruptible love and eternal life**.”[[54]](#footnote-54)

The grace granted in the Eucharist is the incorruptible love and the eternal life. Certainly, these are energies.

**St. Cyprian** wrote:

“He says that whoever will eat of His bread **will live forever**. So, it is clear that those who partake of His body and receive the Eucharist by the right of communion are living. On the other hand, we must fear and pray lest anyone who is separate from Christ’s body –being barred from communion- should remain at a distance from salvation. For He Himself warns and says, “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.”[[55]](#footnote-55)

The aim and goal of the Eucharist is to become our fortress and protection as the **St. Cyprian wrote**:

**“But may fortify them with the protection of Christ’s body and blood. For the Eucharist is appointed for this very purpose**.”[[56]](#footnote-56)

If there was another aim why didn’t the fathers mention it??!!

**St. Irenaeus wrote:**

“But if ]the flesh[ indeed does not obtain salvation, then neither did the Lord redeem us with His blood, nor is the cup of the Eucharist the communion of His blood, nor the bread which we break the communion of His Body.”[[57]](#footnote-57)

Some of the Eastern Orthodox say we unite with **the humanity of the deified Christ** and thus we are united with God. Regarding unity with Christ, the author of “*Deification as the Purpose of Man’s Life*” wrote:

“**A union of course, not with the Divine essence, but with the deified human nature of Christ**”.[[58]](#footnote-58)

**First**: **The fathers, the teachers of the church, rejected that Christ is a deified man and emphasized He was an incarnate God**. **St. Cyril wrote**:

“Thus is the faith and rightly. But if any say: What harm if a man like us be conceived of as laying hold on Godhead and not God rather be made man? We shall answer that there are a thousand things which may be brought to bear against this, and which all but tell us that we ought firmly to strive against it and not thus to believe”.[[59]](#footnote-59)

**Second**: **Regarding our union with Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, St. Cyril wrote**:

“For the Son dwells in us in a corporeal sense as Man,.. united with us by the mystery of the Eucharist; and also in a spiritual sense as God, **by the effectual working and grace of His own Spirit**, building up our spirit into newness of life, and making us partakers of His Divine Nature.”[[60]](#footnote-60)

**Third**: What about the one who partakes of the holy communion without deserving, or who does a crime like murder or fornication??

**St. Cyprian** wrote:

“What a crime is theirs who rashly seize communion and touch the body and blood of the Lord… even though their foulness is not washed away by the laver of the church. For it is written, “Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.”[[61]](#footnote-61)

**The author of the book writes that the human nature is in the bosom of the trinity.**

In the same book “*The Deification as the Purpose of Man’s Life*”, the author mentioned that when we unite with Christ our human nature becomes in the bosom of the Holy Trinity in heaven!! He wrote:

“**So, Now, human nature, through the hypostatic union of the two natures in the person of Christ, is irrevocably unified with the divine one, because Christ is eternally Godman. As Godman, he ascended into heaven. As Godman, he sits on the right hand of the Father. As Godman, he will come to judge the world in the Second coming. Therefore,** **human nature is now enthroned in the bosom of the Holy Trinity**.”[[62]](#footnote-62)

The Son is the second hypostasis Who incarnated while in the bosom of the Father.. The Son before the incarnation was in the bosom of the Father.. But how can the human nature be in the bosom of the Holy Trinity?!!

The Son is the second Hypostasis Who incarnated.. The result of what they mention in their writings would be a separation between the divinity and humanity in Christ! Saying the human nature is in the bosom of the Trinity means the humanity of Christ is in the bosom of His divinity; this will lead us to the Nestorian concept of conjoining. Moreover, the above phrase means that Christ’s humanity is in the bosom of Christ’s divinity, as if there are two Christs as Nestorius believed; the man is one and the son of God is another.

**Another point, if what is meant by ‘man’ or ‘human nature’ are human beings, then we should emphasize that the hypostatic union is a union of two natures in one single person and not many persons. We should highlight that the union between the divinity and humanity from the first moment of the incarnation made the body assumed by the incarnate Word His very own,[[63]](#footnote-63) as emphasized St. Cyril the pillar of faith. Therefore, He is called Only-Begotten Son as mentioned in the Gospel of St. John and later by the saintly fathers.**

**The distinction between the private human nature of the incarnate Word of God and our nature:**

**The private human nature of the Son was personalized in Him, therefore St. Cyril the Great said that God the Word has two births: the first is eternal from the Father before ages without a mother, and the second is human from Virgin Mary in the fullness of time without a father. Because of the perfect union between the divinity and the humanity in Christ, what is related to His own body is related to Him. Therefore we say that He incarnated, became man, suffered, was crucified, resurrected, ascended to heaven and sat on the right of His Father.**

**As a result of this natural and hypostatic union which resulted in a ‘one incarnate nature of the Word of God’ as St. Cyril said, the private human nature of the incarnate Word is not similar to our own human nature but is distinct from it in some aspects, some of which are:**

**1-He is Sinless**

He is sinless, with no tendency or liability to sin, this is a well-known fact.

Regarding our human nature we say in the church prayers {For none is pure from blemish even though his life on earth is a single day}, and Saint Paul the Apostle wrote: “*They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one*” (Rom. 3:12).

2- **His Body Never Experienced Sickness**

**St. Athanasius** in chapter 21 of “*The Incarnation of the Word”* wrote:

“But since He was, firstly, the Life and the Word of God, and it was necessary, secondly, for the death on behalf of all to be accomplished, for this cause, on the one hand, because He was life and power, the body gained strength in Him;

While on the other, as death must needs come to pass, He did not Himself take, but received at others’ hands, the occasion of perfecting His sacrifice. Since **it was not fit, either, that the Lord should fall sick, who healed the diseases of others; nor again was it right for that body to lose its strength, in which He gives strength to the weaknesses of others also**.

**Why, then, did He not prevent death, as He did sickness**? Because it was for this that He had the body, and it was unfitting to prevent it, lest the Resurrection also should be hindered, while yet **it was equally unfitting for sickness to precede His death**, lest it should be thought weakness on the part of Him that was in the body.”[[64]](#footnote-64)

**3**- **His Body will Never be Corrupted**

Regarding His body that it is not liable to natural corruption, although it is from a mortal nature **St. Athanasius** also wrote:

“But the Body itself being of mortal nature, beyond its own nature rose again by reason of the Word which was in it; and **it has ceased from natural corruption**, and having put on the Word which is above man, **has become incorruptible**”[[65]](#footnote-65)

**4- His Body is Life-Giving**

Since He is God and Life by nature, therefore His Body is life-giving. Explaining this idea **St. Cyril the Great** wrote:

“When He raised the dead, the Saviour is found to have operated, not by word only, or God-befitting commands, but He laid a stress on employing His Holy Flesh as a sort of co-operator sunergoj unto this, that He might shew that It had the power to give life, and was already made one with Him. For **it was in truth His Own Body, and** **not another’s**. and verily when He was raising the little daughter of the chief of the Synagogue saying, *Maid, arise*, He laid hold of her hand, as it is written, giving life through the touch of His Holy Flesh, He shews that there was **one kindred operation through both**. Yea and when He went into the city called Nain, and one was being carried out dead, the only son of his mother, again He touches the bier, saying, *Young man, to thee I say, Arise*. And not only to His Word gives He power to give life to the dead, but that He might shew that **His Own Body was life-giving** (as I have said already), He touches the dead, thereby also infusing life into those already decayed.”[[66]](#footnote-66)

**5- His Death is Equal to the Life of All**

**St. Cyril the Great** in the following passage, besides explaining the idea of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ that was equivalent to the death of all the redeemed, he on the other hand, clarified that the incarnation of the Word and His becoming man did not result in annulling the distinction between the incarnate Word and the faithful human beings even the saints. He says that the death of our Lord Jesus Christ is ‘not the death of one who is as we are’ because ‘him alone’… is ‘God by nature’, in spite of being like us when He became man.

“But how is it that “*one died for all*,” (2 Cor 5.14) one who is worth all others, if the suffering is considered simply that of some man? If he suffered according to his human nature, since he made the sufferings of his body his own, then, indeed, we say, and very rightly, that **the death of him alone according to the flesh is known to be worth the life of all, not the death of one who is as we are, even though he became like unto us, but we say that he, being God by nature**, became flesh and was made man according to the confession of the Fathers.”[[67]](#footnote-67)

**6- Only Him has seen the Father**

**St. Cyril the Great** in his commentary on the gospel of St. John, on “*He has seen the Father*” in wrote:

“For the Divine and incomprehensible Nature hath retired and is withdrawn not from our eyes only, but also from those of the whole creation: for in the word *No one*, he comprehendeth all things, and in declaring that He Alone is *of God*, and *hath seen the Father*, He putteth Himself outside of all, whereof the ‘*no one’* may be understood declarative. **But since He is apart from all, and while none hath seen the Father,** **He Alone misseth not the seeing Him**, how shall He not henceforth be conceived of, not among all, as one of them, but external to all, as above all?...**He Alone seeth the Father** **because He is of God**: deeming aright we shall understand the words *of God*, to be of the Essence of the Father, in respect of Him Alone… of the Son, on another and truer sense will His being *of God*, be demonstrated, as being of Him by Nature. Wherefore He, not numbered among the all, but being external to all, and above all with the Father, will not share the infirmity of all, in that He is excepted from affinity with them, but mounting up unto the Nature of Him that begat Him, **will surely see Him from Whom He is**.

But how or in what manner, either He beholds the Father, or is seen of the Father, it pertains not to our tongue to say: we must nevertheless conceive of it in a God-befitting manner.”[[68]](#footnote-68)

**The Claim of being Equivalent to the Son is a Satanic Thought**

**St. Athanasius** provides us with an old claim of the Arians, the same echoed nowadays, we shall present it with the response of St. Athanasius the apostolic:

“The Arians, however, not even thus abashed, reply,… ‘So are the Son and the Father One, and so is the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father, as we too may become one in Him. For this is written in the Gospel according to John, and Christ desired it for us in these words, ‘Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name, those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are.’ And shortly after; ‘Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their Word; that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them, that they may be one, even as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that Thou didst send Me.’ Then, as having found an evasion, these men of craft add, ‘If, as we become one in the Father, so also He and the Father are one, and thus He too is in the Father, how pretend you from His saying, “I and the Father are One,” and “I in the Father and the Father in Me,” that He is proper and like the Father’s Essence? for it follows either that we too are proper to the Father’s Essence, or He foreign to it, as we are foreign.’ Thus they idly babble; but in this their perverseness I see nothing but unreasoning audacity and recklessness from the devil, since it is saying after his pattern, ‘We will ascend to heaven, we will be like the Most High.’ **For what is given to man by grace, this they would make equal to the Godhead of the Giver**. **Thus hearing that men are called sons, they thought themselves equal to the True Son by nature such.** And now again bearing from the Savior, ‘that they may be one as We are,’ they deceive themselves, and are arrogant enough to think that they may be such as the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son; **not considering the fall of their ‘father the devil,’** which happened upon such an imagination.

If then, as we have many times said, **the Word of God is the same with us, and nothing differs from us except in time, let Him be like us, and** **have the same place with the Father as we have**; nor let Him be called Only-begotten, nor Only Word or Wisdom of the Father; but let the same name be of common application to all us who are like Him. For it is right, that they who have one nature, should have their name in common, though they differ from each other in point of time… But in truth neither we are Word or Wisdom, nor is He creature or work.”[[69]](#footnote-69)

**Conclusion**:

We discover very strange concepts! How can one say that the unity between the divinity and humanity in Christ is a unity of the energy of God with humanity!

We should be watchful of the book titled “*The Deification is the Purpose of Man’s Life*” addressed here, being translated into Arabic by a priest of the Eastern Orthodox Church following the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and is prefaced by the Eastern Orthodox Metropolitan of Jordan.

We have found the same concepts in the book titled “*Orthodoxy: A Creed for Today*” by Anthony M. Coniaris, also translated into Arabic by Monk Yoel of the Monastery of St. Macarius. This book was judged by our Holy Synod in its session dated 27 May 2007. Such books are available for our youths to read, and their innovative concepts will corrupt their understanding; i.e. God is not only His essence but also His energies.

This heresy is has spread!! From one side it justifies the deification of man, but what is much more serious wrong is rejects the belief of the unity between the divine essence and human essence in Christ, thus rejecting the natural union between the divine nature and human nature which forms the ‘One incarnate nature of God the Word’.

In defense of this sound faith, Pope Discorus abandoned his throne, and hundreds of thousands of martyrs in our Coptic church sacrificed their lives with bloodshed during the Chalcedonian persecution. The same applies to both orthodox churches of Antioch and Jerusalem which underwent similar persecutions during intervals of their church history.

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16. N. & P.N. Fathers, Vol. IV, Athanasius, *Four Discourses Against the Arians, Discourse III*, par. 62, p. 427. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
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