

CHAPTER TEN

THE OFFICE OF CHRIST AS THE HIGH PRIEST

The Salvation of which our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as the Great Prophet, foretold and His perfect Teachings, accompanied by His high moral standards, became our model and prototype. However, His Holy example would have remained meaningless for us without His Sacrifice on the Cross. He offered the Sacrifice that was required to satisfy Divine Justice and to restore the broken relationship between men and God. The Coming of the Word and Son of God to save the world was foretold in the Old Testament. He is the Eternal High Priest "...according to the Order of Melchizedek."¹ In the Epistle to the Hebrews His Priesthood appears to be incomparably higher than that of the Priesthood of the Levites. Continuing the Tradition of the New Testament, the Holy Apostolic Fathers as well as all the other Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church proclaimed the Office of the High Priest of Christ.

The importance of the Office of Christ as High Priest is manifested by the necessity of man's reconciliation with God by means of offering blood sacrifices rather than his own life, as an expiatory way of appeasing the anger of God. These Sacrifices of the Old Testament were simple symbols and prototypes of the future Sacrifice of the Great High Priest. The precious Blood of the God-Man, Who by His own Will as the spotless Lamb of God, offered Himself on the Cross and was thus able to raise and cleanse the world of sin. Our Lord Jesus Christ became the unique Mediator between God and man. He was able to speak with His Father while at the same time addressing mankind as one of their own and on behalf of all humanity. He became the most precious representative of the human race. His Sacrifice was invaluable because of the Hypostatic Union of His two Natures, the Divine and human, in one Great High Priest. No other man was able to offer this Sacrifice, for everyone was bound by and enslaved to sin.

This Sacrifice is not restricted to His Sufferings because it consists of His entire life, which was a Sacrifice of perfect obedience to His Father and which was sealed by His free, unconstrained and willing deliverance to death. Through this obedience, the greatness and supremacy of His humility and self-denial were manifested. Throughout His absolutely sinless life, He displayed perfect obedience and made His human Nature the beginning of a new Holy and pure life for all mankind. He made man victorious against his opponent, the Devil, becoming Himself the Holy Yeast through which the whole dough is Sanctified and Deified. This incorporation was achieved through His Death on the Cross. He delivered Himself for our sins and became a curse for us, in order that we partake in His Death and become one Nature and one Body. With Christ we become Just before God in Him. The Death of our Lord Jesus Christ became an atonement and representative Sacrifice, in which He gave "...His life a ransom for many..."² for all those who believe in Him.

The Death of our Lord and Saviour is proclaimed by Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church to be an expiatory and representative Sacrifice for all. This Ransom, which was offered by our sinless Lord for all mankind, was not offered to Satan as some Fathers stated. It was simply offered in indescribable Love for the Sanctification of man. The term "*ransom*" was used to stress the satisfaction of the Divine Justice through the

¹ Heb. 7:17. Cf. Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, pp. 237-244. Damalas, *Catechesis*, p. 63. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 146-148. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 159-160. Kefalas, *Christology*, pp. 238-240.

² Matth. 20:28.

Blood of Jesus Christ. The Sacrifice of the Great High Priest was a Sacrifice of an absolutely sinless and perfect Man. Furthermore, the Sacrifice of the God-Man, a Man Who was Hypostatically United with the Son of God, was enough not only to reconcile the entire world with God but also for the abundant outpouring of Divine Grace and *Charismata*, which enabled mankind to become sons of God by adoption and co-heirs of His Only Begotten Son.

The Work of Christ as High Priest continues in Heaven, mediating with the Father for each and everyone separately, as well as for the whole world, by way of the outpouring of the results of His Sacrifice from the Heavenly Altar. Under no circumstances should the Heavenly Intervention and Mediation of the High Priest be understood as some supplement of His Offering on earth, for it would be considered imperfect. Both earthly and Heavenly Mediation are the Work of the High Priest and are united inseparably as one unique, indispensable perfection, which offers Life and Sanctification to all Faithful including the whole Orthodox Church.

1. The Relationship Between the Prophetic Office and that of High Priest of Jesus Christ

The relationship which exists between the two Offices of Christ as Prophet and High Priest is that as a Prophet of the New Testament, the Lord repeatedly foretold His Death and Work, which He, as the unique High Priest would accomplish, confirming the New Testament of which He became the bearer and servant. To achieve Salvation of which He prophesied, He fulfills all necessary requirements as High Priest through His Sacrifice,³ Without which His entire Teaching would remain merely an ideal and unaccomplished.

The Teachings and the Holy Life of the High Prophet without the Sacrifice on the Cross would not have been enough to save mankind. Christ did not come to reveal God the Father to humanity but instead He had to reconcile us to Him, otherwise, although He would have fulfilled the Law and the Prophets, mankind would have remained separated for all Eternity from the Mercy and the Love of God. Consequently, the Work of our Lord, as the High Prophet, leads directly to His Work as the High Priest, only through which the reconciliation of the world with God was achieved.

2. The Teachings of the New Testament Of Christ's Office as High Priest

The Old Testament speaks of Christ as High Priest. God the Father speaks through the mouth of King David, addressing the Messiah: "*Thou art a Priest forever according to the Order of Melchizedek.*"⁴ These words are addressed to the Messiah as our Lord assured us by means of the first verse of the same Psalm: "*The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.'*"⁵ The Prophet Isaiah presented the Servant of God, the Messiah, as suffering and bearing "...our sins, and in pain for us."⁶

The Epistle to the Hebrews characterised the Lord as the High Priest Who received the Office, not by Himself but by being Called by God Who said to Him: "*Thou art a Priest*

³ Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 162-166.

⁴ Psalm 109(110):4.

⁵ Psalm 109(110):1.

⁶ Is. 53:2-9.

forever according to the Order of Melchizedek.”⁷ The God-inspired author explained this phrase by reminding us that Melchizedek was a Priest and a King of Salem. In other words **He was a** “...King of Righteousness...” and a “...King of Peace.”⁸ Holy Scripture remains silent concerning the genealogy and death of Melchizedek **by stating** “...without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a Priest continually.”⁹ **As a result,** Melchizedek appears to pre-announce the Eternal High Priesthood of Christ, **which** is higher than the Priesthood of the Levites, **just as that of** Melchizedek was higher than **that of** the Patriarch and ancestor of the Levites, Abraham, who offered Melchizedek “...the tenth of all...” the loot and **who was consequently** blessed by Him.¹⁰

The **supremacy** of **Christ** the Great High Priest is manifested **by** the fact that He became Eternal High Priest “...with an Oath...” by the Lord, “...Who said to Him: ‘The Lord has sworn and will not relent, **‘Thou art a Priest forever according to the Order of Melchizedek.’**”¹¹ In addition to **that,** Christ is the High Priest “...Who is Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the Heavens; Who does not need daily, as those High Priests, to offer up Sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.”¹² Christ **Who** “...through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God...” cleanses our “...conscience from dead works to serve the Living God.”¹³ For “...He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.”¹⁴ “Therefore, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus, by a new and living Way which He Consecrated for us, through the Veil, that is, His Flesh.”¹⁵

According to the above, St Peter proclaimed that “...Christ also suffered once for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit...”¹⁶ and He “...Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for Righteousness – by Whose stripes...” we “...were healed.”¹⁷ Therefore all Orthodox Christians must “...be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and gave Himself for us, an Offering and a Sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”¹⁸

2. The Teachings of the Holy Fathers of Christ’s Office as High Priest

From the beginning of the Church’s history, Jesus Christ is proclaimed **as** “...the High Priest of our offerings, the Guardian and Helper of our weakness.”¹⁹ Through Him, St

⁷ Psalm 109(110):4.

⁸ Heb. 7:2. Kefalas, *Christology*, p. 239.

⁹ Heb. 7:3.

¹⁰ Heb. 7:2,1. Cf. Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, p. 242-243. Kefalas, *Catechesis*, p. 82.

¹¹ Heb. 7:20-21.

¹² Heb. 7:26-27.

¹³ Heb. 9:14.

¹⁴ Heb. 10:12.

¹⁵ Heb. 10:19-20.

¹⁶ 1 Peter 3:18.

¹⁷ 1 Peter 2:24.

¹⁸ Ephes. 5:1-2.

¹⁹ St. Clement of Rome, *1st Corinthians* 36, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 48.

Clement of Rome said that we “...look steadily into the heights of Heaven...”²⁰ as **He is the “greater”** of the Priests of the Old Testament, for He **Who** is the One Who has been “...entrusted **with** the Holy of Holies, is better; He alone has been entrusted with the hidden things of God, for He Himself is the Door²¹ of the Father, through which Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the Prophets and the Apostles and the Church entered in...”²² as the Eternal “...High Priest of our Offerings...” “...namely Jesus Christ...”²³ Who “...bore our sins in His own Body on the tree.”²⁴ “For it was for this reason that the Lord endured the deliverance of His flesh to corruption, that we might be cleansed by the forgiveness of sins, by His sprinkled Blood. For, the Scripture relates Him partly to Israel and partly to us, and speaks as follows: ‘He was wounded because of our transgressions, and has been afflicted by our sins; by His Wounds we were healed. Like a sheep He was led to slaughter, and like a lamb He was silent before His Shearer.’”²⁵ “He is the excellent Priest and Eternal King...” for **Whom** “...was foresaid...” that “...the Lord gave an Oath according the Order of Melchizedek.”²⁶

Origen was the first to point out the Attribute of Christ as Priest and the Sacrificial Victim. He based his conclusion that Christ is Priest on the Books of Psalms and the Epistle to the Hebrews. Furthermore, based upon the witness of St John the Baptist who exclaimed: “Behold! The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world...”²⁷ Origen, stressed the fact that He is also the Victim! He concluded that Christ “...is the Lamb which was slaughtered and cleansed the whole world...”²⁸ and that “...He Who presented this Lamb on the Altar was God in the Man, the Great High Priest, Who manifested this by the words that ‘No one takes My soul from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.’”^{29,30}

St Epiphanius, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews, presents Christ as offering “...the Priesthood to the Father since He received the dough of humanity, in order that He becomes for us a Priest according to the Order of Melchizedek, which has no succession...” “...presenting Himself on the Cross...” and “...offering the most perfect and living Sacrifice for all the world.” Thus “...He is the Victim, He is the Priest, He is the Altar, He is God, He is Man, He is the King, He is the High Priest, He is the Lamb, He has become all in all for us...” “...serving as High Priest above all Creation. Ascending spiritually and gloriously with His own Body He sat on the right hand of the Father becoming a High Priest forever and passing through the Heavenly places.”³¹

Commemorating the names of Christ, St Gregory of Nazianzos observed that He is called “... ‘Lamb’ for He will be slaughtered...” and “... ‘High Priest’ because He will be presenting...” the Sacrifice of the Lamb to the Father.³²

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ John 10:9.

²² St. Ignatius of Antioch, *To Philadelphians*, 9, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 109.

²³ St. Clement of Rome, *1st Corinthians* 36, 1, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 48.

²⁴ 1 Peter 2:24.

²⁵ *Barnabas*, 5, 1-2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 166-167. Is. 53:5, 7.

²⁶ St. Justin, the philosopher and martyr, *Dialogue*, 118, 2, 1, in *B*, v. 3, p. 317.

²⁷ John 1:29.

²⁸ Origen, *To Romans*, 3, 8, in Migne, *P.G.*, 14, 946-951.

²⁹ John 10:18.

³⁰ Origen, *To John*, 6, 35, in Migne, *P.G.*, 14, 292.

³¹ St. Epiphanius, *Heresies*, 55, 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 41, 980. Ibid, *Heresies*, 69, 39, in Migne, *P.G.*, 42, 261.

³² St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Homily* 30, § 21, in Migne, *P.G.*, 36, 132.

St John Chrysostom proclaimed that “...the Son is the only faithful High Priest, Who is able to free men from sin, to whom He is the High Priest...” and seeing that we were sad and defeated “...showed Mercy, not only rendering for us a High Priest but becoming Himself a faithful High Priest.” In order to offer “...a Sacrifice which was able to cleanse us, He became Man...” “...He Himself (became) an Altar and a Priest...” and presented “...by Himself...” in such a way that Holy Scripture shows “... Him not only as a Priest, but as Victim and Altar.”³³

St Gregory of Nyssa referred to the Epistle to the Hebrews in which our Lord Jesus, “...Who showed Mercy to us through His own Blood...” is called “High Priest” and “...Who for the children who have partaken of Flesh and Blood, He Himself likewise shared in the Blood...” “...as it was said by Zacharias, that the Great High Priest, Who will Sacrifice His own Lamb, in other words His own Body for the sins of the world...” “...presented Himself in the form of a servant as an Offering and a Sacrifice for us.”³⁴

St Augustine emphasised that by taking up human nature, Christ became a true “...Mediator between God and men.”³⁵ He added that, although being in the form of God, He received the Sacrifice with the Father with Whom He is one God, and in the form of a servant He prepared Himself as the Sacrifice rather than receiving it. For that reason He is a Priest Who offered and Who was offered.³⁶

St Cyril of Alexandria taught that “...Christ became for us, High Priest and Apostle of our Faith, says Scripture; He presented Himself for us as a sweet fragrance to God the Father ... when He became flesh and like us, Man.”³⁷

Mogilas³⁸ observed that according to the Order of Melchizedek Christ was superior to the others because of His Priesthood. He was Called as High Priest by God, according to the Order of Melchizedek. He also referred to Christ as Priest because He offered Himself to God the Father. The Death of Christ was different to that of other men due to the following reasons: Firstly, because of our many sins, as the Prophet said: “...He bears our sins, and is pained for us: yet we accounted Him to be in trouble, and in suffering, and in affliction. But He was wounded on account of our sins, and was bruised because of our iniquities.”³⁹ Secondly, He fulfilled the Priesthood on the Cross by presenting Himself to God the Father for the Salvation of the human race as the Holy Apostle Paul said: Christ “... gave Himself [as] a Ransom for all.”⁴⁰ “Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, [as] an Offering and a Sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”⁴¹ In addition, “God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”⁴² On the Cross our Lord completed the Mediation between God and men, as stated by the same Holy Apostle who wrote: “...that He might reconcile them both to God in one Body through the Cross, thereby putting to death the enmity...”⁴³ and “... having wiped out the hand-writing of

³³ St. John Chrysostom, *To Hebrews*, Homily 5, § 1, and Homily 17, §§ 1-2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 63, 47 and 129.

³⁴ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, Homily 6, in Migne, *P.G.*, 45, 717.

³⁵ 1 Tim. 2:5.

³⁶ St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, X, 20, in Migne, *P.L.*, 41, 295.

³⁷ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Anathema* 10, in Migne, *P.G.*, 76, 308.

³⁸ Mogilas, in Karmires, *The dogmatics*, v. II, pp. 610 and 615.

³⁹ Is. 53:4-5.

⁴⁰ 1 Tim. 2:6.

⁴¹ Ephes. 5:2.

⁴² Rom. 5:8.

⁴³ Ephes. 2:16.

requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the Cross.”⁴⁴

4. The Absolute Necessity of the Work of Christ as High Priest

The necessity of Christ’s Office and Work as High Priest is obvious when one takes into consideration that mankind, **due to** its sinful **state**, was separated **by** enmity with God.⁴⁵ No other matter was of such importance as the necessity **of reconciling** mankind with the Divine. Since **he** was **created under** an unbreakable Communion with God **with** which he was Blessed and **thereby** able to fulfill his destiny, it is obvious that when man was separated from God **due to** sin, he **fell away** from his **objective** and **became** unable to enjoy the supreme Good. Consequently, in order to be free **of** the misery in which he had fallen, it was crucial **for his reconciliation** with God. Christ freely took our place and became **accursed**. The **abandonment** of Christ on the Cross **was** therefore necessary, for God departs from the accursed.⁴⁶

In all religions, especially in the Old Testament, one finds **blood sacrifices** as a means **of reconciliation** with the Divine. The sacrifice is **usually** offered for one’s **own** sins or as a sacrifice of expiation, [penance], **so** that reconciliation between God and the one who **makes the** offering is achieved. It is obvious that **with** these **blood sacrifices**, those who **made the offerings** had **nothing greater** to offer than their own **lives but** instead they offered sacrifices **of irrational animals**. Through these **blood sacrifices**, one acknowledged **one’s** own guilt and **that one deserved to die but rather than one’s** own death, **one offered** the blood of a sacrificial animal as the sacrifice of atonement. In the Old Testament God Himself gave instructions for the sacrifice offerings. *“For the life of flesh is its blood, and I have given it to you on the Altar to make atonement for your souls; for its blood shall make atonement for the soul.”*⁴⁷ **According to** these words it is clear that instead of human life, the blood **of sacrificial animals would** be shed. Thus the blood of the sacrificial animal **that** was sprinkled upon the Altar, was acceptable **to** God *“...instead of man’s soul...”* and as **an** exchange equal to the life of him who offered the Sacrifice. *“And according to the Law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission...”*⁴⁸ *“...so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.”*⁴⁹ Without the shedding of blood there was no forgiveness **of bodily** impurities **whereas** a purified man had the right **to participate** in the worship with **other** people of God.

Through these sacrifices the atonement was symbolic of the future Sacrifice. **It was** *“...a shadow of the good things to come...”*⁵⁰ which the Great High Priest **would** offer, since *“...it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.”*⁵¹ How could the blood of irrational animals **that** have no conscience of the offering, take the weight of guilt of those who were offering the Sacrifice? How **could** it become an Atonement Sacrifice, which

⁴⁴ Col. 2:14.

⁴⁵ James 4:4.

⁴⁶ Lossky, *Theology*, p. 112.

⁴⁷ Lev. 17:11.

⁴⁸ Heb. 9:22.

⁴⁹ Heb. 9:28.

⁵⁰ Heb. 10:1.

⁵¹ Heb. 10:4.

in reality, can take away the sins of rational men? These sacrifices had a pedagogic purpose, since every year **they reminded the people of their sins**⁵² during the Feast of Atonement **but** they did not have the power to “...*make those who approach perfect.*”⁵³

The need of Atonement was required because sin entered the world **and** Atonement is achieved through a sacrifice. Consequently, it was necessary that **an ultimate** Sacrifice be offered for sin **and that was the one of** the Lamb Who **carried** the sin of the **entire** world⁵⁴ as witnessed by St John the Baptist **who exclaimed**: “*Behold! The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!*”⁵⁵

5. Christ’s Sacrifice Predestined by God in Wisdom, Love and Justice

When St Peter **referred** to the precious Blood of this Sacrifice, he proclaimed Christ **as being** “...*foreordained before the foundation of the world...*” **but who was revealed** “... *in these last times.*”⁵⁶ Truly God, Who from the beginning of time, foresaw the events **that would occur** in man’s life, and “...*from Above and before the creation of the world prepared the Mystery in Christ.*”⁵⁷ Before all time, God had prepared the Reconciliation through the Sacrifice of Christ **Whom** He **would** offer on the Cross, as High Priest. It was up to God, **Who had been** insulted by man’s Fall, to determine the means by which Divine Justice and Holiness **would** be satisfied and **thereby** fallen man would be reconciled with the infinite Lord. **Under the guilt of his conscience and unable to set himself free**, sinful man made it **essential for God’s Grace that offered him the Knowledge and means of obtaining** the desired Reconciliation, **which is achieved and secured only through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

The manifestation of this Sign of Grace was the fact that the Father sent the High Priest, Who, as Mediator, **brought both God and man** to Communion. The Mediator had to be both God and Man **because** through His familiarity **with** God and men, He **was able to restore** their **Fellowship** and Peace. He had to present man to God and to make God **known** to man. If the Mediator was **only** God or **merely** man, it would not have been possible for Him to accomplish **His Work as** Mediator. If He was simply a man, He could not **have been a Mediator because** He had to meditate with God and **on the contrary, had He been** only God, He could not **have been a Mediator since human beings** would not have **had** the courage to accept or **to** approach Him. Because the Word and Son of God **consisted** of two Natures, He had to be close to both Natures. He has **His Divinity** for all Eternity because He came from God being by Nature **the** Son of God and God. He had to take up **His** human Nature because He **came to mankind in order** to reveal, **to** speak **of** and to present them to God.⁵⁸ Through His Sacrifice on the Cross, He convinced and informed **humanity** that they have peace with God. This “*exchange*” **that** was offered by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, no other man could “...*give in exchange for his soul.*”⁵⁹

⁵² Heb. 10:3.

⁵³ Heb. 10:1.

⁵⁴ Origen, *In Numerum*, XXIV, 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 12, 757. Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, pp. 77-79.

⁵⁵ John 1:29.

⁵⁶ 1 Peter 1:20.

⁵⁷ St. Ecumenius, *To 1 Peter*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 119, 525.

⁵⁸ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book III, ch. 18, § 7, in Migne, *P.G.*, 937. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, p. 242-243.

St. John Chrysostom, *To 1 Timothy*, Homily 7, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 62, 536.

⁵⁹ Mark 8:37. Cf. Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, pp. 119-124.

It is unquestionable that God the Father sent His Only Begotten Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as Mediator⁶⁰ and High Priest⁶¹ of the New Testament **into the world out of love towards man.**⁶² The Reconciliation with Him was the Work of Divine Love, Goodness and Wisdom in perfect harmony with Divine Holiness and Justice. For God “...*can perform all that He wants, but He does not want all that He can...*”⁶³ In other words, God was able to achieve the Salvation and Restoration of man directly and without any other measure, but under no circumstances did He want to achieve this by renouncing Himself and opposing His Holy Nature. It was **always** possible to please His Good Will without violating or abolishing His Divine Justice. If the Grace of Salvation was granted without satisfying Divine Justice, then the moral order would have been shaken and sin **would have no longer been** sin, since there would **have been** no need for expiation. Sin would have become something indifferent before the eyes of Holy God if Divine Justice ceased to demand its punishment. It was required by Divine Holiness and Justice to present and offer a True Sacrifice, not from the blood of irrational animals or lifeless things but a Sacrifice of the root of evil **that** was hidden in man **and** which again consists of putting to death the sinful ego of man, **so as to be Regenerated and Reconciled** to God in perfect obedience. By perfect obedience to God it was required **for** man, through his free action, to cut off the development of sin within himself, **in order to** mollify God for his previous actions and to begin a new life in goodness and Virtue.

The question of whether man was able to offer such a Sacrifice is answered by the fact that everyone was “...*under sin...*”⁶⁴ **and consequently deprived of Divine Grace that** enabled them to perform good things and to deliver themselves and their free will to God. Again, how was it possible for man to please the infinite God?

St Basil the Great **queried:** “*What can man find in order to give for the Salvation of his sou?l*” Continuing, he **commented** that “...*men were unable to offer atonement to God for their own sins.*”⁶⁵ The sinless **Angels** were **also** unable to restore fallen human nature **or** to transmit Holiness because **it** is external **to** their nature. The **Angels** receive their perfection through their **Communion** with the Holy Spirit **and therefore they** cannot transmit **that Holiness** to others **since it is not theirs** by nature.⁶⁶

St Athanasios the Great of Alexandria observed: “*How can a creature unite another creature to the Creator? Or what help can anyone receive from the one who is the same and has the same need?*”⁶⁷

The **Expiation** and Salvation of fallen man **was acknowledged by God** through the Incarnation of His Word and Son Who took up the form of a servant. At the time “...*it was necessary for mankind to suffer death for the Offence of Adam and sin... the Word of God the Father Who was plentiful in calmness and love towards man, became flesh - in other words, Man - and took up our lot...*” “...*and realized the exchange of the life of all with His Soul.*”
“*As Priest and Sacrificial Victim for all, [being] spotless, He took up the Body which He*”

⁶⁰ Heb. 8:6.

⁶¹ Heb. 9:11

⁶² John 3:16-17.

⁶³ St. John of Damascus, *Catechesis*, I, 15, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 860-861. St. Symeon, *Euriskomena*, Homily XXVIII, pp. 143-144.

⁶⁴ Gal. 3:22.

⁶⁵ St. Basil the Great, *To Psalm 48 (49)*, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 29, 437.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, *About the Holy Spirit*, ch. 16, § 38, in Migne, *P.G.*, 32, 137.

⁶⁷ St. Athanasius the Great, *Against Arians*, II, § 69, in Migne, *P.G.*, 26, 289.

presented to death and immediately *vanquished* death from those of the same [nature] through the offering of *His Righteousness*.” For He was “...a High Man, but the Only Begotten Son of God Who died for all.” “The Man-God Jesus Christ...” Who “...does not have need of Expiation but is the Expiation...” “... is the only One Who is able to give Expiation to God for all.”⁶⁸

6. The Sacrifice of Christ Extended Throughout His Life

The Sacrifice of the God-Man **is** not restricted to His Sufferings and Death. It includes His entire Life, which is a Sacrifice of perfect obedience to the Father. This obedience was sealed through **His Sufferings** as St Paul **emphasised**: “*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 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 bond-servant, 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.*”⁶⁹

The history of Christ’s Suffering **did** not begin at the Garden of Gethsemane **but extended** throughout His whole Life. It **began** at Bethlehem and **ended** at Golgotha.⁷⁰ In order that the High Priest offered a perfect Sacrifice acceptable to God, it had to be a rational, moral and spiritual Sacrifice - a Sacrifice of **utmost** obedience - and for this reason the Lord’s Death and the shedding of His Blood on the Cross **is the most** perfect Sacrifice, **the like of which has never been offered before or since and which was extremely pleasing to God**, not that God is pleased with human sacrifices **or** the shedding of human blood, but because, on the Cross, the obedience of the Son towards His Father was shown to its extreme level. Hence the Sacrifice of the Saviour **began** from the moment He **entered** into the world and His Death was the fulfillment of His obedience, which was sealed through the Sufferings of the Cross.

One can distinguish Christ’s obedience **by** two Acts. First, the “*active obedience*” (“*obedientia activa*”) which is expressed **by** the Acts of His Life through which He fulfilled the Law **as well as** through His absolutely sinless and virtuous Life **that** presented **Him as** everything pleasing to the Father. Secondly, the “*passive obedience*” (“*obedientia passiva*”), which was expressed **by His Suffering** “...as the Lamb led to the slaughter...”⁷¹ **and which He faced through** His own free Will as He Himself **proclaimed**: “*No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have Power to lay it down, and I have Power to take it again. This Command I have received from My Father.*”⁷² This is impossible for any other **human being to accomplish**.

According to the **proclamation of** our Lord, **His Suffering** on the Cross was “...a *Command...*” **that** He received from His Father. **However** this does not mean that the Son was forced to fulfill it in a passive **manner** but that our Lord faced Death by His own free

⁶⁸ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Epistle* 41, in Migne, *P.G.*, 77, 209. *Ibid*, *To Leviticus*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 69, 548. St. Athanasius the Great, *Homily about the incarnation of the Word*, § 9, in Migne, *P.G.*, 25, 112. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, 13, § 1-2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33. St. Basil the Great, *To Psalm 48*, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 29, 440.

⁶⁹ Phil. 2:5-8.

⁷⁰ Martensen, *Dogmatique*, p. 470.

⁷¹ Is. 53:7.

⁷² John 10:18.

Will. For this reason He **declared**: “*I Am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives His Life for the sheep.*”⁷³ By His own free Will our Lord accepted the bitter cup of death, pleasing His Father and being perfected in obedience. All this was the Fruit of the Son’s Love towards man. He did not come down to the level of our humility, although He was in the form **of** and equal to God the Father. He did not become poor, although He was rich, nor did He suffer the bitter death of the flesh for any other reason **than because** He loved us more than He loved Himself. Although He had the authority as Man to enjoy life, He left it aside for our sake.⁷⁴ Out of love towards mankind the High Priest suffered and carried the weight of the sins of the world **upon Himself**. Consequently, His whole life was a continuous Sacrifice, a silent Suffering, an expression of free obedience in the midst of an evil world, which **made** His final Suffering present **throughout** His entire Life.

7. The Obedience of Christ as the Second Adam Healed the Disobedience of Mankind

The obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ **that** He **displayed** throughout His Life regenerated and restored human nature. Christ **was** the perfect Man Who, through His sinless Life, became the Elect and Representative of the **entire** human race, the second Adam of Grace and the new Yeast, which regenerates the whole dough of the human race through its union with Him. This High Priest, taking human nature **like** a Lamb in His Divinity, manifested it as the beginning of the human race, justifying it in His Sufferings and presenting it with all **the** Virtues, **thereby** showing man to be an unbeatable victor against his opponent, Satan. If Satan **had not been** defeated by Man, then the enemy **had not been** defeated justly. “*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.*”⁷⁵ As in the first Adam, we moved God to anger by not preserving His Commandment, likewise in the second Adam we are reconciled with Him through the obedience to the point of death, since our disobedience was healed through His **perfect** obedience.⁷⁶ “*For the **Judgement** which came from one **Offence** resulted in condemnation, but the free Gift which came from many offences resulted in Justification. For if by the one man’s **Offence** death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of Grace and the Gift of Righteousness will reign in the **Life** through the **One**, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as through one man’s **Offence** **Judgement** came to all men, resulting in **Condemnation**, even so through one Man’s **Righteous Act** the free **Gift** came to all men, resulting in **Justification** of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made Righteous.*”⁷⁷ Through the struggle against the **wickedness** of the world human nature was raised to a higher condition in Christ.⁷⁸

Christ did not carry the whole human race within Himself **except** only His personal human Nature **that was** united within the Divine Hypostasis. The human race consists of one whole union. All members have a common nature, **having** received it from the same

⁷³ John 10:11.

⁷⁴ St. John Chrysostom, *To John*, Homily 60, § 3, in Montfaucon, v. 8, p. 407. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *To John*, book IX, *To John 13:34*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 74, 161 and 162.

⁷⁵ Rom. 5:12.

⁷⁶ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book V, ch. 16, § 3 and ch. 17, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 1168. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 388-389 and 389. 1 Corinth. 15:45-49.

⁷⁷ Rom. 5:16-19.

⁷⁸ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *To Matthew*, book VIII, in Migne, *P.G.*, 72, 921. See also the 10th Act of the 6th Ecumenical Council, in Mansi, v. 11, p. 413.

forefather, **thus** uniting them to one another as one family and one body, **like** the branches of one tree. The first Adam, from whom all human races derived, and who is the root from which the whole tree grew, is the natural or biological leader of the human race. The second Adam, Who was united with the whole body of the human race, **having** taking up human nature **Supernaturally** through the Action of the Holy Spirit and from the pure blood of the Ever-Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, is the noblest member of the human family. He is the perfect Man Who is able to represent **all** mankind. He is the new worthy Leader, since the first Adam had fallen and was corrupt. The first Adam was responsible for sin and although he was made first, he was not presented as the beginning of our nature to God **because** the beginning of our nature was presented by Christ.⁷⁹

St Irenaeus **portrayed** Christ as summing up human nature and having it as an epitome within Himself,⁸⁰ in order to **offer it Sanctification**⁸¹ and unite it to God, becoming its supreme and one Head.⁸²

St Hippolytos presented the Lord **as** recreating Adam through Himself.⁸³ This summing up in Christ of human nature and its Regeneration is **directly** related to its Hypostatic Union with the Divine Nature of God the Word. Christ summed up all in Himself as the One Lord and as “...*the Word of God, Who took up the Holy Flesh from the Holy Virgin, just like a Bridegroom dresses in his wedding garment.*” He united “...*our mortal body to His Power and mixed mortality with Immortality and the weak with the strong, in order to Save the lost man.*”⁸⁴

The Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church stressed this Mystical **aspect** of the **Work** of Salvation of our Lord, proclaiming that the Incarnated Son of God took up human nature in order to Sanctify **the whole human race** through Himself. He became the Yeast for the whole dough, uniting to Himself that which was previously condemned. He completely freed us from the first Curse. Hence, man participated with Divine Nature **due to** the Union of the two Natures in Christ. When the Word of God became Man, He became familiar **with** all the things of the flesh **and by His taking up of the completely human** nature, men are no **longer** sinners and dead, **considering that** through the Word of God Who became flesh **for us**, sinful mankind **has** Communion with God and our nature **thereby** becomes Divine **due to its** union with the Divine, **since** in the human Body **that** the Son of God **assumed**, **there now** flows Immortality and Resurrection.⁸⁵

8. The Indispensable Representative Nature of Christ’s Sacrifice

Through the perfect obedience **of** Jesus Christ human nature was perfected and through union and Communion with the Incarnated Divine Nature, **it** was raised and Deified. All these were achieved because of the representative Sacrifice offered on the Cross by the God-

⁷⁹ St. John Chrysostom, *To the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ*, § 2-3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 50, 446.

⁸⁰ Ephes. 1:10.

⁸¹ 1 Corinth. 6:11. 1 Thess. 5:23. 1 Tim. 4:5. Heb. 10:10, 14; 13:12. Jude 1.

⁸² Ephes. 1:22; 4:5; 5:23. Col. 1:18. St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book III, ch. 16, § 6; ch. 18, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 925, 932. Cf. *Ibid.*, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 234-235, 239.

⁸³ St. Hippolytus, *About the Anti-Christ*, XXVI, in *B*, v. 6, p. 206. *Ibid.*, *To Daniel*, IV, 11, in *B*, v. 6, p. 81.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, *About the Anti-Christ*, IV, in *B*, v. 6, p. 109.

⁸⁵ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Homily* 30, §§ 6 and 21, in Migne, *P.G.*, 36, 109 and 132. St. Athanasius the Great, *Against Arians*, III, § 33, in Migne, *P.G.*, 26, 393. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, 12, § 15, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 741. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechesis*, ch.25, 16, 32, in Migne, *P.G.*, 45, 65, 52 and 80.

Man Who became the Expiatory Victim and Who reconciled man with God. As the High Priest and Mediator, He mediates **with** the Divinity **for human** nature. Through Christ our whole human nature **is** Blessed.⁸⁶ The Salvation and Glorification **of human** nature, which was achieved through the Mystical Union **of human** nature with Christ, cannot be separated from the Death of our Lord, nor can the Sacrifice on the Cross be considered **as of** secondary importance. Our incorporation and union with the Glorified and Deified human nature of Christ, which makes us partakers of His Body and Nature, was realised only through His Death on the Cross and our participation in that Death through faith in Him.

From the beginning of His Ministry, our Lord Jesus, the Incarnated Son of God the Father, was proclaimed by St John the Forerunner and Baptist as the “...*Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.*”⁸⁷ Holy Scripture proclaims that He was delivered to death “...*because of our offences and was raised because of our Justification...*”⁸⁸ in order that He could “...*wipe out the hand-writing of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the Cross.*”⁸⁹ Christ took away our debt and His Resurrection accomplishes the General Resurrection of all. “*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*”⁹⁰ He assured us that He came “...*to serve, and to give His Life [as] a Ransom for many.*”⁹¹ Delivering the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist to His Holy Disciples and Apostles He **declared that** “...*this is My Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*”⁹² He **spoke of** the **New Covenant by** remembering the **Old Covenant that** was also Consecrated with Sacrifices of blood **whereas** the Blood of the New Testament is shed “...*for the remission of sins...*” of all mankind.

St Paul proclaiming Christ **as** the Sacrificial Lamb of the Passover, assured us that Christ has “...*given Himself for us, an Offering and a Sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma...*”⁹³ according to God’s Plan **of** Salvation, for “...*being Justified freely by His Grace through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God set forth as a propitiation by His Blood, through faith, to demonstrate His Righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.*”⁹⁴ “*Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover was Sacrificed for us.*”⁹⁵ Christ’s Sacrifice was His **destiny that had been** predestined before all ages for the High Priest, to offer His Blood as a way of Expiation of all those who believe in Him. “*So, Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.*”⁹⁶ Christ “...*after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting until His enemies are made His footstool. For by one Offering He has perfected those who are being Sanctified.*”⁹⁷

⁸⁶ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily to the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ*, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 50, 446.

⁸⁷ John 1:29. Is. 53: 7-12.

⁸⁸ Rom. 4:25.

⁸⁹ Col. 2:14.

⁹⁰ 1 Corinth. 15:22.

⁹¹ Matth. 20:28.

⁹² Matth. 26:28.

⁹³ Ephes. 5:2.

⁹⁴ Rom. 3:24-25.

⁹⁵ 1 Corinth. 5:7.

⁹⁶ Heb. 9:28.

⁹⁷ Heb. 10:12-14.

The terms used in Holy Scripture **such as** “...for our offences...” “...which is shed for many...” “...an Offering for us...” “...Expiation in His Blood...” and other expressions, clearly reveal that the High Priest had come to die for our sins and that His Blood, which was shed on the Cross, bears the nature of a Expiatory Sacrifice. Undoubtedly, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate and gave witness **to** the Truth, in order to leave “...us an example, that we should follow His steps.”⁹⁸ He “...bore our sins in His own Body on the Tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for Righteousness.”⁹⁹

The primary Goal and Nature of Christ’s Suffering is that it is an Expiatory Sacrifice for the Salvation of the whole world. Christ, being sinless, “...knew no sin...” nor had any experience of it. He became a “...sin for us...” by God **so** “...that we might become the Righteousness of God in Him.”¹⁰⁰ Christ took up our punishment and suffered pain for all **humanity**. The Father “...loved us and sent His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins.”¹⁰¹ Christ became a “sin” for the world **although** He Himself did not become a sinner, **being** the only True Just **One Who**, by His own free Will became the Sacrificial Victim for the sins of the **entire** world. And although He was the One suffering as Man, He was above all Creation as God.¹⁰² As in the Old Testament, the Sacrificial animal, symbolically and unconsciously carried the sins and guilt of **the one who offered** it on the Altar, likewise the High Priest, simultaneously being the One Who **made the Offering** and the Victim, Altar and Lamb, by His own free Will consciously took up our sins and “...by His Wounds...”¹⁰³ He **vanquished** “...the hand-writing that was against us.” And He “...took it out of the way, having nailed it to the Cross.”¹⁰⁴ He was punished **so as** to free us from sin. He presented Himself as a Holy Sacrifice to God the Father Who **reconciled** “...us to Himself through Jesus Christ...” **having** “...committed to us the Word of Reconciliation.”¹⁰⁵

Truly the sinless Lord was punished and experienced **extreme** humiliation because of sin **that we committed**. When the religious leaders of the Jews and the civil authorities of Rome co-operated **and thereby committed** the **worst, cruelest** crime of all centuries, the sinless Lord on the Cross, although **having** no need of repentance, experienced the fullness of mankind’s corruption of sin and He suffered as though He was a sinner. The new Adam, as true and healthy human Nature, **during** His Suffering **cried out with** tears for the fallen human race. **At** those **extremely** painful moments He **confessed** the sin of the world **that He carried because of His** love towards man, although He Himself is alien **to** sin. **Christ** “...Who, in the days of His Flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him Who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His Godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the Author of Eternal Salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest according to the Order of Melchizedek.”¹⁰⁶

⁹⁸ 1 Peter 2:21.

⁹⁹ 1 Peter 2:24.

¹⁰⁰ 2 Corinth. 5:21.

¹⁰¹ 1 John 4:10.

¹⁰² St. John Chrysostom, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 478. Ibid, *To the Ascension*, Homily 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 50, 445. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Epistle* 41, in Migne, *P.G.*, 77, 209. Ibid, *To John*, book XII *To John 19:19*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 74, 656.

¹⁰³ Is. 53:5.

¹⁰⁴ Col. 2:14.

¹⁰⁵ 2 Corinth. 5:18-19.

¹⁰⁶ Heb. 5:7-10.

9. The Representative Nature of Christ's Sacrifice According to the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church

According to the Teachings of Holy Scripture, the Teachings of the Orthodox Church were formed. The Apostolic Fathers proclaimed **that** "... in love the Master received us. Because of the love He had for us, Jesus Christ our Lord, in accordance with God's Will, gave His Blood for us, and His Flesh for our flesh, and His Life for our lives."¹⁰⁷

Barnabas wrote that Christ suffered "...for our souls, even though He is Lord of the whole world..."¹⁰⁸ in order that "...by His Wounds..." we shall be healed.¹⁰⁹ "If, therefore, the Son of God, Who is Lord and is destined to Judge the living and the dead, suffered in order that His Wounds might give us Life, let us believe that the Son of God could not suffer except for our sake."¹¹⁰

St Ignatius the Theophoros urged all Christians to "...be more diligent than you are. Understand the times. Wait expectantly for Him Who is above time: the Eternal, the Invisible, Who for our sake became visible; the Intangible, the Unsuffering, Who for our sake Suffered, Who for our sake endured in every way."¹¹¹

The "Epistle to Diognetos" states: "...But when our unrighteousness was fulfilled, and it had been made perfectly clear that its wages – punishment and death – were to be expected, then the season arrived during which God had decided to reveal at last His Goodness and Power (Oh, the surpassing Kkindness and Love of God!). He did not hate us, or reject us, or bear a grudge against us; instead He was patient and forbearing; in His Mercy He took upon Himself our sins; He Himself gave up His own Son as a Ransom for us, the Holy One for the lawless, the Guiltless for the guilty, 'the Just for the unjust,'¹¹² the Incorruptible for the corruptible, the Immortal for the mortal. For what else but His Righteousness could have covered our sins? In Whom was it possible for us, the lawless and ungodly, to be Justified, except in the Son of God alone? O the sweet exchange, O the incomprehensible Work of God! O the unexpected Blessings that the sinfulness of many should be hidden in one Righteous Man, while the Righteousness of One should Justify many sinners! Having demonstrated, therefore, in the former time the powerlessness of our nature to obtain Life, and having now revealed the Saviour's Power to Save even the powerless, He Willed that for both these reasons we should believe in His Goodness and regard Him as Nurse, Father, Teacher, Counsellor, Healer, Mind, Light, Honour, Glory, Strength, Life."¹¹³

Origen presented the Lord according to His Humanity, **being** "...the most pure creature, Who took up our sins and our weaknesses, which..." as absolutely sinless, "...is able to take up to Himself and to loosen, to forgive and to **vanquish** the sin of the whole world." For this reason St Paul stated that "... He made Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the Righteousness of God in Him."¹¹⁴ God the Father made His Son to be "sin" in order to take up the sins of all.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁷ St. Clement of Rome, *1st Corinthians*, 49, 6, in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 56.

¹⁰⁸ *Barnabas*, 5, 5, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 167.

¹⁰⁹ Is. 53:5.

¹¹⁰ *Barnabas*, 7, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 170.

¹¹¹ St. Ignatius, *To Polycarp*, 3, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 116.

¹¹² 1 Peter 3:18.

¹¹³ *Epistle to Diognetus*, 9, 2-6, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 302-303.

¹¹⁴ 2 Corinth. 5:21.

¹¹⁵ Origen, *To John*, XXVIII, ch. 14, in Migne, *P.G.*, 14, 720.

St Athanasios the Great of Alexandria portrayed our Lord as “... the One Who is from our own Who took up Death instead of all...” and He Suffered “...the blasphemy from men, in order that we might inherit Immortality.” Because everyone was guilty of death, He gave up His own Life, delivering His own Temple to Death, in order to make all free from the responsibility of the ancient Offence.¹¹⁶

St John Chrysostom stated that He “...Who knew no sin, the Self-righteous, was left to die as a sinner...” “...in order to make sinners Righteous.” Being sinless and not bound under the Curse due to the Offence, He took upon Himself the Curse in order to loosen the Curse of those who were under the Law.¹¹⁷

St Cyril of Jerusalem emphasised that “...we were enemies of God through sins and God appointed the sinner to die.” The Wisdom of God preserved the Truth in its decision that required the death of the sinner and He acted through His love of mankind. Christ took up the sins in His Body on the Cross. “Therefore, do not be ashamed of the One Who was Crucified, but be proud saying: ‘He bears our sins, and is pained for us: yet we accounted Him to be in trouble, and in suffering, and in affliction. But He was bruised because of our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and by His Bruises we were healed.’^{118,119}

In the Anathema of St Cyril of Alexandria, which was read during the 3rd Ecumenical Council, it is proclaimed that Christ as our High Priest “...presented Himself as a sweet-smelling Aroma to God the Father for us...” and that He had presented this “Offering” not “...for Himself, for He had no need of Offering since He knew not sin...” but “...for us alone.”¹²⁰ Elsewhere St Cyril stated that Christ “...was Crucified for all, in order that through the Death of One all shall live in Him.”¹²¹

St Cyprian proclaimed that “...He is the only One Who can achieve the forgiveness of our sins, He Who carried our sins and Suffered for us and Whom God gave for our sins.” He is the Christ Who intervened “... for us, for He, being sinless, carried our sins...” and “...through Him we must please the Father.”¹²²

St Ambrosios observed: “What great Mercy, according to which, for our sins, He gave up Himself to be Sacrificed in order that through His Blood He cleansed the world of sin which, by no other way, was it possible to be forgiven.”¹²³

St Augustine added: “God made Christ a sin for us, to Whom we must become friends, in other words a Sacrifice for sins.”¹²⁴

¹¹⁶ St. Athanasius the Great, *About the incarnation of the Word*, §§ 8, 20 and 54, in Migne, *P.G.*, 25, 109, 129 and 192.

¹¹⁷ St. John Chrysostom, *To 2 Corinthians*, Homily 11, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 478. Ibid, *To Galatians*, III, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 655.

¹¹⁸ Is. 53:4-5.

¹¹⁹ St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XIII, §§ 32 and 33, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 813.

¹²⁰ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Anathema* 10, in Migne, *P.G.*, 76, 309.

¹²¹ Ibid, *To John*, book IV, ch. 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 73, 565.

¹²² St. Cyprian, *De lapsis*, 17 and *Epist.* 40, § 5, in Migne, *P.L.*, (?), 494 and 345.

¹²³ St. Ambrosius, *To Psalm XLIX*, exp. 17, in Bartmann, *Theologie Dogmatique*, v. I, p. 432.

¹²⁴ St. Augustine, in Migne, *P.L.*, 40, 253.

10. The True Meaning of the Offered Ransom

The Holy Fathers and Ecclesiastical Writers of the Eastern Orthodox Church based their Teachings of Christ **having** bought us **with** His Blood, upon the Teachings of Holy Scripture **according to which the** precious Blood of our Lord and Saviour was offered as a “...*Ransom for many...*”¹²⁵ **and by means of which our** Lord “...*bought (us) at a price...*”¹²⁶ “...*by His Blood...*”¹²⁷ for “...*in Him we have Redemption through His Blood...*” **and** “... *the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace.*”¹²⁸ Christ “...*bought us...*” **so consequently**, we do not belong to ourselves but to Him Who has bought us, Redeeming us “...*from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us.*”¹²⁹ **Our Lord Jesus** “...*gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.*”¹³⁰

Because sin **entered the** world, Satan received authority over **it** and **as a result, he** is referred **to** by Christ as the “*strong man*”¹³¹ and by the Holy Apostles as “...*the god of this age...*” who “...*has blinded...*” those “...*who do not believe.*”¹³² This authority of Satan does not give him infinite rights upon God’s Creation **nor does it make** him “*lord*”¹³³ over them **either**. Satan is not **of** an equivalent **stature** to negotiate with the Saviour about the freedom of men as though they belonged to him. Satan ruled **only** because God allowed **it** and consented **to it for His own specific Purpose**.

St Gregory of Nyssa **pointed out** that “...*we have learned that Christ is our Redemption, Who gave Himself as a Ransom for us, buying us from Death through His Life.*”¹³⁴

St Epiphanius expressed the opinion that Christ is called “*Redemption*” because “...*He gave His Blood as the True Lamb for me, Expiatory for the world, Reconciliation of all Heaven and earth.*”¹³⁵

The **concept** at first **expressed** by Origen, that the Soul of Christ was offered as Ransom to “*the evil one*” who was “...*holding us until the Soul of Jesus was given to him as Ransom...*” is mistaken. Satan deceived himself **with the belief** that it was possible for him to hold Christ’s Soul. Our Lord became “...*among the dead free and stronger than the authority of death, that all those who wanted...*” and **who** were “...*captured by death, could follow Him, being freed, and Death not having any authority over them.*”¹³⁶

St Basil the Great, interpreting Psalm 48(49), **commented** that “...*no man was powerful enough to convince the Devil to free him (man) who had fallen once into his authority.*”

¹²⁵ Matth. 20:28. Mark 10:45. 1 Tim. 2:6.

¹²⁶ 1 Corinth. 6:20.

¹²⁷ Rom. 3:25; 5:9. Ephes. 2:13. Col. 1:14, 20. Heb. 9:12, 14, 20; 10:19; 13:12. 1 Peter 1:19. 1 John 1:7. Rev. 1:5; 5:9; 7:14; 12:11.

¹²⁸ Eph. 1:7.

¹²⁹ Gal. 3:13.

¹³⁰ Tit. 2:14.

¹³¹ Matth. 12:29.

¹³² 2 Corinth. 4:4.

¹³³ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *To John*, book X, ch. 1, *To John 14:30*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 74, 329.

¹³⁴ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *About perfection*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 46, 261.

¹³⁵ St. Epiphanius, *Ancyrotus*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 43, 133.

¹³⁶ Origen, *To Matthew*, v. 16, § 8, in *B*, v. 14, p. 44.

Continuing, he **spoke of** Christ “...Who, not because of His own sins, became Expiatory by offering Himself to God.” The Expiatory would not have been given to Satan, but **only** to God.¹³⁷

St Gregory of Nyssa presented Satan as being deceived “...in the negotiation.” Satan was “embarrassed” “...to see with a naked eye God’s thought...” “...for this reason the Divinity is covered with Flesh...” so that Satan **would** not be afraid “...to approach the Superior Power.” **The fact** “...that the Lord wanted to Save (mankind), is a manifestation of His Goodness; whereas, the draft manifests the Just Action of the prisoner’s freedom; that this was made impossible to be contained by the enemy, proves the **supremacy** of the Heavenly Wisdom.”¹³⁸

St Cyril of Jerusalem **said** that “...the Body (of Christ) became the Bait of Death, with the hope that, if the dragon, by **swallowing it, will vomit [up]** all those whom he had already swallowed.”¹³⁹

St Gregory of Nazianzos **considered it blasphemy** to say that Christ’s Soul was presented “...as Ransom to the evil one.” He believed that **it was neither** possible “...by God...” to offer ransom to Satan **nor** for “...the thief...” to receive “...God Himself as Ransom...” as “... reward for his tyranny.”. This Holy Father concluded that **our Heavenly** Father received the Ransom, not because He demanded it nor because He had need of it, “...but because of the *Economia* and the need to Sanctify the human race through **the Man of God.**”¹⁴⁰

St John of Damascus **commented** that since we had sinned **against** “...the Father, He had to receive the **Ransom** for us and thus to free us from the **Condemnation.**” He believed that it was unacceptable “...for the tyrant to receive the Master’s **Blood.**” He **did, however, accept** that the Lord’s human **Nature** became the bait **that** “...death swallowed...” and as a **result** “...was pierced by the fish-hook of the Divinity and **tasting** the sinless and **Life-giving Body** was corrupted and brought out all those who **had previously been swallowed.**”¹⁴¹

St John Chrysostom introduced the opinion that in the Sufferings and Death of our Lord “...Satan misbehaved...” more than **at** any other time. By bringing the Just and Sinless **One to death**, Who “...died with frankness...” the Devil misbehaved **due to being** mortally wounded by Christ Who was put to death. Death stroked Christ but being wounded in His humanity, **He** afterwards destroyed death and “...the Devil received the mortal wound by the Body of the One Who was dead.” Satan hoped to have Christ but instead **he actually** “...lost all those **whom** he had and through the Body of Him Who was nailed, the dead were raised.”¹⁴²

¹³⁷ St. Basil the Great, *To Psalm 48 (49)*, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 29, 440.

¹³⁸ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechesis*, 23, in Migne, *P.G.*, 45, 61.

¹³⁹ St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XII, § 15, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 741.

¹⁴⁰ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Homily 45, To the holy Pascha*, § 22, in Migne, *P.G.*, 36, 653.

¹⁴¹ St. John of Damascus, *Exposition*, III, 71, 27, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1096.

¹⁴² St. John Chrysostom, *Homily VI, To Colossians*, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 62, 340.

11. The Hypostatic Union Gives a Priceless Value and Power to the Representative Sacrifice

The fact that the Sacrifice of Christ was able to lift up the sin of the whole human race, from Adam to the last man to be born before the Second Coming, was the result of the Son of God, as the second Adam and the **absolutely** sinless, most precious and perfect Man, **consenting, by His own Will**, to represent the human race and **by offering** Himself as an Expiatory Sacrifice to God the Father for all of us. This second Adam is not merely man. What **could any** man find to offer for his life? Christ is True Man and He is True God the Word Who became Man. He is not a fine Man but the Only Begotten Son of God Who takes up a body in order to change all **people** and through His Death to **end their** mortality through the Grace of Resurrection. The Sacrifice on the Cross was not a Sacrifice of a fine Man but that of the Word of God. As **High Priest He offered** and as Sacrificial Victim **He was offered for all humanity's** freedom from guilt and by His Death **He defeated** Satan through **His Most Proper Offering**.¹⁴³

According to the above, the Sacrifice offered by the God-Man was a representative Sacrifice **that** the Son of God offered not only for the sake of **our** sin but **also** for the sake of all sinners. He took the place of **all** sinners **by suffering** that **which they** had to **endure** and **completed** whatever was required **of them**. This Sacrifice was the Ransom **that** was **paid** for **all** mankind. The Death of the One Who **"...died for all..."** and **who "all died" in Him**¹⁴⁴ **"...Redeemed us from the curse of the Law..."** by **"... becoming for us a curse."**¹⁴⁵ He carried the heavy weight **of the** guilt of all sinners. His obedience and love with which He suffered **so** patiently for others, **was beyond price** because He Who died for all is more valuable than all **humanity**, for He is by Nature God, the Word of God Who presented His own Body as a **"...sweet-smelling aroma..."**¹⁴⁶ and **Who** became the starting point of all Virtue.¹⁴⁷ **The Heavenly Father admired this New Beginning, the worthiness of Him Who offered the Sacrifice and the purity of Him Who presented Himself as the Offering. Consequently, Christ being familiar to the Heavenly Father He was accepted in His Hands and placed beside the Holy Gift with the words: "Sit on My right hand."**¹⁴⁸

St Gregory of Nyssa stressed that **"...the Lord Who knew no sin became sin for us and our enmity to God..."** which was caused because of our sins. **"He took up and killed..."** and **"...through Himself again united the human race to God."** And He did not simply **resolve** the enmity but **in addition**, the human nature **that** He took up built **"...Him into the new man according to God..."** and, becoming familiar **with** it because of the relationship **with** all of us, **"...all the common things of His Body and familiar nature, made friends with the Grace."** This Sacrifice, which **was** so elect and spotless, became acceptable **to** the Heavenly Father as though it **had been** offered by the sinful human race. Through faith in Jesus Christ all those who believe are incorporated into Him, the Deified Beginning, being at the same time united

¹⁴³ St. Basil the Great, *To Psalm 48* (49), § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 29, 440. St. Epiphanius, in Migne, *P.G.*, 43, 185. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XIII, § 1-2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 773. St. Athanasius the Great, *About the incarnation of the Word*, § 9, in Migne, *P.G.*, 25, 112. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *That one is the Christ*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 75, 1337.

¹⁴⁴ 2 Corinth. 5:14-15.

¹⁴⁵ Gal. 3:13.

¹⁴⁶ Ephes. 5:2.

¹⁴⁷ St. Cyril of Alexandria, in Migne, *P.G.*, 76, 1208 and 1436. *Ibid*, *To John*, book IV, ch. II, in Migne, *P.G.*, 73, 569.

¹⁴⁸ St. John Chrysostom, *To the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ*, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 50, 446.

with Him Who **pleases** God.¹⁴⁹ For the Son of God became Man **so** that He may Deify us in Himself **and so** that He may make us “...a chosen generation, a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation...”¹⁵⁰ and “...partakers of the Divine Nature.”¹⁵¹

12. The Expiatory Sacrifice **Benefits** Only Those Who Believe

It is obvious that this Sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God was considered **as being** offered by all mankind, which He, as the High Priest, represented **and which** consists of an Expiatory Sacrifice for the whole world. “For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have Everlasting Life.”¹⁵² Christ is not only the Expiatory of the sins of the Faithful and **the Elect but also of** the whole world. According to St Paul, “Christ died for the ungodly...”¹⁵³ “...while we were still sinners.”¹⁵⁴ He did not die for the Elect **alone** but to take away the sin of the **entire** world and **so** “...that the world, through Him, might be Saved.”¹⁵⁵ If the Sacrifice was offered for the whole world, only those **who believe** will benefit from it. **Although** “...the Lord died for all to save all...” as it was fitting **for** Him to do so, “...He did not take up the sins of those who did not want...” **His Redemption.**¹⁵⁶ The Lord assured us **that** “...he who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the Name of the Only Begotten Son of God.”¹⁵⁷

Christ offered the Sacrifice for the sin of the world, which **enabled the reconciliation of the entire** world **with God** the Heavenly Father. Those who **do** not believe in the **Son alienate themselves from this Reconciliation** and all its Divine Gifts. **Consequently** they are condemned for their lack of faith. The Blood of the New Testament was shed for their Salvation and it is for them, as for the whole human race, **more than** sufficient to cleanse their sins. The Sacrifice of Christ was sufficient to save all **people**. **Therefore even** the lawless of sinners **are** not greater than the Justice of Him Who **died**. **Neither have** we sinned more than **His Justice – the One Who offered His Life up** for us. He gave more than we owned: “...just like the drop of water which falls into the infinite ocean.”¹⁵⁸

Henceforth, we can say that the Sacrifice of the Lord abundantly satisfied God in that it **was not restricting to only appeasing** the anger of God and to reconcile us to Him, but it **furthermore** became the Fountain of many Gifts and Graces **that** the human Nature of the Incarnated Son first enjoyed, being **Deified and Glorified and from Whom these riches poured forth to us**. “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in Heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should

¹⁴⁹ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, Homily 12, in Migne, *P.G.*, 45, 889. St. Athanasius the Great, *To Adelphius*, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 26, 1077. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Homily IV, That the Son is not a creation*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 75, 905. *Ibid*, *To John*, book XI, ch. X, in Migne, *P.G.*, 74, 545. *Ibid*, *To Isaiah*, book IV, Homily II, in Migne, *P.G.*, 70, 965. *Ibid*, *To 1 Corinthians*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 74, 913.

¹⁵⁰ 1 Peter 2:9.

¹⁵¹ 2 Peter 1:4.

¹⁵² John 3:16.

¹⁵³ Rom. 5:6.

¹⁵⁴ Rom. 5:8.

¹⁵⁵ John 3:17.

¹⁵⁶ St. John Chrysostom, *To Galatians* 2:8, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 647.

¹⁵⁷ John 3:18.

¹⁵⁸ St. John Chrysostom, *To Romans*, Homily 10, in Migne, *P.G.*, 60, 447.

*confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*¹⁵⁹ *“But we see Jesus Who was made a little lower than the Angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the Grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”*¹⁶⁰

St Augustine observed that the Lord was honoured through His humbleness with the glorious exaltation **that** is the Reward of His Humility.¹⁶¹

In the outpouring of the riches of Gifts and Graces, one must recall St Paul **who wrote:** *“The Grace of God and the Gift by the Grace of the Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many...”*¹⁶² and *“...where sin abounded, Grace abounded much more.”*¹⁶³ According to St John Chrysostom, we received **an abundance** *“... of Grace...”* because we did not **only** receive from **God’s** Grace **that** *“...which was required to wipe out sin, but even much more.”* For *“...we were freed from the punishment of Hell and had put aside all evilness and we were Regenerated from Above and Saved and Sanctified and led to be sons by Adoption and became brothers of the Only Begotten and co-Heirs and of His same Body and perfected in His Flesh and are united with Him in one Body, having Him as the Head.”*¹⁶⁴

13. The Continuation of the Work of Christ as High Priest in Heaven

The Work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as High Priest, which was achieved on earth, continues in Heaven¹⁶⁵ where He *“...lives in God...”* and, **according to His Humanity**, being dedicated completely to God in prayer and Communion with Him. **On the last night of His earthly life** He Himself assured His Holy Apostles that He **would** ask the Father to send *“...another Helper.”*¹⁶⁶ After His glorious Resurrection and Ascension Christ, sitting **at** the right hand of the Father *“...continues forever...”*¹⁶⁷ *“...to make intercession for them...”*¹⁶⁸ **by** appearing *“...in the Presence of God for us.”*¹⁶⁹ Not like the High Priest of the Old Testament **who** entered in *“...the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another...”*¹⁷⁰ our High Priest *“...Christ, has not entered the Holy Places made with hands, which are copies of the True, but into Heaven itself.”*¹⁷¹ In Heaven our Lord remains *“...an Advocate to the Father...”*¹⁷² Mediator and High Priest **Who prays** for us **and assures** *“... our forgiveness and the riches of Grace.”*¹⁷³

The exaltation of the High Priest on the Throne of God was the result and direct consequence of the Sacrifice offered by Jesus Christ on the Cross, which completely satisfied God and being perfected, opened the Way to Heaven, *“...where the Forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus.”*¹⁷⁴ Christ’s Work **of intervention** and prayer to the Father **is** necessary,

¹⁵⁹ Phil. 2:9-11.

¹⁶⁰ Heb. 2:9.

¹⁶¹ St. Augustine, *In Johannis evangelium. Tractatus CIV*, 3, in Migne, *P.L.*, 35, 1903.

¹⁶² Rom. 5:15.

¹⁶³ Rom. 5:20.

¹⁶⁴ St. John Chrysostom, *To Romans*, Homily 10, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 60, 446-447.

¹⁶⁵ Heb. 9:24.

¹⁶⁶ John 14:16.

¹⁶⁷ Heb. 7:24.

¹⁶⁸ Heb. 7:25.

¹⁶⁹ Heb. 9:24.

¹⁷⁰ Heb. 9:25.

¹⁷¹ Heb. 9:24.

¹⁷² 1 John 2:1

¹⁷³ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *To John IX*, ch. 9 to John 17:16, in Migne *P.G.*, 74, 553.

¹⁷⁴ Heb. 6:20.

not because His Sacrifice was imperfect, but because those faithful on earth who struggle against sin **are imperfect**. **They** fall and are wounded, and continuously need the Divine Mercy and Grace of Christ **Who** continues to intercede for our Salvation. All our weaknesses, all our discouragements, all our daily falls, all our requests and prayers to God are covered by our Holy High Priest Who presents them to Him. Our High Priest is our “*Helper*” Who intercedes **with** the Father, not as a servant, but as Man and as His Word and Son.¹⁷⁵

Exactly how the intervention of our Lord takes place in Heaven is beyond our knowledge, for it is impossible for any man to conceive those things **that** take place in Heaven, **unless** revealed by the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, according to Holy Scripture, our Lord, after His Resurrection, “...*makes intercession for the Saints...*”¹⁷⁶ **and like** “...*a Lamb as though it had been slain...*”¹⁷⁷ for “...*it is Christ Who died, and furthermore is also Risen, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also makes intercession for us.*”¹⁷⁸

The prayer and Communion with the Father by the High Priest Christ and His Sacrifice on the Cross continues without end in Heaven and consists of a unique and undivided Work, which was offered once for the entire world. St Augustine **emphasised** that Christ intercedes for us as **High Priest**. **He** intercedes in us as our Head **and He** accepts prayers from us as our God. Let us **realise that** in Him **are** our voices and in us **is** His Voice.¹⁷⁹

Concerning the **words addressed** to Christ by King David: “*Thou art a Priest forever...*”¹⁸⁰ **and that He** “...*has an unchangeable Priesthood...*”¹⁸¹ it is important to know that Christ received His Priesthood from the moment of the Incarnation of God the Word. Through the Hypostatic Union of Christ’s Humanity with His Divinity, His Priesthood remains forever because His Divinity is forever. The results of the Lord’s Priesthood **furthermore**, remain forever unchangeable since He, as High Priest, became the reason for their Eternal Salvation to those who believe.

Christ’s Heavenly intervention for the Faithful will come to an end when His Second Coming and Last Judgement takes place. For it will **no longer be necessary** since all those who will be Saved will enjoy the Fruits of Christ’s Sacrifice. They will struggle no more and **then** He, “...*when all things are made subject to Him ... will also be subject to Him Who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.*”¹⁸²

¹⁷⁵ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Homily* 30, § 14, in Migne, *P.G.*, 36, 121.

¹⁷⁶ Rom. 8:27.

¹⁷⁷ Rev. 5:6.

¹⁷⁸ Rom. 8:34.

¹⁷⁹ St. Augustine, in Oosterzee, *Dogmatics*, p. 619.

¹⁸⁰ Psalm 109(110):4. Heb. 5:6.

¹⁸¹ Heb. 7:24.

¹⁸² 1 Corinth. 15:28.