

# **Interpreting the Ancient of Days?**

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# I. Introduction

In the long-standing controversy about the image of God the Father or the Trinity, whether inside or outside the Orthodox Church, the discussion concentrates on the identity of the Ancient of Days and the One-like-a-son-of-man (Dn 7: 9—22). Is the Ancient of Days God the Father and the One-like-a-son-of-man the Son/Logos of the Father? Those who are in favor of the equation Ancient of Days=God the Father and the One-like-a-son-of-man=the Son/Logos support their argument by the presence of two different figures in the prophet's vision, assuming them to be different divine Persons, one receiving an eternal kingdom from the other. Obviously, it is the Father/Ancient of Days who gives an eternal kingdom to the Son/the One-like-a-son-of-man. Having clearly identified the figures—as far as these exegetes are concerned—they then proceed to apply the principle of “what is visible is representable” to this passage and feel quite justified in representing God the Father in a direct portrait image. Having interpreted the other theophanies of the Old Testament also as manifestations of the Father, they generally leave the New Testament for the Son's manifestations. They claim that, naturally, the Father did not appear in his essence but only in an anthropomorphic form, even though he is not a man. In theory, they say, he could have chosen any other image, an eagle, a star, a flower, etc., but he chose a human form, and so we can represent that human form because he chose to manifest himself in that manner. In fact, the human form he chose is what we call an anthropomorphic allegory, like Cosmos in the Pentecost icon or the Statue of Liberty: a human form that does not represent a real person, but an idea or something else. The advocates of the equation God the Father=the Ancient of Days continue to support their argument by appealing to patristic texts, usually commentaries on the Bible, especially Daniel, to show that various Fathers and writers of Christian antiquity agree with them that the Ancient of Days is the Father and the One-like-a-son-of-man is the Son/Logos. Their argument seems, to them, nearly unassailable. What more could anyone want? The Bible and the Fathers agree. If there are any liturgical texts or conciliar decisions in their favor, they add them to their arsenal of arguments. Finally, they say that the fact that the Church, Orthodox or other, has accepted these images, even blessing them, shows that they are compatible with fundamental Church doctrine. On the basis of these arguments, those who favor direct portrait images of God the Father argue against those who put forward other points of view.

The advocates of another point of view usually concentrate their arguments on the text itself, but, due to the many patristic texts identifying the Ancient of Days as God the Father, they seem to be hard-pressed to make their point. The nearly omnipresent images of the Trinity, even in very important centers of the Orthodox world and in monasteries, tend to weaken their objections. That is why I, one of those presenting another point of view, will not argue the case on the opponents' ground since that gives them the advantage. Since the question turns around representing God the Father or any divine Person in art, I would like to take the historical, theological route to argue against such direct images of God the Father. I will follow the path of the Christian theological consciousness and artistic practice through time to see what principles have been laid down that can be applied to the question. The advocates of images of God the Father use history very sparingly, if at all. They nearly exclusively cite the appearance of the Ancient of Days as the Father and then apply the principle of visible=representable, and that is that.

My approach is based on the following principles which I believe are not just MY principles or even MY theologoumena—theological opinions—but in fact set out the dogmatic vision of the Orthodox Church itself, the very vision of the Fathers and of Holy Tradition. I do not intend to ignore the arguments of the other side, but I want first to set the stage on which to place the question. Then, I believe, it will be seen that the question itself, to say nothing of the answer, is a foreign, toxic plant growing in and poisoning the garden. Let us keep in mind that we are asking if it is possible, and if so how, to make an image of God in general or of God the Father in particular. What I hope is to present new and more convincing arguments. They have been written up and discussed for many years. What I think is new is the setting out of an iconology, a theology of the image, that the Church catholic has worked out at the highest dogmatic level and that has been perpetuated by what we call the Eastern Orthodox Church. It is with this dogmatic iconology of Holy Tradition that the image itself and its theological justification will be seen to clash.

## **1. The Second Commandment**

Remembering our fundamental question, how can a Christian begin anywhere else than with the Second Commandment against making any image whatsoever of God: a total, absolute, and unconditional ban on any image of God, either as a portrait or as something in creation that resembles him. Not only is he invisible by his very nature, but there is nothing in the creation that is like him in his essence that could serve as an image. All three Abrahamic religions are bound by this prohibition.

## **2. The Old Testament Theophanies**

And yet, the Bible itself shows that God somehow makes himself visible, even in human form. Many prophets have written that they saw the Lord, sitting high up on his throne. Is this to say that WE cannot make an image of God, but that HE can show himself in any way he wants? This problem—two seemingly contradictory principles—is one mostly for Jews and Muslims because they do not accept the New Testament and the Incarnation, but one which Christians have solved.

## **3. The Incarnation**

Obviously, we are now dealing with only Christian theology. But the claim that the Son of God took to himself a human nature and became the man Jesus, without ceasing to be the divine Son—in other words, he became visible—modifies somewhat the Second Commandment. God himself, that is God the Son of the Father, on his own, by his own will and action, partially modified the doctrine of God's invisibility, and therefore his unrepresentability, by not just showing himself as a star, a flower, or a man, but by making his Person visible in the visible humanity he took on like a garment.

## **4. The Law and the Prophets**

Christ told the disciples just before leaving them: “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” (Lk 24: 27) In the Old Testament, we therefore look for the face of Christ, that is ways in which his incarnation is prefigured or prophesied.

## 5. What is Visible is Representable

For a thousand years after Christ, Christians everywhere did not hesitate to represent, paint, or draw Jesus. The examples in Church history are legion. It may have been—we cannot say for sure—that the first Christians began representing him symbolically either as a fish or the Good Shepherd. Very soon, however, they began to make real portrait images of Jesus, often very crudely made from the artistic point of view: the images of Christ in the baptistry of Dura-Europos being the earliest that have survived to our time, 250 A.D. They also represented the Holy Spirit as a dove at the Christ's baptism because that is how the Spirit is said to have appeared in the gospels. So one principle was expressed three ways: 1) direct, portrait images of Christ's person, either in a New Testament scene, or isolated by himself, in what we call today an icon; 2) symbolic representations of Jesus as fish or good Shepherd or the Holy Spirit as a dove; 3) the Father "represented" by nothing, pure invisibility, perhaps in a symbolic way, but no portrait images of his person.

## 6. The 7<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council, 787

During the first millennium, there was a council, Nicaea II, which dealt precisely with our question. The controversy was engaged around 730 when the Roman emperor Leo II banned images of Christ and the saints, saying that the image of Jesus was an idol that fell under the ban of the Second Commandment. He said it forbids the making of any image of God, and since Jesus is God and man, an image of him is therefore an idol and to be destroyed. So the two sides battled it out with all kinds of arguments saying why an image of Jesus is an idol and why it is not. They were debating the very question we asked at the beginning: Is it possible, and if so how, to make an image of God? The outcome was that the iconoclasts, as the opponents of Christ's image were called, lost, and the winners, the iconodules—or the Orthodox as they are called today—set out the theology of making images of God. Here are the principles that the whole Church, East and West, agreed on. Here is the theology of the Catholic Church. Holy Tradition was defined on this question at Nicaea II in 787. What did they say?

**6.1.** The iconoclasts said that an image of Christ is an idol and prohibited by the Second Commandment. They did not distinguish between an image (icon) and an idol. The Orthodox replied that an idol is an image of a false god, and obviously an image of Christ is not one of a false god. Secondly, an icon is not an idol because it does not claim to represent who or what is essentially invisible but rather the visible aspects of the humanity that the Son and Word of God voluntarily took on himself.

**6.2.** The council fathers then gave a definition of an image/icon to counter the claim of the iconoclasts that an image of Christ attempts to represent, on the one hand, the divine natures of Christ by themselves and separated from each other or, on the other, the two natures combined. In either case, the Orthodox were heretics for separating the natures of Christ (Nestorianism) or for combining them (Eutychian Monophysitism). The Orthodox answered that an image does not represent a nature, whether divine or human, and this is of great importance for our study. They said that any Christian image represents a person (*hypostasis* is the technical, theological term), not a nature, according to the visible aspects of his or her humanity. This principle, though only defined in 787, highlighted and explained

a process that had been going on silently in Christian art for centuries. Christian art had been eliminating or retrograding nearly all symbolic images, that is, one thing that stands for another: Christ as lamb, fish, anchor or anthropomorphic allegories. These latter are empty human forms not representing real persons but ideas or things: *Winged Victory*, John Bull for England, Marianne for France, Uncle Sam for the United States, four young girls for the seasons.

**6.3.** The third principle established by the Council for a balanced iconology is that of the relation between an image and the person represented. A real image establishes a relation between the two, between the type and the prototype, again using the technical terms of Orthodox iconology. St. Basil the Great had already stated that the honor given to an image rebounds to the person represented. Therefore, any honor or dishonor given to an image of someone rebounds to the person in the image. This notion of a relation created by an image between the type and the prototype is the basis of all image veneration. By honoring the image, we honor the person represented. What that means for our study is this: behind every human form in an icon, it is assumed that there is a real person represented and that the image/type establishes a relation with the person/prototype.

## **7. Absence of Images of the Father during the First Millennium**

We simply note that during the first millennium of Church history, there was no attempt to make direct, portrait images of the Father in a representation of the Trinity, only in symbolic representations. Various theories can be advanced to explain this absence, but the absence is just a fact of art history. It is interesting also to note that during the bloody fight over the image of Christ, the iconoclasts never attacked images of God the Father. We can safely assume that this is evidence that such images did not exist. If making an image of the incarnate Logos, Jesus, is idolatry, imagine what the iconoclasts would have said about an image of the Father.

## **8. The First Images of the Father and the Trinity**

Where and when did Christians begin to paint images of the Trinity? In general, art historians have shown that the practice took root and flowered in Western Europe at the beginning of the second millennium, but that such images did not appear and blossom in the Orthodox world until around the 16<sup>th</sup> century. During the High Middle Ages in the Latin Catholic world, three important changes took place regarding our fundamental question asked at the beginning: Is it possible, and if so how, can an image of God be made?

**8.1.** Joachim of Flore (1130–1202), from Calabria, Italy, was a medieval monk, mystic, and theologian who reinterpreted world history according to three periods: 1) that of the Father in the Old Testament where men lived by God's law, 2) that of the Son in the gospel and up to his Joachim's own time (1260 was the date of transition), and 3) that of the Spirit where men would become the sons of God and would be free to have intimate contact and knowledge of God. Joachim's historical scheme has influenced many, even up to our own time. What is important for our study is that Joachim made the Old Testament the arena

for the activity of the Father, and so once the general idea has taken root, it is not difficult to see how the theophanies of the Old Testament would be seen, not as manifestations of the Logos and prefigurations of the incarnation, but as manifestations of the Father. Augustine had already rejected the general patristic view that the Logos manifested himself in the Law and the Prophets, saying rather that the whole Trinity showed itself there. Joachim's division of the history of salvation into three periods sealed, for the Latin Christian world, the "obvious" fact that the Old Testament was the Father's domain.

**8.2.** The artists of the medieval, Latin world began to paint various images of the Trinity. These images became very popular and were, and are, to be seen in nearly every country of Roman Catholic tradition.

**8.3.** Two types of protests arose against such images: one from within the Roman Church, but more significantly from without, that is, from the various heretical groups that attacked it: the Albigensians, the Lollards, the Waldensians, etc. Among other things, these groups protested against the presence and the veneration ("worship") of images in the churches, especially anthropomorphic images of the Trinity. In order to defend these images against attacks, Roman Catholic scholars used Daniel 7: 9—22 in which they identified the Ancient of Days as a theophany of God the Father and the One-like-a-son-of-man as Christ. Then quoting patristic sources which make the same identification and applying the principle of "what is visible is representable," they felt that they had established a solid defense of direct Trinity images. Certain of these images and their theological justification, based on Daniel 7: 9—22, by Pope Benedict XIV in 1745 brought the question to a close in the Roman Catholic world.

## **9. Importation into the Orthodox World**

The Orthodox world had little or no knowledge of anthropomorphic images of the Trinity before the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries. We cannot identify the first Trinity "icon" made by or for Orthodox Christians, but we do know when and where such an image provoked a controversy among the Orthodox: the Council of Moscow 1553–1554 where Ivan Viskovaty challenged the correctness of a group of symbolic representations of the Credo containing images of God the Father. Viskovaty's protests were rejected by the then Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow who justified such images by an appeal to Old Testament theophanies, especially Dn 7: 9—22: the Father visibly manifested himself to the prophets; it is therefore legitimate to paint him as he appeared.

## **10. Rejection and Acceptance**

During the nearly 500 years that separate us from the first known controversy about the image of God the Father, some Orthodox have continued to oppose images of the Father by various conciliar statements and writings while others, at the same time, have welcomed the images in churches such that they are found all over the Orthodox world from patriarchal cathedrals down to simple monastic chapels. And one of the most interesting aspects of this period is that it coincides with the period of decadence in many areas of Orthodox life, including iconography during which Roman Catholic theology and art greatly influenced the Orthodox. It is not surprising then that the importation of both direct images of God the

Father in Trinity images and their theological justification coincide historically with what has come to be called the period of Western Captivity.

And if we set the two interpretations side by side, what do we have? We see that they are opposed to each other, that they give two contradictory answers.

<b>The Iconology of the Orthodox Church</b>	<b>The Iconology based on the Equation of the Ancient of Days=God the Father</b>
1. The Son/Logos manifested himself in the Old Testament: "The Law and the Prophets speak of me."	The Father manifested himself in the Old Testament, at least in Daniel's vision but also in other theophanies.
2. The eschatological judge is the Son/Logos: "The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son."	The Father becomes the eschatological judge.
3. The Incarnation makes the Son/Logos visible and allows an image of God: "And the Word became flesh."	A theophany of the Father, even in the Old Testament, allows an image of him: what is visible is representable.
4. An image represents a person (hypostasis) according to the visible aspects of his humanity.	An image of the Father represents neither his person nor his essence but is rather an anthropomorphic allegory, one of the symbols by which he represented himself.
5. An image creates a relation between the person represented (prototype) and his representation (type).	The form of an old man has no relation with the person of the Father; it is an anthropomorphic symbol.
6. An iconic relation allows the veneration of an image and, through it, the person represented: "The honor [or insult] given to an image rebounds onto the person represented."	An anthropomorphic allegory does not allow the veneration of this empty, human form. It is the veneration of a symbol.
7. The tradition of the fundamental invisibility of the Father and the Spirit remains intact, and the refusal to paint the Father maintains the centuries-old tradition of Christian artists refusing to make an image of the Father.	Images of the Father, borrowed from the Latin, medieval West, introduce a novelty into the Christian, artistic tradition, an artistic novelty but not a dogmatic one.
8. The theological justification of the image of the Father, borrowed from the medieval, Latin tradition and	The theological justification of the image of the Father, borrowed from the medieval Latin tradition and based on Daniel's vision is accepted as being

founded on Daniel's vision is rejected as being foreign to Holy Tradition.	compatible with Holy Tradition.
9. The protests of councils and Orthodox authors against the image of the Father are seen as allergic reactions of the body against the invasion of foreign, toxic organisms.	The protests of councils and Orthodox authors against the image of the Father have little authority being opinions of traditionalists and fundamentalists. They can be forgotten.
10. The renaissance of the canonical icon underway for 150 years is seen as a blessing and reaffirmation of the Church's iconology, that is of Orthodoxy itself.	The renaissance of the canonical icon, underway for 150 years, is seen as the popularity of a new, local style revived from a former age; the renaissance is the denigration of local traditions while the "new" style is wrongly seen as universal, Orthodox traditions.



## II. The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man Daniel 7: 1—28

### 1. The Question

In the text of Daniel 7: 8—26, the Ancient of Days appears three times as well as One-like-a-son-of-man. Can we establish the identity of these two figures in the prophet's visions? Who are the Ancient of Days and One-like-a-son-of-man?

The main actors in the text are the following:

- Daniel the prophetic visionary
- The Ancient of Days
- One-like-a-son-of-man
- The Most High
- One of those who were standing there
- The saints/the people of the saints of the Most High

### 2. The Division of the Verses Daniel 7: 1—28

#### 2.1 Verses 7: 1—8

The first important thing to note is that we are in the world of dreams, especially an eschatological dream. Therefore the logic of our world does not apply, or very little, but that does not mean that the passage is without logic. To begin with, Daniel is asleep, is dreaming, awakes and writes down his dream. According to his story, he first dreams of four beasts that he describes; then, in verse 9 we have the beginning of the passage that interests us here. Daniel continues his story of his dream:

#### 2.2 Verses 7: 9—10

Many thrones are set in place. Who set them up? Someone? We do not know whom; the Greek word (*etethésan*) is a passive: they were set up by someone or something. How many thrones? We cannot determine that either. We can suppose, however, that they were set up in heaven, in a big court room, a tribunal where cases are decided and sentences handed out.

Someone called the Ancient of Days sits down as the judge. We suppose that he sits on one of the thrones. He is dressed in a garment white as snow and his hair is like pure wool.

The throne of the Ancient of Days is a flame of fire, and it has wheels of burning fire.

A river of fire flows out from in front of the throne. The Greek verb says *emprosthen autou*, from in front of it. Should we understand that the fire is coming from the throne or from the Ancient of Days? It is not very important whether *autou* is interpreted as *from him* or *from it*. The word can refer to either *ho thronos* or to *palaios*. If we have to choose, we prefer *from the throne*.

Numberless “angels” stand in front of the Ancient of Days who is seated on his throne. They serve him.

The members of the tribunal take their seats. The Greek words *kritérion ekathise* means *court of justice*. We imagine a judge of a civil or criminal court sitting in front of those who are going to listen to the lawyers' speeches. In this case, the judge is the Ancient of Days and the members of the court are the numberless angels standing in front of him.

The books are opened. The Greek verb *éneôichthésan* is a passive which describes an action rather than a state of being. Someone opens them, or perhaps they open themselves. In any case, they were closed before the trial and are now open.

## **2.3 Verses 11–12**

Daniel tells what happens to the horns.

## **2.4 Verses 13–14 Return to the Court Room**

One-like-a-son-of-man is being carried on the clouds of heaven and arrives at the court. He moves forward toward the Ancient of Days and stops at some distance in front of him. Then he is escorted—the verb is another passive—probably by the angels to just in front of the Ancient of Days.

The One-like-a-son-of-man receives—another passive “are given to him”—empire, honor and a kingdom/rule.

Everyone is going to serve him, and his empire and kingdom will be eternal and will never be destroyed.

## **2.5 Verses 15–27**

Daniel is still in his dream, but now it becomes a two-level dream. He dreams as though he were seeing a film projected on a screen. That is the second level, but he dreams of being with others (angels?) of whom he can ask questions. In the presence of the other observers, he sees the show, but after, being troubled by what he saw, he speaks to one of the other observers standing there; he wants to know the meaning of what he just saw.

The interpreter who stands there gives Daniel the interpretation of the theophany they have just seen. The identity of the beasts does not concern us here. We are looking to identify the actors—human, angelic or divine. The interpreter says that the four kings symbolized by the beasts will lose their kingdoms. This is where the text introduces a group: “Those who will receive the kingdom,” that is to say, the saints of the Most High who will have this kingdom forever. It is supposed that “the saints of the Most High” are not the same as those who stand there, that is to say, those who are watching the “film.”

But those who will receive the kingdom are called “the saints of the Most High,” even “the people of the saints of the Most High.” The interpreter, at Daniel’s request, continues his explanation, especially of the fourth beast and its horns, and among

them the largest and most ferocious which “made war on the saints” and won against them “up to the coming of the Ancient of Days.” And this is the one who will do justice, who will judge in favor of the Most High after which the saints will possess the kingdom.

## 2.6 Verse 28

Daniel wakes up in a troubled state caused by his dream.

## 3. Interpretation of the Data

The purpose of our study is to determine the identity of the Ancient of Days and of the One-like-a-son-of-man by examining the attributes of each one. We must not forget that we interpret them on the basis of the principle which is common to the whole patristic tradition: the Old Testament must be interpreted in the light of the New, in the light of Christ. Accepting as an article of faith that “the Law and the prophets speak of me,” of Christ, we try, especially with regard to the divine theophanies of the Old Testament in general, and that of Daniel in particular, to identify the “actors” from the Trinitarian point of view, since God, the Eternal One of Israel, is not unipersonal, but tripersonal, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

First of all, chapter 7 is set in a court of justice; that word even appears twice, but it is not an earthly court, rather a heavenly one and at the end of time; it is an eschatological court room. There is a judge, a description of the crimes of the accused, the victims of the crimes, a verdict which renders justice to the victims. So who is the judge? There seems to be only one candidate for this post: the Ancient of Days. The thrones having been set up, the Ancient of Days takes his seat; the whole court is sitting, and the books are opened. So everything is ready to start the trial. It is also said later on that when the Ancient of Days comes, he will render justice for the saints of the Most High. And thirdly, verse 26 says that the tribunal will sit. The Ancient of Days is not here specifically mentioned, but he has his place, according to the two previous verses, on the seat of the judge.

So, in the light of the New Testament and of the entire patristic tradition, who is the eschatological judge? It is not difficult to answer.

⤴ Ac 10: 42: And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be the judge of the living and the dead;

⤴ Jn 5: 22: The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son;

⤴ 2 Tm 4: 1 and 8: I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead. . . Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

So, needless to say, the eschatological Judge is the Christ at the time of his Second Coming and where there is talk of the eschatological judge or judgment, in the Old Testament, one must understand, according to the Orthodox Christian interpretation, the Logos/the Son of God/Christ/Jesus, who has come back for the Last Judgment. It therefore seems clear that Dn 7: 9—10 speak precisely of this Last

Judgment and the place of the eschatological Judge is given to the Ancient of Days. The conclusion is obvious: The title *Ancient of Days* is just another designation, another title, for the eschatological Judge, for Jesus Christ.

Another word tends to confirm this interpretation: “As I looked, this horn made war on the saints, and prevailed over them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High.” (Dn 7: 21) Who will come at the end of time to give judgment? Again the word *come* in all its forms, associated with the end times and the Last Judgment, refers to the eschatological Judge who is Christ. Even the creed says, “He [Christ] will come again to judge the living and the dead.” So the conclusion: The Ancient of Days who comes to preside over the judgment is Christ at his Second Coming.

Usually, exegetes begin with the identification of the One-like-a-son-of-man. Since he also comes on the clouds and is called the Son of Man, it is easier to designate him as the Christ who receives the kingdom. Once this identification is made, the Ancient of Days “must” be God the Father. We start rather with the Ancient of Days because he is the first actor to come on stage, and the most important, as the eschatological judge. Having identified the Ancient of Days as Christ the eschatological judge, we must proceed to identify the One-like-a-son-of-man. I admit that the exegetes—me or those who say that the Ancient of Days is the Father—have a problem: since there are two figures, one who approaches the other to receive something and the other who gives the gift, it seems that there are two distinct people. We must therefore make a coherent interpretation of these two figures. I, having first identified the Ancient of Days, now have the problem of identifying the One-like-a-son-of-man.

Then the One-like-a-son-of-man<sup>1</sup> approaches the Ancient of Days to receive a kingdom, as if the One represents another person or something else, distinct from the Ancient of Days. But according to Daniel, what does the One-like-a-son-of-man receive, and how does Daniel describe what he receives? We have already seen above what his legacy is. And we have also seen the likeness between the inheritance of the One-like-a-son-of-man and that of the saints of the Most High. Is it possible that the image of the One-like-a-son-of-man does not represent a real person but that it is a collective name, a symbol, an allegory for the saints of the Most High, for the people of the saints of the Most High? It would not be the first time that the Scriptures represent a group by one image: Adam for all humanity, Israel my servant for all the people of Israel, the daughter of Babylon for the Babylonians, etc. And what if the One-like-a-son-of-man is a collective for the saints/people of the saints? Then Daniel is speaking of only one reality, in two ways, and one kingdom that the saints—symbolized by the allegorical image of the One-like-a-son-of-man will receive from the hands eschatological judge. Such an interpretation preserves the integrity of “The Law and the Prophets speak of me”; the theophanies of the Old Testament remain prefigurations of the incarnation of the Logos in Jesus Christ; the Father remains

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<sup>1</sup>In itself, the title *Son of Man* is not a divine designation, since, for example, the prophet Ezechiel is often given this title: “And he said to me, ‘Son of man, stand upon your feet, and I will speak to you.’ (Ez 2: 1)

fundamentally invisible because nothing in the created world can be an image of him. The justification of the image of God the Father evaporates.

We also have the problem of logic: which logic to apply? Our world's logic where one figure who approaches a second, and is escorted into the presence of the second, is necessarily distinct from the second? Or should we apply dream logic, especially when we have an eschatological dream where two figures, apparently distinct and bearing two different names, may be two manifestations of the same person or reality? The problem seems to be reduced to this: we have two figures whose descriptions, taken separately, clearly impose an identity for each one. For a Christian, the only person who can be the eschatological Judge at the end of time is Christ. The Ancient of Days is clearly identified by Daniel as the one who presides over the eschatological judgment. So that identity is certain. On the other hand, the other figure is identified by the title *One-like-a-son-of-man*, who comes on the clouds and receives the kingship of the eternal kingdom. Again, it is difficult not to see Christ in this figure. And here we are caught with two sure identities and the problem of explaining how the same person—Christ the eschatological judge—is acting in two different roles. But by using dream logic, it is not “illogical” to see the manifestation of Christ the Judge in these two aspects: the glorious one as the Ancient of Days and the humble one as the One-like-a-son-of-man. We admit that it is a mystery and cannot solve it; we can only notice it. What we cannot do, on the other hand, is to give the impression of solving the mystery by imposing on it a false logic. That would be to betray a fundamental principle of the Scriptures and the tradition of the Church. It would be to affirm that the Father is the eschatological Judge and from this dogmatic upheaval to proceed to contradict the theology of the image which the Seventh Council of Nicaea, 787, and the three doctors of the icon affirmed: the only possible portrait image of God is that of the Logos incarnate in Jesus Christ.

We therefore favor the interpretation according to which the Ancient of Days and the One-like-a-son-of-man are, in fact, the same person, the Son/Logos, manifested in two images. The fact that the One-like-a-son-of-man “receives” a kingdom from the Ancient of Days should not be interpreted as a legal act in the real world where a living judge/emperor/king/president grants earthly rule to someone, but rather as a declaration that this eschatological kingdom belongs to the One-like-a-son-of-man who is therefore its king.

## **4. Two Other Old Testament Theophanies, Prefigurations of Christ Pantocrator**

### **4.1 The Vision of Isaiah 6: 1—8**

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.” And the foundation of the thresholds

shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said, “Wo is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”

The vision of Isaiah is not an anthropomorphic vision but rather one of the glory of the Lord, an “energetic” vision, according to a definition that will take shape several centuries later. Isaiah hears the voice of the Lord, but has seen nothing but the Lord in majesty. If the prophet saw other things, the text says nothing about them.

## 4.2 The Vision of Ezekiel, Ez 1: 4—28

As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness round about it, and the fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming bronze. And from the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the form of men. . .

Then Ezekiel gives a long description of these living creatures as well as the wheels on which they moved forward.

And above the firmament over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness as it were of a human form. And upward from what had the appearance of his loins, I saw as it were gleaming bronze, like the appearance of fire enclosed round about; and downward from the what had the appearance of his loins, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him. Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

So Ezekiel had two kinds of visions: 1) an anthropomorphic one, a likeness as it were of a human form as well as 2) an energetic one, with no human form, “the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire . . . gleaming bronze, like the appearance of fire enclosed round about”: fire, brightness, rainbow, glory. Nonetheless, the prophet does not doubt that he saw the Lord in a human form.

# III. The Theophanies in Revelations

## Rev 1: 9—18 and 4: 1—11

### 1. Introduction

Why should we examine here some verses of Revelations? Because the theophanies that St. John describes are sometimes used to justify the images of God the Father by identifying the subject of one of them as God the Father. We would like to study these passages to determine to what extent such an interpretation is justified.

We have two theophanies in the Revelations of John: Rev 1: 9—18 and 4: 1—11. The first is in a human form—anthropomorphic—and the second is without a human form—*an*anthropomorphic or as we have said above, energetic. And the essential task for our study is to identify who is manifested in each vision. Are they both an appearance of Christ or both of the Father or one of Christ and the other of the Father or other beings, perhaps angelic, demonic or human? How should we interpret the divine manifestations of St. John in Revelation? Who appears to him and who speaks to him? It is the objective of this part of our study to show that the subject of the two visions is the Logos, Christ, who appears as the eschatological judge.

### 2. Three Principles of Interpretation

**2.1** The logic of the apocalyptic visions is not that of our world. We have already seen this principle at work in Daniel's vision. It is still relevant to Revelations.

**2.2** Since the New Testament affirms the full divinity of the Son/Logos with the Father (and the Holy Spirit), it is not enough, in answer to our questions, to simply say, "God manifests himself and speaks." The word *God* is polysemantic and in a Christian context it can mean several things:

- the **Divinity**, "Blessed is our God, always, now and ever. . .";
- the **Trinity**, "For you are holy, O our God, and we send up glory to you Father, Son and Holy Spirit. . .";
- the **Father**, ". . . that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rm 15: 6);
- **Christ**, "the mercies of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. . .";
- the **Holy Spirit**, "The Holy Spirit, light and life. . . He is God and deifies us. . ." (Stichera from Pentecost vespers).

Therefore, we must examine the context to properly interpret the words.

**2.3** A title or description that refers to one divine Person in a passage, where it is clear who is appearing or speaking, may be used in a less obvious context to identify the same

Person, unless something clearly indicates another subject. But before proceeding, we must give ourselves a tool for our study. Let us look at the titles and descriptions that John gives to Christ at the beginning of Revelations.

### 3. Christ's Titles in the Greetings to the Churches of Asia: Rev 1: 4—8

In this section, which comes right before the first vision, John uses many titles. To whom do they refer?

- “Grace to you and peace from **him who is and who was and who is to come** . . .
- ▲ and from the **seven spirits** who are before his throne . . .
  - ▲ and from **Jesus Christ the faithful witness,**
  - ▲ **the first-born of the dead,** and
  - ▲ **the ruler of kings on earth.** . . .
  - ▲ I am **the Alpha and the Omega** says
  - ▲ **the Lord God,**
  - ▲ **who is, who was and who is to come,**
  - ▲ **the Almighty**” (Pantocrator)

It seems, on the other hand, that we have one Person designated by “him who is . . .” and another by “Jesus Christ . . .,” but actually no. One Person, the Word of God, is designated 1) according to the logic of dreams and visions—two expressions can refer to the same person; 2) according to a Semitism wherein repetition is well known as a linguistic tool; and 3) according to the title itself, “who is, who was and who is to come,” which contains two words that can only be applied to Christ. First, “him who is” in Greek is *ho ōn* (ὁ ὢν / Ὁ ὢΝ), the answer that Moses received on Mount Sinai when he asked for the name of the one who was speaking to him. It is the Greek translation for his “name” (Yahweh), and it is found in the nimbus of icons of Christ. And the second word, “to come”: who, except Christ, could be designated by this word found in another context: Rev 22: 20, “Surely I am coming soon. Amen, Come Lord Jesus”? The other titles of the greeting that follow “Jesus Christ” obviously refer to him.

Is this introductory greeting Trinitarian? Grace and peace are given “from him who is . . .,” “from the seven spirits,” and “from Jesus Christ.” Do these titles refer to the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son, as *The Orthodox Study Bible* says.<sup>2</sup> According to this interpretation “from him who is” is from the Father; “from the seven spirits” stands for the Holy Spirit; and “from Jesus Christ” is obvious. For several reasons, this interpretation seems problematic. First of all, the order of the Persons is strange. Second, the author affirms that this passage **IS** Trinitarian but then says that this greeting . . . **MAY** express the Father as the one **who is**, the Son as the one **who was**, and the Holy Spirit as the one **who is to come** at Pentecost. Then, offering an alternative reading, he says that these greetings **MAY** denote the character of the Holy One. In other words, they refer to the Divinity, the common divine nature of the three Persons. That is not strictly Trinitarian. The author

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<sup>2</sup>*The Orthodox Study Bible*, St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology, 2002, Note 1: 4, p. 1712.



grounds his Trinitarian interpretation by saying that the seven spirits of God **MOST LIKELY** refers to the Holy Spirit and His several gifts . . . but then offers another interpretation: Alternatively, the term could refer to the seven archangels who . . . stand before the throne of God. Archangels cannot really be part of the Trinity. To say that the Holy Spirit and his gifts stand before “his” throne is a very strange way to refer to him who is consubstantial with the Father and the Son. A Trinitarian interpretation of the greeting seems therefore rather confused and forced.

But since the author of *The Orthodox Study Bible* offers several interpretations tending toward a Trinitarian understanding, but not exclusively, there is space for other interpretations, and that is what I would like to offer. As the opening sentence of Revelations says, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ . . .,” the whole book is Christological, centered on Christ. If we are correct in this Christological interpretation, how do we see the opening greeting as references to Christ? The seven spirits pose an interpretation problem, but they do not enter into the question here. The titles that follow “from Jesus Christ” are well-known and refer again to Christ. It can be objected that such an interpretation gives us two references to Christ and one to the seven, somewhat enigmatic, spirits. Is this not just as problematic as a Trinitarian interpretation? Not so much if we remember that the Semitic mindset likes repetition and duplication, so it should not seem strange to have multiple titles and references for the same person. Why the seven spirits who are around his throne are sandwiched in between two references to Christ, I must admit that I have no explanation. Let us chalk it up to the Semitic mindset and dream logic. Therefore, all the titles of the greeting refer to one single person, Jesus Christ.

## 4. The First Vision, the Bodily or Anthropomorphic Theophany: Rev 1: 9-19

In the first vision, St. John describes the person who manifests himself in a human form:

- one like a **son of man**,
- clothed with a long robe
- and with a golden girdle round his breast;
- his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow;
- his eyes were like a flame of fire,
- his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace,
- and his voice was like the sound of many waters;
- in his right hand, he held seven stars,
- from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword,
- and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

He who speaks to St. John says the following of himself:

“I am . . .

- the Alpha and the Omega,
- the living one;
- I died,

- and behold I am alive forevermore,
- and I have the keys of Death and Hades.”

Who is manifesting himself and speaking in this first vision? Who other than Christ the Son and Logos?

## 5. The Words to the Churches of Asia: Rev 2–3

John, having fallen into ecstasy, hears a voice behind him. Who is speaking to him? He sees the Son of man [none other than Christ] and describes his visible characteristics. How can we be sure? Verse 1: 17: “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me, saying. . .” And throughout these two chapters, the same Person, the Son of man, dictates what to say to the churches of Asia Minor:

“To the angel of the church in. . .

- ✧ 1. Ephesus, write: The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand. . . **I know. . .**”
- ✧ 2. Smyrna, write: The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life, **I know. . .**
- ✧ 3. Pergamum, write: The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword, **I know. . .**
- ✧ 4. Thyatira, write: The words of the Son of God who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze. **I know. . .**
- ✧ 5. Sardis, write: The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. **I know. . .**
- ✧ 6. Philadelphia, write: The words of the holy one, the true one who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens. **I know. . .**
- ✧ 7. Laodicea, write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation. . . I know. . .

Conclusion: The one who appears and speaks to Saint John in the first vision and the “I” in the words to the Churches are one and the same person, the Son of God, the Messiah and the eschatological Judge, Jesus Christ. These titles and descriptions can now be used to identify the “one seated on the throne” in the second, energetic vision.

## 6. The Second Vision, Ananthropomorphic, the One with No Human Form: Rev 4: 1—11

The second vision begins in ch. 4, and seems to be another vision, distinct from the first, but the same Person speaks again to St. John: “After this, I looked, and lo, in heaven an open door! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said. . .” Then follows the vision of “one seated on the throne. . . And this time, the one that John describes has no visible, human features. John describes the heavenly court around the throne on which is “He who sits on the throne.” And the question arises: What is the identity

of the “one seated on the throne”? Is it still the Son of God described this time, not according to the visible features of his human nature, according to the incarnation, as in the first vision, but according to his energetic features, so to speak, that is, to say in terms of light and the brilliance of precious stones. The first indication of the answer is found above in the fact that the two voices are in fact from only one Person, but we have surer indications by listening to the titles and descriptions that the four living creatures sing day and night before the “one on the throne”:

“Holy, holy, holy (Is 6: 3)

- 1. the Lord God Almighty (Pantocrator),
- 2. who was and is and is to come!

And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to

- 3. who lives forever and ever, . . .

they cast their crowns before the throne, singing:

- 4. Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power
- 5. for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

This doxology contains some of Christ’s titles that we have already seen in the first, anthropomorphic vision. (Rev 1: 8): “I am the Alpha and the Omega, says. . .

the Lord God. . . Almighty;

“who is and was and is to come,” “who was and is and is to come”;

“I am alive forevermore,” “who lives forever and ever”;

“our Lord and God,” “says the Lord God” are similar to Jn 20: 28, where Thomas says:

“My Lord and my God.”

How then can we not conclude that he who is seated on the throne is a new title for Christ and that the second vision is another theophany of the Logos in his glory?

Conclusion: The second vision, the ananthropomorphic one, is an extension of the first, the anthropomorphic, or if you will, a second manifestation of the same person. One could even say that the imagery of the second presents an “energetic” theophany, avoiding to make the one seated on the throne visible in human form. Nevertheless, the same person speaks in both and some titles are applied both to the Son of man and to him seated on the throne. So we have two manifestations of Christ.

## **7. The Other Chapters of Revelations 5–22**

### **7.1 The Lamb**

In Rev 5: 6, we have a new actor, “a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes.” It is obvious that the Lamb is a symbolic, typological image of Christ. So, if we are right to consider the second vision—that of the “one seated on the throne who now holds in the right hand a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals”—as a manifestation of Christ, we seem to have a problem in our

interpretation because, after Rev 5: 6, we see that the Lamb and the “one who sits on the throne” are associated as two distinct persons, in action and in doxology: “He [the Lamb] came to take the book in the right hand of Him who sits on the throne. . . . And to him who sits on the throne, as well as to the Lamb, praise, honor, glory, and power forever and ever.

Does not it go without saying that we have here two different “individuals”? And since the Lamb represents Christ, is not the “one who sits on the throne” a theophany of the Father? If we start our analysis of the text only from Rev 5: 6 where the two figures are distinct, it might be “logical” to conclude that they are two Divine Persons. On the other hand, having already designated the one who appears in the first vision as Christ according to the visible features of his human nature, and having established that John hears the voice of the same Person in both visions, and having shown that He who sits on the throne can only be Christ represented “gloriously” according to his divine energies, we cannot accept that the first vision is of Christ, the second vision is of the Father and the third, of the Son, as the Lamb slain. Let us not forget that this last interpretation is valid only if we apply the logic of our world according to which the same person cannot be present in two forms and even interact. This is possible only in dreams, in supernatural appearances, in futuristic stories, in poetry or in science fiction, which do not obey the logic of our world. We have in fact a situation parallel to that of Daniel’s vision: two figures—the Ancient of Days and the Son of man—representing one person and even interacting.

So then in Revelations, we have precisely a dream, an eschatological, “futuristic” story. Therefore, it is quite possible that, according to the logic proper to this kind of story, two figures represent a single Person, especially if other elements of the story tend to confirm that the one represented in both cases is the same person. For whoever sits on the throne, described according to his luminous glory, as well as the Lamb, a symbol of the Old Testament, cannot be understood according to the logic where  $2 + 2 = 4$ , where animals do not speak, and where 2 H and 1 O always combine to form water. If, following a logic that is not that of this kind of literature, we accept that the second vision is an apparition of Christ symbolized by a Lamb and another of the Father, we must reinterpret the first vision and attribute messianic and Christological titles to the Father. This is hardly possible. On the other hand, if we interpret the visions, by applying a logic proper to this kind of literature, we have a story that progresses “naturally,” where the same Messianic and Christological titles apply to the Messiah and to Christ even if he is represented in several ways. Even if the apocalyptic stories do not follow the logic of our world, they still follow a logic, their own.

## **7.2 A White Horse and Its Rider**

We have another example of the same phenomenon: a character in a story that merely represents, according to yet another symbolic image, the same main actor of the story. Verses 19: 11—21 show a rider on a white horse. Who is he? It is difficult to say without analyzing the whole context. There are several men on horseback, but in this case the identity of the rider on the white horse is quite clear. How do we know this? Again by the descriptions and the titles which are given to him: He is called “Faithful and True, he judges and makes war.” This is not conclusive, but the fact that he judges and that elsewhere Christ is called the “faithful witness” already gives us an indication. Then, we have, “He is clad in

a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God . . . On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords.” Who is he other than Christ symbolically represented as a horseman who goes out to fight and judge the Beast, the kings and their armies?

If we interpret the slain Lamb, which evidently symbolizes the sacrificed Christ, as well as the first-vision Son of man as a “person” distinct from Him who sits on the throne of the second vision, thereby identifying the latter as God the Father, the interpretation of the rest of the book is greatly complicated because the titles and descriptions are not clearly divided into two watertight categories: one to describe the Son of Man-Judge-Lamb, Horseman and the other to describe God the Father. If, on the other hand, we interpret the four titles of the theophanies of Revelations as manifestations of the Logos (either as eschatological judge or as the one who sits on the throne or as the slaughtered lamb or a horseman), we maintain intact the unity of the book. It is as if we “refract” a Person, the Christ-Logos, into four rays: 1) as an eschatological Judge, in the first anthropomorphic vision; 2) as the One who sits on the throne, in the second, non-bodily vision; and 3) as the slain Lamb who takes and opens the book, the sacrificed Christ, and 4) the horseman who is the “faithful witness” and the “Son of God.” We can even say that we have here the three acceptable ways of representing God: 1) in an iconic way, that is to say, an icon portrait of a divine Person who can only be the Logos incarnate, seen and represented according to the visible aspects of his humanity, the horseman falling into this category; 2) in an energetic way, that is to say in the divine energies, but without human form, in light, in lightning, in the brilliance of precious stones, fire, etc.; 3) in a symbolic way, that is, using a non-human form to be an indirect image of the Trinity or one of the three Divine Persons, perhaps a mountain, a crown, a lamb, or a fish.<sup>3</sup>

Conclusion: Revelations is an eschatological story, a dream, which tells how the eschatological Judge will return to judge the earth, establish his eternal Kingdom and welcome his faithful servants. This same Judge, none other than Christ, manifests himself in four ways, according to three iconographic principles:

- Son of man, and horseman, visible in human form;
- He who sits on the throne, visible in his divine energies, according to an expression that will be consecrated later;
- the slaughtered Lamb, symbol, type, of the Old Testament;

So, from the beginning to the end, Revelations is nothing other than what is said in the first sentence of the book: “Revelation of Jesus Christ.”

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<sup>3</sup>In Christian antiquity, and even sometimes today, the symbolism representing God and Christ was widespread. Even anthropomorphic symbols, human allegories: the good shepherd, a fisherman, etc. Despite the place that symbolism held in the early Church, the latter decided, at the Quinisext Council 689–690, to replace, for example, the symbol of the Lamb of God with the icon portrait of Christ, Christ being the fulfillment of the paschal lamb. This substitution was possible only for the Logos incarnate. Neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit can have a portrait icon, that is, a direct image of his Person. So we can represent them only indirectly, either energetically or symbolically.

## 8. Addendum

### The Glory of God

As the Bible contains very few descriptions of God in majesty, that of John, a detailed vision of “the One sitting on a throne in heaven,” made a lasting impression on the illustrators of Revelations and on the artists who have represented God. The specific elements of John’s description—this central figure seated on a throne, surrounded by the living creatures and the Elders—are faithfully reproduced, but where he refers to God the Father, the artists of the Middle Ages represented Christ.<sup>4</sup>

How does the author, Gilles Quispel, see God the Father in Him who sits on the throne and not Christ? This is a question that deserves an answer, but even more surprisingly, the author does not understand how medieval artists could have misunderstood Revelations and represented the eschatological Christ instead of God the Father. Then another good question: Who misunderstood Revelations? Was it the medieval artists, who followed the long patristic and Christological tradition, or the exegetes, the art historians, and the so-called modern artists—since the late Latin Middle Ages—who see there manifestations of God the Father?

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<sup>4</sup>Gilles Quispel, *Le Livre secret de l'Apocalypse*, Paris, Éditions Albin Michel, 1981, p. 148; English translation by the author.

## IV. Ancient Authors

It is natural that all parties to a controversy seek to substantiate their views by appealing to recognized authorities, to writers who apparently agree with them. It is no different on the question of the identity of the Ancient of Days. Everyone wants to know what an author of the past thought. So we have the duty to consult, as much as possible, ancient Christian writers to see which side they lean on. Especially for Orthodox Christians, the expression “the Fathers say . . .” can sometimes decide the question, if we can establish a consensus. So, what do the authors of the past, the Fathers, say? What do the ancient writers say about the identity of the Ancient of Days? How did they interpret Daniel 7? For the various commentators, who is the Ancient of Days? In the following table, we have divided the authors who spoke on the issue into three categories:

- those who identify the Ancient of Days as God the Father;
- those who identify the Ancient of Days as Christ, the Logos, the preincarnate God the Son;
- those who are not clear on the matter.

We believe that the analysis of the writings of the ancient authors will show that there is no consensus on the question: some say this; some say that, and even some say both in different texts. So, although almost every point of view is supported by the ancient writers, the question of the identity of the Ancient of Days remains open, and we cannot definitively settle it by calling on “the Fathers.”

But what is even more significant, no author of Antiquity, designating the Ancient of Days as God the Father, uses this identity to develop an iconology, to justify images of God the Father, these images having not existed at all during the first millennium and not before the 15<sup>th</sup>—16<sup>th</sup> centuries in the Orthodox world.

The authors of antiquity speak on a question which is an adjunct to that of the identity of the Ancient of Days. It is the question of the identity of the one who manifests himself in the theophanies of the Old Testament. And here we have a consensus, with one caveat: the Logos-Word-Son is seen and heard in the theophanies of the Old Testament. He who stands outside this consensus is Augustine of Hippo who, to support his Trinitarian theology, innovates and opens up the possibility of seeing the whole Trinity manifested in the Old Testament theophanies (the Hospitality of Abraham) or one of the three Persons divine alone. The patristic consensus, identifying the one manifested in the Old Testament as the Son, does not directly contradict those who say that the Ancient of Days is God the Father, but tends rather to tip the balance in favor of the other point of view. If it is the Father who manifests Himself as the Ancient of Days, those who defend this opinion must explain why, in Daniel’s vision, the Father manifests Himself, and not the Son in two forms. And to reinforce their new opinion and not to create a hapax, they identify other theophanies as manifestations of the Father and thus, they completely undermine the consensus of Holy Tradition.

Here are the authors and their points of view on the identity of the Ancient of Days.

1	2	3
Authors who identify the <u>Ancient of Days</u> as God the Father.	Authors who identify the <u>Ancient of Days</u> as God the Son.	Authors who do not clearly identify the <u>Ancient of Days</u> or who see him as someone or something else.

1.1 HIPPLYTUS OF ROME (170–235)	1.2 AMBROSE OF MILAN (340–397)	1.3 ANONYMOUS AUTHOR (Novatian + around 256)
<p><i>Fragmenta in Daniele</i><sup>5</sup> The <u>Ancient of Days</u> “is, for Daniel, nothing more than the Lord, God and Master of All, the Father of Christ himself.”</p>	<p><i>Letter 63: 5—6</i><sup>6</sup> 5. Let Him therefore stand in your midst, that the heavens, which declare the <b>glory of God</b>, may be opened to you, that you may do His <b>will</b>, and work His works. He who sees Jesus, to him are the heavens opened as they were opened to Stephen, when he said: Behold I see the heavens opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <b>Acts 7:56</b> Jesus was standing as his advocate, He was standing as though anxious, that He might help His athlete Stephen in his conflict, He was standing as though ready to crown His <b>martyr</b>.</p> <p>6. Let Him then be standing for you, that you may not be afraid of Him sitting; for when sitting He judges, as Daniel says: The thrones were placed, and the books were opened, and the Ancient of Days did sit. Daniel 7: 9 But in the eighty-first [second] Psalm it is written: God stood in the congregation of gods, and decides among the gods. So then when He sits He judges, when He stands He decides, and He judges concerning the imperfect, but decides among the gods. Let Him stand for you as a defender, as a good shepherd, lest the fierce wolves assault you.</p>	<p><i>A Treatise against the Heretic Novatian</i><sup>7</sup> [The author quotes Rev 6: 16] And the kings of the earth and all the great men . . . hid themselves in the caves and caverns of the mountains; saying to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the sight of the Father<sup>8</sup> who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb because the Day of Destruction is coming; and who shall be able to stand?”</p>

<sup>5</sup>Gretchen Kraehling McKay, “The Eastern Christian Exegetical Tradition of Daniel’s Vision of the Ancient of Days,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7, 1, 1999, pp. 139–161, p. 141.

<sup>6</sup>*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 10, p. 966; <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/340963.htm>.

<sup>7</sup>“A Treatise Against the Heretic Novatian,” *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* V, p. 663.

<sup>8</sup>The anonymous author from the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century changed the Biblical text: “the one who sits on the throne” has become the Father who sits on the throne. It shows us how this author understood “the one who sits on the throne.”



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2.1</b> <b>APOSTOLIC</b> <b>CONSTITUTIONS</b> <b>(380)</b></p> <p>5, 20, 10- 11<sup>9</sup> And Zechariah says, Behold your king comes to you, just, and having salvation, meek, and riding upon an ass, even a colt, the foal of an ass. Him Daniel describes as the Son of Man coming to the Father<sup>10</sup>, and receiving all judgment and honor from him. . .</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2.2</b> <b>PSEUDO-METHODIUS</b> <b>OF OLYMPUS</b> <b>(Methodius of</b> <b>Olympus + 312,</b> <b>Pseudo-Methodius +?)</b></p> <p><i>Oration concerning</i> <i>Simeon and Anna</i> 8<sup>11</sup> . . . that righteous man [the righteous Simeon] . . . received into his aged arms Him who in infancy was yet the <u>Ancient of Days</u> and blessed God. . .</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2.3</b> <b>IRENÆUS OF LYONS</b> <b>(+/-140–202)</b></p> <p><i>Against Heresies</i> 3, 6, 1<sup>12</sup> Therefore neither would the Lord, nor the Holy Spirit, nor the apostles, have ever named as God, definitely and absolutely, him who was not God, unless he were truly God; nor would they have named anyone in his own person Lord, except God the Father ruling over all, and His Son who has received dominion from His Father over all creation, as this passage has it: “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.” [Ps 110: 1] <u>Here the</u> <u>Scripture represents to us the Father</u> <u>addressing the Son; He who gave Him</u> <u>the inheritance of the heathen, and</u> <u>subjected to Him all His enemies.</u><sup>13</sup></p>
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<sup>9</sup>ANF VII, p. 448.

<sup>10</sup>We have another “quotation/interpretation. Daniel says, “like a Son of man. He approaches the Ancient of Days.” (Dn 7: 13) It is, however, a witness of what the authors of the *Apostolic Constitution* thought.

<sup>11</sup>PG 18, 356, *Oration concerning Simeon and Anna* VIII, ANF, VI, p. 388. Even if this text under the name of Methodius of Olympus is not authentic and must be attributed to an unknown Pseudo-Methodius, the *Oration concerning Simeon and Anna* is a witness to the ancient interpretation of the Ancient of Days as a prefiguration of the incarnate Logos.

<sup>12</sup>*The Ante-Nicene Fathers* vol. I, p. 418.

<sup>13</sup>Perhaps a vague reference to Dn 7: 10.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3.1</b> <b>CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA</b> <b>A</b> <b>(376–412)</b></p> <p><i>Letter 55</i><sup>14</sup> And behold Emmanuel is seen clearly and visibly going up to God and Father in heaven. . . And again [the Son of Man] appeared in the flesh “advancing to the <u>Ancient of Days</u>, that is to say, going up to the throne of the eternal Father ‘and he was given honor and the kingdom.’</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3.2</b> <b>JOHN CHRYSOSTOM</b> <b>(344 or 349–407)</b></p> <p><i>Second Homily on the Birthday of Our Savior Jesus Christ</i><sup>15</sup> But what am I to say, or what am I to speak? For the miracle strikes me senseless. The <u>Ancient of Days</u> has become a child, He who sits on a high and lofty throne is placed in a manger, the intangible and simple and uncompounded and incorporeal One is turned about by human hands, He who tore the bonds of sin asunder is entwined in swaddling clothes. . .</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3.3</b> <b>CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA</b> <b>(376–412)</b></p> <p>1. <i>In Daniele Prophetam</i><sup>16</sup> What does [this passage] mean: “He attained to the <u>Ancient of Days</u>”? (Dn 7: 13) Does it refer to space [to a physical place]? How absurd that would be because the Divinity cannot be in a place, for it fills all things. So what does it mean, “He attained to the <u>Ancient of Days</u>”? It clearly means that the Son attained to the glory of the Father. Where is this seen? And the same one [Daniel] spoke again saying “to him has been given honor and the kingdom,” for he [the Son] heard the Father speaking, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.” (Ps 109: 1)</p> <p>2. <i>Scolia on the Incarnation of the Only Begotten</i> 35<sup>17</sup> Blessed Daniel setting forth to us a dread vision says, “<i>I was seeing in a night vision, and lo with the clouds of Heaven came as it were the Son of Man and came even unto the <u>Ancient of Days</u>, and they brought Him, into His Presence and there was given Him dominion and honor and a kingdom, and all peoples nations and languages shall serve Him: His Power a Power forever which shall not pass, and His Kingdom shall not be destroyed.</i>” Do you hear how he does not mention that he had seen simply a man, lest Emmanuel should be believed to be one of us and like as we, but <i>as it were the Son of Man?</i> For the Word being by Nature God was <i>made in the likeness of men</i> and was <i>found in fashion as a Man</i>, in order that in the Same [Person] might both be conceived of, neither bare man nor yet the Word apart from manhood and flesh. Yet does he say that what] was given to Him were the principdom and honor which He ever had? For he says that <i>all peoples nations and languages shall serve Him.</i></p>
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<sup>14</sup>PG 77,309 A & C. The English translation is by the author.

<sup>15</sup>“This translation was commissioned by Roger Pearse and translated from the text printed in the *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 56, cols. 385–396. The translation has been placed in the public domain. The homily is transmitted under the name of Chrysostom, but scholars have usually considered that it is probably not authentic. According to J. Quasten, *Patrology* 3, pp. 454-5, its authenticity was defended by C. Martin, “Un centon d’extraits de l’homélie in Salvatoris Nostri Jesu Christi Nativitatem de saint Jean Chrysostome,” *Le muséeon: revue d’études orientales* 54, 1941, pp. 30–33 et 48-52 (Greek text)” and “Note sur deux homéliees attribuées à saint Grégoire le Thaumaturge,” *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique* 24, 2, avril 1928, pp. 364– 373. [http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/chrysostom\\_homily\\_2\\_on\\_christmas.htm#\\_ftn1](http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/chrysostom_homily_2_on_christmas.htm#_ftn1).

*Œuvres complètes de saint Jean Chrysostome* VI, Abbé J. Bareille, 1868, p. 63.

<sup>16</sup>PG 70, 1461 A& B. The English translation is by the author.

<sup>17</sup>PG 75, 1404 B. *Library of the Fathers of the Church* 47, Oxford, 1881, pp. 185–236.

[http://www.ccel.org/ccel/pearse/morefathers/files/cyril\\_scolia\\_incarnation\\_01\\_text.htm#C35](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/pearse/morefathers/files/cyril_scolia_incarnation_01_text.htm#C35)



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4.1 EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA (265–339)</b></p> <p>1. <i>On Ecclesiastical Theology</i> 3, 17<sup>18</sup> You see how in these remarks, too, the prophet shows that the kingdom that will be indestructible and undying and without end will not be the kingdom of the Word that is in God, but of the Son of Man, and he clearly teaches that the Son of Man is another besides the <u>Ancient of Days</u>, who received the indestructible kingdom from the <u>Ancient of Days</u>, that is to say, from the same Father.</p> <p>2. <i>Selections from the Prophets</i><sup>19</sup> In his visions, Daniel says, “I beheld. . . [Dn 7: 13] What he says here agrees with the prophecy he makes elsewhere where he prophesizes about Christ’s Kingdom and the stone that had been cut from the mountain not touched by human hands. For who is the one who arrived on the clouds and who came up to the <u>Ancient of Days</u>? Is he anyone other than our Lord Jesus Christ who took on for us the form of a slave, who became the son of man, and who said, ‘I have come from the Father and I’m going to God<sup>20</sup>.’ [Jn 13: 3] And he was the one—his disciples were near him and saw him [Acts 1: 9]—who was taken up and was removed from their sight by a cloud. For as they looked up to heaven, two men in brilliant clothes appeared, and the men taught them things about his Second Coming, and they predicted that he would come again on a cloud. Therefore the Father gave to Christ and to him alone authority and honor and the Kingdom so that all nations would worship him and all the languages confess him, for ‘Jesus Christ is the Lord to the glory of God the Father.’ [Ph 2: 11]</p> <p>3. <i>The History of the Church</i> 1, 2, 23<sup>21</sup></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4.2 ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA (298–373)</b></p> <p><i>Discourse 1 Against the Arians</i> 1, 38<sup>22</sup> For if He was not, or was indeed, but afterwards was promoted, how were all things made by Him, or how in Him, were He not perfect, did the Father delight? And He, on the other hand, if now promoted, how did He before rejoice in the presence of the Father? And, if He received His worship after dying, how is Abraham seen to worship Him in the tent, and</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4.3 RUFINUS OF AQUILAEA (345–411)</b></p> <p><i>Commentary on the Apostles’ Creed</i> 34<sup>23</sup> Now let us show briefly, if you will, that these things were foretold by the Prophets. You will yourself, since you are so minded, gather together more from the ample range of the Scriptures. The Prophet Malachi says, “Behold the Lord Almighty shall come, and who shall abide the day of His coming, or who shall abide the sight of Him? For He comes as the fire of a furnace and as fuller’s soap: and He shall sit, refining and purifying as it were gold and silver.” But that you may know more certainly Who this Lord is of Whom these things are said, hear what the Prophet Daniel also foretells: “I saw,” he says, “in the vision of the night, and, behold, One like the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven, and He came nigh to the <u>Ancient of Days</u>, and was brought near before Him; and there was given to Him dominion, and honor, and a kingdom. And all peoples, tribes, and languages shall serve Him. And His dominion is an eternal dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom shall not be ‘destroyed.’ By these words we are taught not only of His coming and judgment, but of His dominion and kingdom, that His dominion is eternal, and His kingdom indestructible, without</p>
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<sup>18</sup>*The Fathers of the Church: Eusebius of Caesarea: Against Marcellus and on Ecclesiastical Theology*, Kelley McCarthy Spoerl and Markus Vinzent, trans, Washington D. C., The Catholic University of America Press, 2017, pp. 330–331.

<sup>19</sup>Thomas Gaisford, ed., Oxford, UK, 1842, pp. 148–149. The English translation is by the author.

<sup>20</sup>Eusebius changed the New Testament text a bit: “Jesus came from God and was going to God.”

<sup>21</sup>G. A. Williamson, translator, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, Dorset Press, 1984, p. 40. The text is in a Coptic manuscript of the 7<sup>th</sup> century in the Egyptian Museum of Turin.

<sup>22</sup>Translated by John Henry Newman and Archibald Robertson. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 4. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight.

<<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/28161.htm>>.

<sup>23</sup>NPNF 2, Vol. 3, p. 556. *A Commentary on the Apostles’ Creed*, J. N. D. Kelly, tr., *Ancient Christian*

<p>His final kingdom was shown by the Holy Spirit to Daniel the prophet, who thus inspired described the vision of God in human terms: [Dn 7: 9-10 &amp; 13-14] Such words clearly, would never be applied to anyone but our Savior, the Word who was in the beginning with God and was God, called Son of Man because ultimately He became man. However, I have collected in special pamphlets the <i>Selections from the Prophets</i> that concern our Savior Jesus Christ, and in other works have provided a fuller explanation of the statements about Him; so in the present work I shall add nothing to what has been said.</p>	<p>Moses in the bush? And, as Daniel saw, myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands were ministering unto Him?</p>	<p>end; as it is said in the Creed, 'and of His kingdom there shall be no end.' So that one who says that Christ's kingdom shall one day have an end is very far from the faith."</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5.1</b> <b>John Chrysostom</b> <b>(344–407)</b> <i>Commentary on the Prophet Daniel</i> 7<sup>24</sup></p> <p>So when you see an old man [in the prophecy], do not think of an old man like other old men. Do not look for clarity among the prophets where things are obscure and enigmatic. You do not look for a light that lasts a long time from lightning which gives light only for an instant. “My mind was troubled, and I was terribly afraid, and the visions of my head caused me great anguish.” This is quite reasonable after hearing about what he saw. He is the first and only prophet to see the Father and the Son in a vision.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5.2</b> <b>John Chrysostom</b> <b>(344–407)</b> <i>On the Incomprehensibility of God</i> 11, 24–26<sup>25</sup></p> <p>This is why the Son is said to sit at the right hand of the Father—that you may learn that they are the same in honor and exactly alike in power. For a subordinate does not sit with his superior but stands alongside him. To sit on the throne in the same honor and in exactly the same way is a mark of the power of a master. To stand alongside is the mark of the power of a subordinate who does what he is ordered to do. That you may know that this is true, listen to what Daniel said: “I watched until the thrones were set and the <u>Ancient of Days</u> sat down. Thousands upon thousands were ministering to him and myriads upon myriads stood alongside and attended him.” And again, Isaiah said: “I saw the Lord sitting on a “high and exalted throne and the Seraphim stood round about him and attended him.” And Micah said, “I saw the Lord God of Israel seated on his throne with the whole host of heaven standing by and attending on his right hand and on his left.” “Do you see that in all these texts the powers</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5.3</b> <b>John Chrysostom</b> <b>(344–407)</b> <i>Homily on Saint John</i> 15: 1<sup>26</sup></p> <p>Moses, as being a servant, was minister of lower things, but Christ being Lord and King, and the King’s Son, brought to us things far greater, being ever with the Father, and beholding Him continually; wherefore He says, No man has seen God at any time. What then shall we answer to the mightiest of voices, Isaiah, when he says, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up Isaiah 6:1; and to John himself testifying of Him, that he said these things when he had seen His glory? John 12: 41 What also to Ezekiel? For he too beheld Him sitting above the cherubim. Ezekiel 1 and 10 What to Daniel? For he too says, The <u>Ancient of Days</u> did sit Daniel 7:9 What to Moses himself, saying, Show me Your Glory, that I may see You so as to know You. Exodus 33:13, partly from Septuagint And Jacob took his name from this very thing, being called Israel; for Israel is one that sees God. And others have seen him. How then says John, No man has seen God at any time? It is to declare that all these were instances of (His) condescension, not the vision of the Essence itself unveiled. . .</p> <p>And this He has declared by a certain prophet, saying, I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes by the hands of the prophets Hosea 12:10, that is, I have condescended, I have not appeared</p>
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<sup>24</sup>PG 56, 231–233. The English translation is by the author.

<sup>25</sup>*On the Incomprehensible Nature of God* 11, 24–26, Paul W. Harkins, trans., *The Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 72, Washington D. C., The Catholic University of America Press, 1984, pp. 278–279.

<sup>26</sup>Translated by Charles Marriott. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 14. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1889.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2401.htm>>.

	<p>above are standing alongside and attending while the Lord is seated? Therefore, when you see the Son, too, is seated at the Father's right hand, do not think that his is the dignity of one who ministers and is subordinate. You must realize that his dignity is that of a master possessing authority.</p>	<p>as I really was. For since His Son was about to appear in very flesh, He prepared them from old time to behold the substance of God, as far as it was possible for them to see it, but what God really is, not only have not the prophets seen, but not even angels nor archangels.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6.1</b> <b>AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO</b> <b>(354–430)</b> <i>On the Trinity</i> 2, 18, 33 “The Vision of Daniel”<sup>27</sup></p> <p>I do not <u>know</u> in what manner these men understand that the <u>Ancient of Days</u> appeared to Daniel, from whom the Son of man, which He deigned to be for our sakes, is understood to have received the kingdom; namely, from Him who says to Him in the Psalms, “You are my Son; this day have I begotten you; ask of me, and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance”; [344] and who has “put all things under His feet.” [345] If, however, both the Father giving the kingdom, and the Son receiving it, appeared to Daniel in bodily form, how can those men say that the Father never appeared to the prophets, and, therefore, that He only ought to be understood to be invisible whom no man has seen, nor can see? For Daniel has told us thus: “I beheld,” he says, “till the thrones were set, [346] and the <u>Ancient of Days</u> did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6.2</b> <b>PSEUDO-CYRIL OF JERUSALEM</b> <b>(6th Century)</b> <i>Homily on the Presentation of the Lord</i><sup>28</sup></p> <p>Therefore, all nations, clap your hands; all the ends of the earth, come and see the works of God; every breathing thing, praise the Lord; all the earth, fall down [before Him]; every tongue, sing, praise and glorify the Child God. He is 40 days old and exists from all ages, a small Child and <u>Ancient of Days</u>, a breast-feeding Child and creator of the ages.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6.3</b> <b>PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE</b> <b>(Beginning of the 6th Century)</b> <i>The Divine Names</i> 1. 2, 1<sup>29</sup></p> <p>It is the entire divine subsistence . . . which is praised by the scriptures. . . I have discussed all this elsewhere, and I have shown how in scripture all the names appropriate to God are praised regarding the whole, entire, full, and complete divinity rather than any part of it, and that they all refer indivisibly, absolutely, unreservedly, and totally to God in his entirety.</p> <p>2. 10, 1–3<sup>30</sup></p> <p>It is time now for this treatise of mine to celebrate our many-named God for being “Omnipotent” and “<u>Ancient of Days</u>.” They call him <u>Ancient of Days</u> because he is the eternity and time of everything, and because he precedes days and eternity and time. And an appropriate sense is required</p>
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<sup>27</sup>Translated by Arthur West Haddan. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 3. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/130102.htm>>.

<sup>28</sup>Migne 33, 1192 A. The authenticity of the document is contested, but even if it from Pseudo Cyril of Jerusalem, it is a witness of the ancient interpretation of the Ancient of Days as a prefiguration of the incarnate Logos. Alban Butler, *The Fathers, Martyrs, and Principal Saints*, 1815, p. 205. “A sermon, On the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, and the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, bears the name of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in almost all the MSS.; but the custom of carrying blessed candles in procession that day mentioned in this discourse, was only introduced at Jerusalem at the suggestion of a devout lady named Icelia, about the middle of the fifth century, about sixty years after the death of St. Cyril. Other passages in this discourse seem clearly leveled against the heresy of Nestorius. The style is also more pompous and adorned than that of St. Cyril; this text abounds with parentheses unlike his. It is a beautiful, eloquent, and solid piece, and was probably composed by some priest of the church of Jerusalem, whose name was Cyril, about the sixth century, when either Sallust or Elias was patriarch.” (<http://www.bartelby.net/210/3/183.html>).

<sup>29</sup>*Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works, The Divine Names*, Colm Luibheid, trans., New York, Paulist Press, 1987, p. 58.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 121–123.



<p>head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousands of thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened," etc. And a little after, "I saw," he says, "in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the <u>Ancient of Days</u>, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." [347] Behold the Father giving, and the Son receiving, an eternal kingdom; and both are in the sight of him who prophesies, in a visible form. It is not, therefore, unsuitably believed that God the Father also was wont to appear in that manner to mortals.</p>	<p>too for those other names of his, "Time," "Day," "Season," "Eternity," all of which refer to someone totally free of change or movement. . . So in those sacred revelations of himself during mystical visions, he is depicted as ancient and new, meaning that he is the primal and "from the very beginning," and that he does not grow old. The two names "Ancient" and "New" reveal that he goes forth from the beginning of the world through all things until the very end. Each name, as my divine sacred-initiator says, conveys the notion of the primacy of God's being, Ancient signifying that he is first from the point of view of time, Young signifying that he is primary in the context of number, since the first one and those near it have primacy over the more advanced numbers. . . One can take eternity and time to be predicates of God since, being the <u>Ancient of Days</u>, he is the cause of all time and eternity. Yet he is before time and beyond time and is the source of the variety of time and seasons. . . Amen.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7.1</b> <b>CYRIL OF JERUSALEM</b> <b>(376–412)</b> <i>Catechetical Lectures</i> 15, 21<sup>31</sup></p> <p>The Son of Man shall come to the Father, according to the Scripture which was just now read, <i>on the clouds of heaven, drawn by a stream of fire, which is to make trial of men. . .</i> And the Father <i>shall sit, having His garment white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool.</i> But this is spoken after the manner of men . . . But the Lord who shall come from heaven on the clouds, is He who ascended on the clouds; for He Himself has said, <i>And they shall see the</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7.2</b> <b>PSEUDO-ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA</b></p> <p><i>A Homily on the Nativity of Christ</i><sup>32</sup></p> <p>The <u>Ancient of Days</u> has become a child.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7.3</b> <b>JEROME OF JERUSALEM</b> <b>(347–420)</b> <i>Commentaries on Daniel</i> 7<sup>33</sup></p> <p>Verse 9. “I beheld until thrones were set up, and the <u>Ancient of Days</u> took His seat. His garment was as white as snow. . .” We read something similar in John’s Revelations: (Rev 4:2 ff.) “After these things I was immediately in the Spirit, and lo, a throne was set up in heaven, and one was seated upon the throne; and He who sat upon it had the likeness of jasper and sardine stone, and there was a rainbow round about the throne like the appearance of emerald. . .” And so the many thrones which Daniel saw seem to me to be what John called the twenty-four thrones. And the <u>Ancient of Days</u> is the One who, according to John sits alone upon His throne. Likewise the Son of man, who came unto the <u>Ancient of Days</u>, is the same as He who, according to John, is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Rv 5), the Root of David, and the titles of that sort. I imagine that these thrones are the ones of which the Apostle Paul says, “Whether thrones or dominions. . .” (Col 1: 16). And in the Gospel we read, “You yourselves shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mt 10: 28). And God is called the One who sits and who is the <u>Ancient of Days</u>, in order that His character as eternal Judge might be indicated. His garment is shining white like the snow, and the hair of His head is like pure wool. The Savior also, when He was transfigured on the mount and assumed the glory of His divine majesty, appeared in shining white garments (Mt 17). And as for the fact that His hair is compared to perfectly pure wool, the even-handedness and uprightness of His judgment is shown forth, a judgment which shows no partiality in its exercise. Moreover He is described as an elderly man, in order that the ripeness of His judgment may be established. His throne consists of</p>
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<sup>31</sup>Translated by Edwin Hamilton Gifford. *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 7. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310115.htm>>.

<sup>32</sup>According to Charles Kannengiesser, in a telephone conversation at the beginning of 2011, this homily is not authentic, but it testifies, nonetheless, to the ancient interpretation of the Ancient of Days as a prefiguration of the Logos incarnate.

<sup>33</sup>St. Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, Gleason L. Archer, trans., Eugene, Oregon, WIPF and Stock Publishers, 2009; [http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/jerome\\_daniel\\_02\\_text.htm](http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/jerome_daniel_02_text.htm)

<p><i>Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.</i></p>		<p>fiery flames, in order that sinners may tremble before the severity of the (669) torments [of hell], and also that the just may be saved, but so as by fire. The wheels of the throne are set aflame, or else it is the wheels of His chariot which are aflame. In Ezekiel also God is ushered on the scene seated in a four-horse chariot (Ez: 1), and everything pertaining to God is of a fiery consistency. In another place also a statement is made on this subject: "God is a consuming fire" (Dt 4: 24), that we might know that wood, hay and stubble are going to burn up in the day of judgment. And in the Psalms we read: "Fire goes before Him, and He shall set aflame all His enemies round about Him." (Ps 96: 3) A rushing, fiery stream proceeded from before Him in order that it might carry sinners to hell (Gehenna).</p> <p>Verses 13–14. "And behold, there came One with the clouds of heaven like unto the Son of man." He who was described in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar as a rock cut without hands, which also grew to be a large mountain, and which smashed the earthenware, the iron, the bronze, the silver, and the gold is now introduced as the very person of the Son of man, so as to indicate in the case of the Son of God how He took upon Himself human flesh; according to the statement which we read in the Acts of the Apostles: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up towards heaven? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him going into heaven" (Ac 1: 11).</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>8.1</b> <b>EPIPHANIUS OF SALAMIS</b> <b>(315–403)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>A Concise, Accurate Account of the Faith of the Catholic and Apostolic Church</i> 14, 3<sup>34</sup></p> <p>This Father, Son and Holy Spirit has always vouchsafed to appear in visions to his saints, as each was able to receive the vision in accordance with the gift which had been given him by the Godhead. This gift was granted to each of those who were deemed worthy, sometimes to see the Father as each was able, sometimes to hear his voice as well as he could. When he said by the mouth of Isaiah, “My beloved servant shall understand.” (Is 52: 13) this is the voice of the Father. And when Daniel saw “the Ancient of Days” (Dn 7: 9), this is a vision of the Father. And again, when he says in the prophet, “I have multiplied visions and been portrayed by hands of the prophets,” (Ho 12: 11), this is the voice of the Son. And when, in Ezekiel, “The Spirit of God took me” and “brought me out unto the plain,” (Ez 3: 14; 22), this refers to the Holy Spirit.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>8.2</b> <b>JOHN OF DAMASCUS</b> <b>(675–749)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Homily for the Annunciation</i><sup>35</sup></p> <p>Rejoice, O vase that carried God. Rejoice, O vase that carried God, you heard the highest of all statements. Rejoice—and this is why we say Rejoice—because you gave birth to a child at whom Jacob hinted obscurely, saying Lion cub, Juda, from a shoot, my Son, you have risen. [Gn 49: 9] Rejoice because you have given birth to a child concerning whom the father-of-God, David, said that he will live and be given the gold of Arabia. [Ps 71: 15] Rejoice because you have given birth to a child <u>around whom stand 1,000 s of 10,000 s of angels, according to Daniel.</u> [Dn 7: 10]</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>8.3</b> <b>JOHN OF DAMASCUS</b> <b>(675–749)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>On the Divine Images</i> 3, 26<sup>36</sup></p> <p>In the beginning, He who is God begot His only Son, His Word, the living image of Himself, the natural and precisely similar likeness of His eternity. And He made man after His own image and likeness. And Adam saw God, and heard the sound of His feet as He walked in Paradise in the cool of the evening, and hid himself. Jacob saw and struggled with God, for it is evident that God appeared to him as a man. Moses saw, as it were, the back of a man; Isaiah saw Him as a man sitting upon a throne. Daniel saw the likeness of a man, and one like a son of man coming before the <u>Ancient of Days</u>. No one saw the divine nature, but the image and figure of what was yet to come. For the invisible Son and Word of God was to become truly man.</p>
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<sup>34</sup>*The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, Books II and III (Sects 47–80, De Fide), Frank Williams, trans., New York, E. J. Brill, 1994, p. 355.

<sup>35</sup>PG 96, C-D, col. 649; the English translation by the author.

<sup>36</sup>*On the Divine Images*, David Anderson, tr., Crestwood, NY, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980, p. 80.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>9.1</b> <b>GERMANOS OF CONSTANTINOPLE</b> <b>(between 630 &amp; 650–733)</b> <i>Ecclesiastical History and Mystical Contemplation</i> 36<sup>37</sup></p> <p>Thus the God and Father, who is without beginning and <u>ancient of days</u> was pleased for His eternal Son to be incarnate in the last times from the undefiled virgin Theotokos from the loins of Adam, according to a vowed promise which He made him. And as a man He suffered in the flesh, but in His divinity He remained impassible.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>9.2</b> <b>EPHREM THE SYRIAN</b> <b>(306–373)</b> <i>Hymns for the Nativity of Christ in the Flesh</i><sup>38</sup></p> <p>1. Hymn 10, 16, col. 562 &amp; 564 O Son of God, you came to draw to you the rational sheep; child of a virgin, you became a lamb and the perishing sheep ran to meet you because he heard your bleating voice. O Lamb who brought forth holiness; O suckling child, you brought forth the <u>Ancient of Days</u>; O shepherd and lamb; O priest and sacrifice; O suckling lamb, you are so meek.</p> <p>2. Hymn 18, 47, col. 620 The <u>Ancient of Days</u> who inhabited his highest celestial realms [also inhabited] the womb as a little child. Fire inhabited a fleshly womb; he who is from all eternity assumed a beginning through conception.</p> <p>3. Hymn 19, 28 The old man (Symeon) bows before the young child, and great age bears witness to a young child who himself is truly the <u>Ancient of Days</u>. David bears witness to him: “You Child, you were from the beginning.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>9.3</b> <b>THEODORE THE STUDITE</b> <b>(759–826)</b> <i>On the Holy Angels</i> 839</p> <p>And again the angels are represented in images as horses, as Zacharia said because they run rapidly on divine missions. Still again, one time, as wheels of fire because they run all over the heavenly sphere and live there at the same time. “The voice of your thunder has sounded in the wheel.” (Ps 76: 19) Consequently, Elijah the Thesbite was taken up from the earth on a chariot of fire which had four horses and was clearly a symbol of our composite nature of four elements, in which nature he rose up on high, carrying and directing it as God the Word wanted. But the horses are an image of the royal chariot of the holy angels. For it is said of God’s chariot, “thousands of thousands of angels swirled around Him and sang.” Daniel saw, as in a vision, he says, a man seated on a throne, God the <u>Ancient of Days</u> in human form. He said, “Around him were standing ten thousands of ten thousands and thousands and</p>
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<sup>37</sup>*On the Divine Liturgy*, Paul Meyendorff, trans., Crestwood, NY, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984, p. 85. Even though the title of the book refers only to the Divine Liturgy, it also contains *Ecclesiastical History and Mystical Contemplation*. I have found the following quotation GERMANOS OF CONSTANTINOPLE *Historia ecclesiastica*: “The history of salvation is divided into three successive stages of Christ’s manifestation: the Ancient of Days, Emmanuel and Christ the adult on the cross.” Although the quote definitely goes in column 2, I have not been able to find the exact source, so I cannot include it among the other authors in column 2.

<sup>38</sup>*Sancti Ephraem Syri humni et sermones quos ed., lat. Donavit, variis*, Vol. 2. I have searched for an English or French translation of these hymns which I found in Syriac and a Latin translation. The English translations were made from the Latin. There may be some question of authenticity about these four hymns, but they were nonetheless included in some manuscripts containing the hymns of St. Ephrem. Even if their authenticity can be questioned, the ideas they express were thought to be sufficiently in agreement with St. Ephrem that they were associated with his name. They also express a very ancient opinion as to who the Ancient of Days is.

<sup>39</sup>PG 99, 740 D-741 A. The English translation is by the author.

	<p>(Ps 109: 3) 4. Hymn 19, 29 The wise old man (Simeon), who in the temple held the Child in his arms, looked attentively at him and knew him to be the <u>Ancient of Days</u>. He (Simeon) then prayed that by his (the Child's) mercy, he would be sent from this life.</p>	<p>thousands served him.” But these things, and so many others in the Old Testament are in effect representations of visions and apparitions because no one who lives in the flesh has ever seen the essence of God, neither his form, nor his figure, nor his outline, nor his beauty; nor can anyone see Him, as the sacred Logos taught us. No one is able to see even the essence of angels.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>10.1</b> <b>GREGORY PALAMAS</b> <b>(1296–1357)</b></p> <p>Homily 14: <i>On the Annunciation</i><sup>40</sup> Now Christ also has David for a father and therefore he is also a man so that this child is both God and man, Son of Man and Son of God. As man he received from his God and Father the eternal kingdom, as Daniel saw and proclaimed: “And I watched, he said, until the thrones were set in place and the <u>Ancient of Days</u> sat down. And behold, one like a son of man arrived on the clouds of heaven, came up to the <u>Ancient of Days</u> and received honor and power, and his kingdom is an eternal kingdom which will not be abandoned to any other king.” [Dn 7: 9 &amp; 13–14]</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>10.2</b> <b>MICHAEL</b> <b>AKOMINATOS</b> <b>(+1,220)</b></p> <p><i>Commentary on Revelations</i><sup>41</sup> It is said that white hair symbolizes the eternity of Him who is from the beginning and the <u>Ancient of Days</u> even though he has become recent [<i>prospatos</i>] for us, accepting to be a child because he assumed the flesh.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>10.3</b> <b>ANDREW</b> <b>OF</b> <b>CAESAREA</b> <b>(563–614)</b></p> <p><i>Commentary on Revelations</i> I, 14<sup>42</sup> Even though Christ has recently appeared as young for us, he is also old that is to say eternal. The symbol of his eternity is his white hair.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>11.1</b> <b>LACTANTIUS</b> <b>(240–320)</b></p> <p><i>The Epitome of the Divine Institutes</i><sup>43</sup> ...and then at length, on the fortieth day, He returned to His Father, being carried up into a cloud. The prophet Daniel had long before shown this, saying: “I saw in the night vision, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the <u>Ancient of</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>11.2</b> <b>NIKOLAOS MESARITES</b> <b>(1163-after 1216)</b></p> <p><i>Description de l'Église des Saints Apôtres à Constantinople</i><sup>44</sup> And see now, over against the arch, that portentous scene, the Virgin herself who is now also a woman who has just been in childbirth, even though this woman who has given birth suffered no labor pains. She lies on a straw mattress in the cave as though on a gilded royal couch worthy of Solomon, showing the face of a woman</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>11.3</b> <b>ARETHAS OF</b> <b>CAESAREA</b> <b>(860–930)</b></p> <p><i>Commentary on Revelations</i><sup>45</sup> <i>His head and hair are white,</i> for the mystery of Christ is precious. He is young by manifestation,</p>
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<sup>40</sup>PG 151, 173 D-176A. The English translation is by the author.

<sup>41</sup>*H anekdotos epméneia tou Michaél Akominatou eis tén Apokalypsin tou Iōannou*, K. I. Duobountôtés, ed., *Eperteris Etaireias Byzantynôn Spoudôn*, 5, 1928, pp. 19–30, p. 24. The English translation is by the author.

<sup>42</sup>PG 106, 228 D-229A. The English translation is by the author.

<sup>43</sup>Lactantius, *The Epitome of the Divine Institutes* 47 *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* VII, p. 241; see also *The Divine Institutes* 4, 12 and 21, p. 111 and p. 123.

<sup>44</sup>Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, “The Nativity” XXIII, New Series—Volume 47, part 6, 1957, trad., Glanville Downey, pp. 877–878.

<sup>45</sup>PG 106, 517D. The English translation is by the author.

<p><u>Days</u>; and they who stood beside Him brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him a kingdom, and glory, and dominion, and all people, tribes, and tongues shall serve Him; and His power is an everlasting one, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” Also David in the 109<sup>th</sup> Psalm: “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool.”</p>	<p>who has just been in pain—even though she escaped the pangs of labor—in order that the dispensation of the incarnation might not be looked upon with suspicion as trickery. The infant is wrapped in swaddling clothes, and the uncircumscribable is bound tightly with bonds. He who existed before time was, is a newborn babe; the <u>Ancient of Days</u> is an infant at the breast. He who is present everywhere and fills all things is confined in the smallest kind of cave; the boundless is a cubit long; He who holds all creation in His all-powerful grasp is carried in a weak hand. Very wisdom is unable to speak; He who established the heaven is unsupported by His own feet.</p>	<p>but eternal by good will. This is what Paul says about this: “His mystery has been hidden for centuries, but now he is shown openly to his saints.” (Col 1: 26)</p>
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12.1	12.2	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>12.3</b> <b>THE VENERABLE THEOPHYLACTUS</b> <b>(1050–1108)</b></p> <p>1 <i>The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew</i> (Mt 26: 64)<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, I say unto you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. [Dn 7: 13] For since they thought that he was deluded as he appeared to them in humble form, he said, “You shall see me coming in power and seated with the Father.” <i>Power</i> here means that of the Father, and the Son of Man will not be coming from earth but from heaven.</p> <p>2) <i>Explanation of the Gospel according to St. Mark</i> (Mk 14: 62)<sup>47</sup>: He says, “the Son of man is sitting at the right hand of the power of the Father,” for “Power” here means the Father. And at the Second Coming, he will come in his body so that those who crucified him will be able to see and recognize him.</p>
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<sup>46</sup>*The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew*, House Springs, MO, Chrysostom Press, 1992, p. 236.

<sup>47</sup>*The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark*, House Springs MO, Chrysostom Press, 1992, p. 128.

<b>13.1</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<p><b>13.3</b>  <b>GREGORY II OF ROME</b>  <b>(669–715)</b></p> <p><i>Letter to Emperor Leo III</i><sup>48</sup></p> <p>Why, then, do we make no representation of God the Father? The divine nature cannot be represented. If we had seen Him, as we have the Son, we could also make an image of Him.</p>
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<b>14.1</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<p><b>14.3</b>  <b>THEODORET DE CYRUS</b>  <b>(398–458)</b></p> <p><i>Commentary on Daniel 7: 9-10, 13–14, 21-23</i><sup>49</sup></p> <p><b>Verses 9–10</b> Now we should realize that God is incorporeal, simple and without form, uncircumscribed; yet while being uncircumscribed in nature, he often takes visible forms for people’s benefit. It is possible to see him making himself visible in one way to Abraham, in another to Moses, yet another to Isaiah, and likewise in a different form to Ezekiel. So when you see the difference in the revelations, instead of thinking the divinity has many forms, listen to him speaking through the prophet Hosea, “I multiplied visions, and adopted likenesses in the works of the inspired authors.” (Hos 12: 10)</p> <p><b>Verses 13–14</b> This is what blessed Daniel clearly taught us, prophesying the second coming of the Savior, clearly calling him <i>Son of Man</i> on account of the nature he had assumed, <i>coming on the clouds</i> in keeping with his own promise to bring out his authority and receiving as man <i>honor and rule and kingship</i> from the <u>Ancient of Days</u>.</p> <p><b>Verse 21</b> So he continues to make further inquiries, asking why on earth <i>did that horn make war on the holy ones and prevail over them</i>—that is, humble them—<i>until the Ancient of Days came and gave judgment in favor of the holy ones of the Most High</i>... I begged to learn what was the reference in that horn, which was exercising conceit, uttering arrogant words, and humbling the company of the holy ones until the <u>Ancient of Days</u> exercises righteous judgment, restores the kingdom to the holy ones,</p>
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<sup>48</sup>Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church* Book XVIII, Chapter 1 “History of the Councils about Images up to the Convocation of the Seventh Ecumenical Synod,” Section 332 “Origin of the Controversy about Images, 7: [https://www.ecatholic2000.com/councils/untitled-60.shtml#\\_Toc385946589](https://www.ecatholic2000.com/councils/untitled-60.shtml#_Toc385946589); *The Acts of Nicaea II*, Mansi 12, 963 E-965 A. Some writers question the authenticity of this letter attributed to Pope Gregory II of Rome. Nonetheless, even if it is not from Gregory’s hand, the text and the theology that it expresses have received the assent of the Ecumenical Council. They therefore have the highest authority. It is true that the text does not speak of Daniel’s vision of the Ancient of Days, but the point of view it represents blocks any attempt to identify the vision of the Ancient of Days as one of the Father and even more any justification of portrait images of the Father on the basis of Daniel’s vision.

<sup>49</sup>Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on Daniel*, Robert C. Hill, trans., Atlanta, Georgia, Society of Biblical Literature, 2006, pp. 185–195.

		and destroys the power of the other.
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<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Authors who identify the Ancient of Days with God the Father	Authors who identify the Ancient of Days with the Son/Logos	Authors who do not make a clear identification
11	11	14

### **Commentaries on the Authors in Column 3**

Perhaps it is necessary to comment on the decision to put certain texts in the column of quotes that do not clearly identify the Ancient of Days as the Father or the Son.

#### **1.3 Anonymous Author**

*“A Treatise against the Heretic Novatian”*

The author quotes Daniel and the Ancient of Days, but he jumps immediately to Revelations and quotes a passage with a slight addition: “. . . hide us from the sight of the Father who sits on the throne and from the anger of the Lamb.” The words “of the Father” are not in the text of St. John; the author has added them himself, which certainly indicates that he identifies “the one sitting on the throne” with God the Father. It seems, and I say “seems,” that the author makes a relationship—identity?—between 1) “a throne and an Ancient of Days is seated,” 2) “of the Father who sits on the throne,” and 3) “He who was dressed in white and sat on the throne.” It must be admitted that the weight of the comparison tips the scales in favor of an identity, but, in our opinion, not enough to put the anonymous author in the first category, but he is leaning toward column 1.

#### **2.3 IRENAEUS OF LYONS**

Against Heresies 3, 6, 1

It may be that St. Irenaeus is making a vague reference to Daniel’s vision in the last sentence, but this is not certain, leaving enough imprecision to justify putting the quote in column 3.

#### **3.3. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA,**

**3.3.1** *On the prophet Daniel* (Dn 7: 13)

In this first text of St. Cyril, “Ancient of Days” does not designate God the Father, but rather, the glory of the Father. Nuance. The quotation from Psalm 110: 1 shows the Father and the Son, but, still, the link between the psalm and Daniel is rather tenuous, since the Ancient of Days is not the Father but his glory. There is still an analogy between “son of man / glory of the Father” in Daniel and “Lord / Father-Lord / Son” of the Psalm 110. Here then, Cyrille leans towards column 1.

**3.3.2** *Scolia on the Incarnation of the Only-Begotten*

Here St. Cyril identifies the Son of Man with the Word, but does not mention the Ancient of Days. This text does not help us in discerning St. Cyril’s thinking on the identity of the Ancient of Days.

#### **4.3 RUFINUS OF AQUILAEA**

### *Commentary on the Apostles' Creed*

Rufinus's text speaks of Christ coming back for the Last Judgment, but does not say anything about the identity of the Ancient of Days. The Son of Man is certainly the eschatological judge, but is the latter a person other than the Ancient of Days or the same? The question remains without an answer. So the 3<sup>rd</sup> column. Rufinus leans neither to column 1 nor to column 2.

### **5.3 JOHN CHRYSOSTOM**

#### *Homily on Saint John*

We put this passage in the ambiguous text column because St. John seems to say that the prophets were "inspired" both by the Father ("And what I just said, God the Father declares by the mouth of one of his prophets: It is I, said he, who instructed the prophets by a great number of visions, and they represented me to you under different images.") and by the Son ("When his Son was about to appear to us in the true flesh, he was preparing men to see the substance of God as much as they could see it. How could the Son 'prepare men' if it had not been by the prophets and theophanies? Note also that it is not certain that the words 'God the Father' come from St. John. So the passage has its place in the 3<sup>rd</sup> column, even though St. John leans neither toward column 1 nor toward column 2.

### **6.3 PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS THE AEROPAGITE**

*The Divine Names* The title Ancient of Days is not the name of a divine person, neither of the Father nor of the Son, but an adjectival expression that applies to the divine nature. It is not possible to put it in either the first or the second column. We could have left it out altogether, but that would not have been justified because he speaks directly of the Ancient of Days; or he could be in the third column. We decided for the third. Pseudo-Dionysius leans neither towards column 1 nor towards column 2.

### **7.3 JEROME OF JERUSALEM**

#### *Commentaries on Daniel*

St. Jerome draws a parallel between Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days and the ananthropomorphic, the 'energetic,' vision of St. John in Revelations. The Ancient of Days is the same as the one John sees before him and the Son of Man is the lion of Judah—Christ—whom John sees before him. Jerome designates the Ancient of Days as God who sits and is eternal judge. He compares the white clothes of the Ancient of Days to those of Christ in the Transfiguration. Does he identify both as the same person? It's clear Jerome identifies the Son of Man with Christ, but the Ancient of Days? He does not clearly say that the Ancient of Days is God the Father. Therefore, the passage is in column 3. Jerome leans neither to column 1 nor to column 2.

### **8.3 JOHN OF DAMASCUS**

#### *Apologia of St John of Damascus Against Those who Decry Holy Images*

John seems to say that the great ones of the Old Testament (Adam, Jacob, Moses, Isaiah and Daniel) have seen 'God' for the sake of the incarnation, without really seeing him in his essence, but speaking of Daniel, although St John names the two figures of the theophany, the Son of Man and the Ancient of Days, he does not say who the Ancient of Days is. If all the other visions of 'God' as man were prefigurations of Christ's incarnation,

why suddenly does he not put the figure of the Ancient of Days among the other appearances of the Logos seated on a glorious throne? This imprecision convinces us to put this text of John Damascene in column 3 and say that here he leans neither toward column 1 nor toward column 2.

### **9.3 THEODORE THE STUDITE**

*On the Holy Angels*

Theodore says, 'God the Ancient of Days' without going any further. God the...? Therefore column 3. He leans neither toward column 1 nor toward column 2.

### **10.3 ANDREW OF CAESAREA**

*Commentary on Revelations*

We put Andrew of Caesarea in column 3, even though he gives the traits similar to those of the Ancient of Days to Christ. In fact, he quotes Revelations: his hair is white and his eyes are like a flame of fire. This statement is not enough to definitively say that Andrew identifies the Ancient of Days with Christ, but he leans in that direction, toward column 2.

### **11.3 ARETHAS OF CAESAREA**

*Commentary on Revelations*

It is certain that Arethas attributes the characteristics of the Ancient of Days to Christ, but he does not say that the Ancient of Days is Christ. To argue that Arethas did in fact identify the two as the same person, is it enough simply to note the comparison? His text nevertheless tends to confirm this interpretation; so Arethas leans towards column 2.

### **12.3 THE VENERABLE THEOPHYLACTUS**

1 *The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew*

2 *The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark*

Theophylactus, though speaking about the Second Coming, makes only a fleeting reference to Daniel: at the Second Coming, the Son of Man 'will come on the clouds of heaven,' but in Daniel, the Son of Man did not sit down at the right hand of the Ancient of Days. Though the Son of Man is obviously distinct from the Father in the vision of St. Stephan and at the Second Coming, Theophylactus says nothing about Daniel's vision and the identity of the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man. I have therefore put him in column 3.

### **13.3 GREGORY OF ROME**

*Letter to the Emperor Leo III.*

Gregory says nothing about the identity of the Ancient of Days, but he does exclude the possibility of making a portrait icon of the Father because the Father did not become incarnate, and therefore visible, like the Son. Does Gregory not imply as well that the Father did not become visible in any other way? Granted that I am speculating here on Gregory's words. But if others want to use this statement to justify a visible image of the Father on some other grounds, they will have to engage in an even greater exercise in speculation than what they might accuse me of. Though Gregory says nothing certain either way on the identity of the Ancient of Days, his statement makes him lean away from the position of seeing the Ancient of Days as a visible manifestation of the Father.

### 14.3 THEODRET OF CYRUS

#### *Commentary on Daniel*

Theodoret clearly identifies the Son of Man with the Logos Christ, and he even sees that the Son of Man receives the kingdom from the Ancient of Days, but as man. It is therefore not impossible that the Ancient of Days represents the Logos in his divine, glorious nature, as prefiguration of the Incarnation, and that the two figures represent only one person, according to our interpretation. Theodoret says nothing about the identity of the Ancient of Days, except that he is *God*, but he clearly says that the Ancient of Days “exercises righteous judgment, restores the kingdom to the holy ones, and destroys the power of the other.” Who but the Logos will do that? Nonetheless I cannot honestly claim that Theodoret goes in column 2 or in column 1 without more evidence.

#### **Conclusion**

We believe that the analysis of the writings of the ancient authors shows that there is no consensus on the question of who is the Ancient of Days: some say this; others say that; and some in several columns: even John Chrysostom is in three columns. So, although almost every point of view finds support among ancient writers, the question of the identity of the Ancient of Days remains open. We cannot settle it definitively, by only a call to the *consensus patrum*.

What is even more significant is that no author of antiquity—even those who have identified the Ancient of Days as God the Father—uses this identification to elaborate an iconological principle according to which it is possible to make and justify images of God the Father; the latter never even existed at all during the first millennium and, and in the Orthodox world, almost not before the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries. It cannot be said that Pope Gregory II—assuming that the text attributed to him is authentic—was ignorant of the authors and Fathers who identified the Ancient of Days with the Father, but he would never have imagined that the Christian artists could use Daniel to paint an image of God the Father: ‘Why do we not represent in painting the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?’ Because we do not know what it is, and it is impossible to figure and paint the nature of God. And if we contemplated it and knew it as his Son, He too could be figured and to paint.”<sup>50</sup> And it is here that we see to what extent the Orthodox defenders of the images of God the Father are indebted to the theologians of the medieval, Latin West: they have not only adopted the West’s image of the Father as well as the justification of it based on Daniel’s vision, but they applied to the Ancient of Days, seen as God the Father, the already well-known principle of “what is visible is representable.” The principle is not new; it is part of Orthodox iconology but applied only to the incarnate Logos: as he became visible in His humanity, so he is representable in an image. What is new among medieval Western theologians and among their Orthodox followers is that this principle is applied to the Father. And that is precisely what the Fathers of the Church, who established the iconological dogma, never imagined. The more we examine the theological foundations of the image of God the Father and his theological justification, the more we realize how much they are in conflict with Orthodox iconology. The authors of antiquity speak on a question which is ancillary to that of the identity of the Ancient of Days. It is that of the identity of the one who

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<sup>50</sup>See note 47.

manifests himself in the theophanies of the Old Testament. And here we have a patristic consensus: it is the Logos Son who is shown and heard in the theophanies of the Old Testament.

St. Augustine of Hippo, in order to support his Trinitarian theology, rejected this consensus, innovated and opened the possibility of seeing the whole Trinity manifested in the Old Testament theophanies (Hospitality of Abraham) or only one of the three Divine Persons. The patristic consensus, according to which the Son is manifested in the Old Testament prefiguring the Incarnation, does not directly contradict those who say that the Ancient of Days is God the Father, but it does tend rather to tip the balance in favor of the patristic point of view, which affirms the manifestation of the Son. Yes, say those who identify Ancient of Days with God the Father, the Father manifests himself as the Ancient of Days in the vision of Daniel. Those who defend this opinion must, in our opinion, explain why the Father manifests himself and substitutes himself for the Son as the eschatological judge and why the vision is not of the Son manifested in two different forms. The third time that the Ancient of Days appears in the vision, Dn 7: 22, he makes "judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High." To reinforce their new opinion and not to create a hapax, the supporters of St. Augustine's position identify other Old Testament theophanies as manifestations of the Father, and so they completely undermine the consensus of the Holy Tradition.



## V. LITURGICAL TEXTS

As we did for patristic texts, so we will do for the liturgical hymns of the Church. We have searched for all liturgical texts that mention the Ancient of Days to see how, if at all, the poets of the Church interpreted Daniel's vision. We have divided the texts into three categories, like the patristic texts: those in column 1 identify the Ancient of Days as God the Father; those in column 2 identify the Ancient of Days as God the Son/Logos/Christ; those in column 3 do not clearly identify the Ancient of Days but tend to identify him with Christ.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Texts that identify the Ancient of Days with the Father	Texts that identify the Ancient of Days with Christ	Texts that are somewhat ambiguous but that tend to identify the Ancient of Days with Christ

<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.3</b>
<b>The Octoechus</b> <b>The 5<sup>th</sup> tone</b> <b>Saturday,</b> <b>midnight</b> <b>office, ode 4</b> Daniel was initiated into the triple aspect of the unique Lordship by contemplating the Son and the man near the Father, and the Spirit revealing to him this vision. <sup>51</sup>	<b>St. Athanasius the Athonite</b> <b>July 5</b> <b>Matins, ode 1 of the canon, stichera 1</b> Like a newborn child in an ineffable way, you gave birth to the <u>Ancient of Days</u> who came to show us on earth the new ways of virtue; and Athanasios, your illustrious servant, full of love for your Son, has had this temple built for you, O Virgin. <sup>52</sup>	<b>The Holy Prophet Daniel</b> <b>December 17</b> <b>1. Vespers, aposticha 3</b> Admirable prophet, you beheld the righteous Judge, who is beyond all understanding, seated on a throne and surrounded by holy angels: trembling with fear before such a fearful vision, you revealed it for posterity, describing the Second Coming of the Lord robed in his flesh. <sup>53</sup> <b>2. Matins, ode 6, stichera 2</b> You revealed the saving Coming of the Word; you also predicted the destruction of the Temple as well as the fulfillment of the Law and the gifts of grace which are beyond every mind. <sup>54</sup>

<b>2.1</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.3</b>
	<b>The Meeting of Christ in the Temple</b> <b>February 2</b>	<b>Meat Fare Sunday,</b> <b>The Last Judgment</b> <b>3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Pre-Lent</b>

<sup>51</sup>*Paraclitique ou Grand Octoèque*, Denis Guillaume, trad., Parma, Italie, Diaconie Apostolique, 1995, p. 376. The English translation is by the author.

<sup>52</sup>*Menée de juillet*, <http://www.forum-orthodoxe.com/~forum/viewtopic.php?f=8&t=2518>. The English translation is by the author.

<sup>53</sup>*Menée de décembre*, Denis Guillaume, trad., Bruxelles, Éditions de Chevetogne, 2001, p. 217. The English translation is by the author.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 222. The English translation is by the author.

<p><b>1. Vespers, lity, tone 1</b> The <u>Ancient of Days</u>, who in times past gave Moses the Law on Sinai, appears this day as a babe. As Maker of the Law, He fulfills the Law and according to the Law. . .<sup>55</sup></p> <p><b>2. Vespers, lity, tone 5</b> The <u>Ancient of Days</u>, a young child in the flesh, was brought to the temple by His Mother the Virgin, fulfilling the ordinance of His own Law. . .<sup>56</sup></p> <p><b>3. Matins sessional hymn</b> The <u>Ancient of Days</u> for my sake becomes a child; God the most pure receives purification, that He may confirm the reality of the human flesh which He took from the Virgin. . .<sup>57</sup></p>	<p><b>1. Vespers, stichera 1, tone 6</b> Righteous Judge of all mankind! You will come to judge the living and the dead, enthroned in glory and escorted by angels. Every man will stand in fear before you, trembling at the river of fire flowing past your throne, as each one waits to hear the sentence he deserves. On that awesome day, have mercy on us as well, O Christ. . .<sup>58</sup></p> <p><b>2. Vespers, stichera 2, tone 6</b> The books will be opened and the works of all men laid bare. . .<sup>59</sup></p> <p><b>3. Vespers, Gloire . . ., tone 8</b> When the thrones are set in place and the books are opened, then God will take his place on the judgment seat. What a fearful sight, as the angels stand in awe and the river of fire flows by. . .<sup>60</sup></p> <p><b>4. Matins, ode 9, stichera 4</b> Daniel was afraid of the hour of trial [judgment]. . .<sup>61</sup></p> <p><b>5. Matins, lauds, tone 8</b> Daniel the prophet and greatly beloved man, when he saw the power of God, cried out: the Court sat in judgment and the books were opened. . .<sup>62</sup></p>
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<b>3.1</b>	<p><b>3.2</b> <b>Saint Polycarp of Smyrna</b> <b>February 23</b></p> <p><b>Matins, ode 5, theotokion</b> As rain on the fleece, O most pure Virgin, the <u>Ancient of Days</u> came down into your sanctified womb, and the New Adam, coming forth from the womb, showed himself to be the friend of men.<sup>63</sup></p>	<b>3.3</b>
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<b>4.1</b>	<p><b>4.2</b> <b>The Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt</b> <b>5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent</b></p>	<b>4.</b>
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<sup>55</sup>*The Festal Menaion*, Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware, trans., London, Faber and Faber, 1969, p. 412.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 415.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 418.

<sup>58</sup>*The Lenten Triodion*, Community of the Holy Myrrhbearers, Mother Raphaela, ed., Otego, New York, 1969. <http://www.ocf.org/OrthodoxPage/prayers/triodion/lstjudg>

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup>*Menée de février*, Denis Guillaume, trad., Bruxelles, Éditions de Chevetogne, 2001, p. 210. The English translation is by the author.

	<b>Matins, ode 8, theotokion</b>	
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In a manner surpassing nature, pure Maiden, you escaped the laws of nature, bringing forth on earth a newborn Child, Who is the Giver of the Law and the Ancient of Days. Therefore, spiritual heaven of the Creator of all, with faith and love we call you blessed.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>*The Lenten Triodion*, <http://www.ocf.org/OrthodoxPage/prayers/triodion/lent5sun>.

<b>5.1</b>	<b>5.2</b> <b>The Ochoekos</b> <b>1. Friday, matins, ode 1, tone 5, theotokion</b> O Pure Virgin, you gave birth to the <u>Ancient of Days</u> , as a new born: by the passion that he underwent, O Most Holy One, he renewed the fallen human nature. . . <sup>65</sup> <b>2. Tuesday, matins, ode 8, tone 6, theotokion</b> As a newborn child, you gave birth for us to the <u>Ancient of Days</u> , who showed us on earth the new way, thus renewing our old nature. . . <sup>66</sup>	<b>5.3</b>
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<sup>65</sup>*Paraclitique*, p. 439.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 439.



6.1	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6.2</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Kontakion 15 for the Epiphany</b></p> <p>Let us lift up our eyes to the Lord who is in heaven, crying like Jeremiah: “He who was seen on earth, he is our God who by the exercise of his will, spoke with men” without undergoing any change. He is the one who showed himself to the prophets in various ways: Ezechiel contemplated him in the form of a man on the fiery chariot, and Daniel saw him as Son of Man and <u>Ancient of Days</u>, old and young at the same time, proclaiming him to be one single Lord, who appeared and illumined all.<sup>67</sup></p>	6.3
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<sup>67</sup>Romanos le Mélode, *Hymnes* II, José Grosdidier de Matons, tr., Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 1965, p. 289.

## Conclusion

<b>1</b> Texts that identify the Ancient of Days with the Father 1	<b>2</b> Texts that identify the Ancient of Days with Christ 9	<b>3</b> Texts that are somewhat ambiguous but that tend to identify the Ancient of Days with Christ 7
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If the patristic texts support one interpretation of the Ancient of Days as well as the other, the liturgical texts remove all ambiguity. We have 1 supporting the equation, the Ancient of Days = God the Father, but 16 texts supporting or leaning toward the equation, the Ancient of Days = Christ. By applying the law *Lex orandi, lex credendi*—the law of prayer is the law of belief—we see more clearly the mind of the Church on this question: the eschatological judge, the Ancient of Days is Christ at his Second Coming.

## VI. CHRISTIAN IMAGES

The images mentioned below from 1 through 28 are to be found on a separate slideshow file.

**6.1** First of all, from a chronological point of view, we have images 1<sup>68</sup>, 2<sup>69</sup>, and 2.1<sup>70</sup>, diptychs, carved in ivory. These show what seems to be an old man, surrounded by two other men who present the physiognomy of Sts. Peter and Paul, according to their classical, physical features. The image of the old man shows almost all the classical features of Christ's figuration,<sup>71</sup> except that his face is that of an old man. On the first image we show here, his forehead is even full of wrinkles. When we look at the second part of the diptychs, we cannot doubt that the images are those of Christ, represented as an old man.

In the case of images 2 and 2.1, both sections cover the four gospels. Where do we find an image of an old man that could be interpreted as the representation of Christ? The answer will not be long in coming: it is the Ancient of Days. There is no inscription on the images, but the context and the meaning are very clear: the diptychs show, on one side, the Logos/Christ before the incarnation—the Ancient of Days—and, on the other, the Christ/Logos incarnated—the Child Jesus.

Image 3<sup>72</sup> is of the same order; it's an ivory plaque, and the image itself is that of Christ. Many Christological signs are represented. The image could even be of Christ Pantocrator, but the face is older than images 1 and 2. Image 4<sup>73</sup> is a composite. It combines, it seems, three moments of the manifestation of the Logos: 1) the Ancient of Days, with a beard and white hair; 2) the incarnation, the title EMMANUEL; and 3) the Christ Pantocrator, sitting on the rainbow, with a starry background. Even if we say it's the Christ of the Apocalypse, with a beard and white hair, these traits come from those of the Ancient of Days. In any case, it is an eminently Christological image. We add image 5<sup>74</sup> to illustrate the fact that the model of images 1–3 could be used to show Christ at another age, no doubt by combining many of these ages. So what do we have now?

The first images of Christ as the Ancient of Days, identified as such by the features and not by an inscription, appear in a clearly Christological context. It seems very obvious. Yet we will see—less in the images themselves than in the interpretations that modern scholars have made of them—all the intellectual gymnastics that have been accomplished in order to interpret them as either images of God the Father, or perhaps representations of Eternity or of the divine nature of Christ, etc. Why did the artists give to Christ the features of an old man? We must not forget that most interpreters of early Christian and Byzantine Christian art, until our time, have been formed in the long Western tradition

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<sup>68</sup><https://www.pinterest.com/pin/354799276865758629/>

<sup>69</sup>[http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-3S9UUJs30ul/VlrAew0RN\\_I/AAAAAAAAAPw/AYMKeayqloE/s1600/30.2.jpg](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-3S9UUJs30ul/VlrAew0RN_I/AAAAAAAAAPw/AYMKeayqloE/s1600/30.2.jpg)

<sup>70</sup><http://expositions.bnf.fr/carolingiens/itz/15/05.htm>

<sup>71</sup>Steven Bigham, *Romanesque Art and Icons + Other Iconographic Studies*, "The Incarnation," ebook published on Smashwords, 2015.

<sup>72</sup>[http://art.thewalters.org/images/art/large/l\\_pl7\\_71303\\_fnt\\_bw\\_4192.jpg](http://art.thewalters.org/images/art/large/l_pl7_71303_fnt_bw_4192.jpg)

<sup>73</sup><http://all-photo.ru/icon/index.en.html?img=18240&big=on>

<sup>74</sup>[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ivory\\_from\\_Genoels-Elderen\\_left.JPG](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ivory_from_Genoels-Elderen_left.JPG)



where the Ancient of Days is seen as a manifestation of God the Father. It is not difficult to understand their problem, without, however, accepting their opinions.

These interpreters examine an image that is in an obviously Christological context, with features that designate Christ. And yet, they say it is an image of the Father. In fact, we have here a methodological mistake. The cultural, artistic, and exegetical context of the artists who produced the images existed prior to the cultural context of Jerome of Flore, and of the medieval Latin West. For the older, patristic tradition, the Ancient of Days is simply one of the various Old Testament manifestations of the Logos as a prefiguration of the incarnation. When we understand the context that nourished the artists and Christians of that time, many “problems” disappear. Let us move on to other images.

**6.2** Image 6<sup>75</sup> gives a twist to those who tried to interpret it.<sup>76</sup> It illustrates the text of a sermon on the Nativity in which is mentioned the story of the visit of the three Wise Men. According to the apocryphal narrative which is at the base of the reference and the image, the three men, in an inn after their visit, spoke of Christ as each one had seen him: the youngest saw an old man; the middle-aged man, a middle-aged man; and the oldest, a child. André Grabar<sup>77</sup> and Paul Huber<sup>78</sup> interpret the image as a representation of the Trinity: the Ancient of Days, God the Father; the middle-aged man, Christ at 33; and the Child, the Holy Spirit! Where did they look for such an interpretation? It is not hard to imagine. If art historians, like Grabar and Huber, are already conditioned to think that an image of the Ancient of Days is a manifestation of God the Father, it makes sense, given the image of Christ at 33, to seek a Trinitarian interpretation and to designate Christ Emmanuel as the Holy Spirit. In a context so eminently Christological, the nativity of the Messiah, however, why impose on the image a forced Trinitarian interpretation—above all, the Child as the Holy Spirit—when a Christological interpretation is so simple and convincing: The Wise Men come to worship the new King and Messiah, and they see him according to three modes of his existence: the Ancient of Days, as prefiguration of the incarnation; the middle-aged man, like Jesus at the beginning of his ministry; and the child like Christ Emmanuel. Is it possible that the image of the Ancient of Days is the Christ as eschatological judge returned at the end of time instead of the preincarnate Logos? It might be better to interpret it as Christ’s eschatological judgment with the features of the Ancient of Days, according to the Apocalypse. In this case, the order of the three manifestations would be more logical, passing from the nativity through adulthood to arrive at the end of time as the Eschatological Judge. According to these two interpretations—the Pre-Incarnate Ancient of Days or the Eschatological Judge represented in features of the

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<sup>75</sup>[https://www.google.ca/search?q=taphou+codex+14&biw=1366&bih=622&source=Inms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ei=xOmeVdvLOlaVNqfAgegJ&ved=0CAcQ\\_AUoAg&dpr=1#imgrc=1fCllaS5usBCqM%3A82](https://www.google.ca/search?q=taphou+codex+14&biw=1366&bih=622&source=Inms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ei=xOmeVdvLOlaVNqfAgegJ&ved=0CAcQ_AUoAg&dpr=1#imgrc=1fCllaS5usBCqM%3A82).

[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_MS\\_19352](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_19352) 83.

[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_MS\\_19352](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_19352)

<sup>76</sup>Gretchen Krehling McKay, “Christ’s Polymorphism in Jerusalem, Taphou 14: An Examination of Text and Image,” *Apocrypha* 14, 2003, pp. 177–192.

<sup>77</sup>André Grabar, *Les voies de la création en iconographie chrétienne*, Paris, Champs-Flammarion, 1979, p. 195.

<sup>78</sup>Paul Huber, *Die kunstschatze der Heiligen Berge : Sinai, Athos, Golgota-Ikonen, Fresken, Miniaturen*, Zurich, Pattloch, 1980, p. 229.

Ancient of Days—we are always in the domain of Christology and not in the realm of the Trinity. The only thing that requires a Trinitarian interpretation of this image is the pre-established idea that the Ancient of Days is a manifestation of God the Father.

Images 7<sup>79</sup>, 8<sup>80</sup>, and 9<sup>81</sup> come from the Theodore Psalter, produced at the monastery of Studios by the monk Theodore in 1066. It contains three headpieces, one on the first page of the three sections of the psalter: sections 1 and 2, for the 150 Psalms divided into two groups plus the third section: a poem on the life of David and liturgical texts.<sup>82</sup> The figure in image 7 bears the title Palaios hemerôn, Ancient of Days; the identity is therefore certain, except that we fall back on our fundamental question: Who is the Ancient of Days? But looking at the headpieces at the beginning of the other two sections, we see that the three images represent, again, the three “ages” or manifestations of the Logos Son of God: the preincarnate Logos, the Ancient of Days; the Emmanuel Child, the incarnated Christ Logos; and the Christ Pantocrator, the Eschatological Judge. That is to say, three Christological images.

Images 10<sup>83</sup>, 10.1, 11<sup>84</sup>, 12<sup>85</sup>, 13<sup>86</sup>, and 13.1<sup>83</sup> are in an eleventh-century gospel in the National Library, Paris. An image of the evangelist adorns each gospel with one or three images of Christ: Matthew, the Ancient of Days; Mark, the young Christ Emmanuel; Luke, the Christ Pantocrator Eschatological Judge; and John, the three images. First, the context, a gospel book, is Christological and the images at the beginning of the first three gospels as well as the three images at the beginning of John show what we have already seen: three manifestations of the Logos Christ. See also images 25, 25.1, 25.2 and 28; l’information sur ces images plus bas.

Images 14<sup>87</sup>, 14.1<sup>84</sup>, 15<sup>88</sup>, 16<sup>89</sup>, 17<sup>90</sup>, and 17.1<sup>87</sup> are found in the *Gospel Book of Tsar Ivan Alexander*, commissioned and delivered in 1355. They closely resemble the images of the *Parisinus graecus* 74 and require no comment except that the figure of the Ancient days carries for the first time the title of IC XC thus explicitly confirming what was only implicit in the previous images.

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<sup>79</sup>[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_MS\\_19352](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_19352)

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup>Shigebumi Tsuji, « The Headpiece Miniatures and Genealogy Pictures in Paris. Gr. 74, » *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 29, 1957, pp. 165–203 and 176–178.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, ill. 1, p. 193. *Ibid.*, pp. 165–203,

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, ill. 2, p. 30.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, ill. 3, p. 31.

<sup>86</sup>*Dieu et ses images*, p. 134, fig. 7.

<sup>87</sup>Ekaterina Dimitrova, *The Gospels of Tsar Ivan Alexander*, London, The British Library, p. 25.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, frontispiece.

**6.3** Images 18<sup>91</sup>, 18.1<sup>92</sup>, 18.2<sup>93</sup>, 18.3<sup>94</sup> & 19<sup>95</sup> confirm three hermeneutical principles of our study: 1. Christ is the one who, in general, speaks and manifests himself in the Old Testament; 2. Christ spoke and manifested specifically to Isaiah and Moses; and 3. in a context other than Daniel's vision, Christ and the Ancient of Days are identified as the same person. This is very clear in image 18.1; we see *ho palaios* (more obscurely, *tôn hemerôn*) and IC XC as well as the form and characteristic features of the Ancient of Days. *Ho palaios* in image 19 is almost invisible, but given the similarities between the two images, it is not hazardous to assume that these words were there before being erased. As for image 18.1, it may seem odd to find Isaiah's vision represented in a sermon on the Annunciation. What is the link? And who is he whom Isaiah sees? Based on the principle of interpreting what is less clear by what is clearer (interpreting image 18.1 in light of image 18), we believe we are justified in designating the figure sitting on the throne as a vision of the preincarnated Logos Son, as a Christological vision of the prophet. Even without an inscription around the figure to identify it, the shape and the beard and the white hair confirm this hypothesis. The fact that the image is in a sermon on the Annunciation settles the question. The one who is conceived in the bosom of Mary at the Annunciation is the same as he who manifested himself and spoke to the prophets, in this case, Isaiah. Images 18.2 and 18.3 are of the same order.

Is it legitimate to identify the figure in image 20<sup>96</sup> as the Ancient of Days only because of the form and features? Although IC XC is inscribed next to the figure, we do not doubt that the image is of Christ the Creator, as we see in many images of the Creation. Those who created such images knew that the Logos Son is the active agent in creation. The Father commands, but the Logos Son executes. The title *Ho ōn* in the crucifix nimbus only confirms the identity of the preincarnated Christ. We are reluctant to call him the Ancient of Days, this title is missing, but we are still tempted to do so. We note the presence of three out of four elements authorizing such a designation: absent is 1) the title *Ho Palaios tôn hémerôn*; present is 2) the body and the characteristic features of the image of Christ; also present is 3) the beard and white hair of the Ancient of Days; and finally we have 4) a Christological title, in this case *Ho Ōn*, what Moses received when he asked for the name of Him to whom he spoke on Mount Sinai—or IC XC or Emmanuel. Images 18 and 21<sup>97</sup> certainly, and 19 probably, also show these four elements; therefore, no hesitation. If elements numbers 2, 3, and 4 are seen in an image, is it a stretch to supply number 1 and call it the Ancient of Days? We have a hesitation, but it is neither illogical nor foolish. Then we will do it. And if there are only the elements numbers 2 and 3, without any title? In this case, the context must decide. We conclude: thanks to the presence of the elements numbers 2, 3, and 4 in the image 20, we will call it the Ancient of

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<sup>91</sup>Kurt Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex. A Study of the Origins and Method of Text Illustration*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1947, ill. 139.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, ill. 138; François Boespflug, *Dieu et ses images*, Montrouge, Bayard Éditions, 2008, p. 144, fig. 19.

<sup>93</sup>*Dieu et ses images*, p. 133, fig. 4.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 133, fig. 5.

<sup>95</sup>Anthony Cutler, *The Aristocratic Psalters in Byzantium*, Paris, Picard, 1984, p. 250, fig. 399.

<sup>96</sup>John Lowden, *The Octateuchs: A Study in Byzantine Manuscript Illustrations*, University Park, PA, The Pennsylvania State University Press, fig.12.

<sup>97</sup><http://www.orthodoxmonasteryicons.com/ancient-of-days-icon/>

Days. The images 21, 22<sup>98</sup>, 23<sup>99</sup>, 24<sup>100</sup>, 25<sup>101</sup>, 25.1<sup>102</sup> and 25.2<sup>103</sup> support the affirmation that, in the Eastern Orthodox zone until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Ancient of Days was identified as the preincarnate Christ.

**6.4** Image 26<sup>104</sup> begins a series of images that are more difficult to interpret in a Christological sense because there are two figures, especially if we start with the assumption that the Ancient of Days is a manifestation of the Father. But we started with the idea that Old Testament theophanies, including that of the Ancient of Days, are manifestations of the preincarnate Logos Son. Then, studying image 26 from this point of view, it seems quite natural to see St. John the Evangelist pointing to a representation of the Son Logos/Ancient of Days before the incarnation and Christ Emmanuel after. The written text is the beginning of the Gospel of John where the preincarnate Word is described as being in the beginning, with God and God, the light of man and so on. (John 1: 1 ff) and the incarnate Logos, Christ Emmanuel, having become flesh and lived “among us.” (Jn 1: 14)

Image 27<sup>105</sup> causes interpreters a lot of problems. Since there are only two figures, a Trinitarian interpretation seems unlikely, perhaps excluded, even if the Ancient of Days is seen here as the Father; several studies make this analysis.<sup>106</sup> But by identifying the Ancient of Days as a manifestation of the preincarnate Logos Son instead of the image of Christ Pantocrator incarnated as Eschatological Judge, we have a set of images that presents a coherent and natural message: John the Baptist testifies to the Jews that the one who will come after him, the Christ Pantocrator, is the same person who manifested himself to the prophets, especially to Daniel.

Image 28<sup>107</sup> is associated with Ps 76: 2–3—“God is known in Judea; in Israel his name is great. The place where he resides is peace and his dwelling is in Zion.” It is by its eminently Christological and incarnational forms and titles that we can identify the images: the Ancient of Days, the preincarnate Son Logos, named IC XC and *Ho Ôn*, is known in Judea and it is in Israel that his name is great, but this same *Ho Ôn*, incarnated in Emmanuel, made Zion his residence and his home. The image and the verses go elegantly together.

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<sup>98</sup>[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/48/Damian.\\_The\\_Ancient\\_of\\_Days.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/48/Damian._The_Ancient_of_Days.jpg).

<sup>99</sup>Viktor N. Lazarev, *Mosaïques et fresques de l'ancienne Russie*, Les Éditions de l'Amateur, 2000, p. 164. <https://regelson.files.wordpress.com/2010/05/jesus-christ-ancient-of-days-russian-fresco-11991.jpg>

<sup>100</sup>Josef Strzygowski, *Die Miniaturen serbischen Psalters der Königl. Hof—und Staatsbibliothek in München*, Vienne, Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1906, fig. 111. <https://archive.org/stream/dieminaturendes00strz#page/n329/mode/2up>.

<sup>101</sup>Stylios Pelekanidis, *Kastoria, Athènes*, Melissa Publishing House, 1985, p. 11. <http://all-photo.ru/icon/photos/23776-0.jpg>

<sup>102</sup>Paul, Huber, *Hiob: Dulder oder Rebell ?*, Düsseldorf, Patmos Verlag, 1986, fig.255.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, fig. 29.

<sup>104</sup>*Dieu et ses images*, p. 136, fig. 8.

<sup>105</sup><http://all-photo.ru/icon/photos/23776-0.jpg>.

<sup>106</sup>H. Omont, *Miniatures des plus anciens manuscrits grecs de la Bibliothèque nationale du VI<sup>e</sup> au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, H. Champion, 1929, p. 46 ; A. Grabar, *Les origines de l'esthétique médiévale*, « La représentation de l'Intelligible dans l'art byzantin du Moyen Âge », Paris, Éditions Macula, 1992, p. 100.

<sup>107</sup>Strzygowski, fig. 55.

## Conclusion

Our first image bearing the inscription *ho palaios tôn hemerôn* dates to 1066. (See image 7.) However, if we give this title to an image, otherwise identifiable as Christ, who shows signs of old age or who represents the main figure with a beard and white hair, we believe ourselves justified in dating the first image of the Ancient of Days to the 6<sup>th</sup> century (See images 1–4) In addition, the images here are unanimous in placing the Ancient of Days in a Christological context that excludes any possibility of identifying Him as God the Father. So, during the first millennium, where there is an image of the Ancient of Days, the latter is the Logos Son before the incarnation or the Christ Eschatological Judge.

From the 11<sup>th</sup> century, we see the two inscriptions, IC XC and *ho palaios tôn hemerôn*, put together, and this dispels any doubt about the identity of the figure. Although the first attempt to expand the identity of the Ancient of Days and apply either the inscription or the traits of a white beard and hair to God the Father is seen in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. (See image 30.) But from the second millennium in the East, the images of the Ancient of Days in a Trinitarian context are sporadic and generally limited to illuminations, and they introduce a theological confusion by attributing traits of Christ to the Father and even to the Holy Spirit. We can even say that this exchange of personal traits of the Divine Persons introduces Trinitarian heresies. So, in the period we are studying, attempts to expand the identity of the Ancient of Days are very limited and almost unknown. And beside them, we have images, illuminations and frescoes, which continue the tradition of identifying the Ancient of Days as the Logos Son as prefigurations of the incarnation.

## VII. CONCLUSION

So, what is the result of our study? We have analyzed Biblical texts, writings of ancient Christian authors, liturgical texts and images. What do these witnesses from the past teach us about the identity of the Ancient of Days? Who is he? We must remember the context in which we ask our question and conducted our study. The context is the Orthodox iconology of the patristic tradition and its prolongation in the Christian East until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was then, for the first time in the Orthodox milieu, that the prophet Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days was identified as a theophany of God the Father and used as a justification of an image of God the Father.

We began by noting that the patristic tradition identifies the Old Testament theophanies, especially Daniel's, as prefigurations of the incarnation of the Logos Son in Jesus Christ. It is only Augustine of Hippo, and the theological and iconographic tradition that accepted his interpretation, who abandoned the patristic consensus on this question to affirm that the three Persons of the Trinity could have manifested themselves together or only one of them, depending on the context. According to Augustine, it is sometimes difficult to identify which Person is manifesting himself in a particular theophany.

Based on the patristic tradition, the fathers of Nicaea II defined the iconology of the Church against the iconoclastic prohibition of images in general and of the image of Christ in particular, the latter being, according to the iconoclasts, a violation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> commandment. The council defined that it is possible to make an image of God by painting Christ according to the visible characteristics of his humanity. Such an image represents the hypostasis of Christ and not his nature(s). No other image of God is allowed, even possible!

In analyzing the vision of the Ancient of Days in the book of Daniel, we have seen that the Ancient of Days throughout the passage is identified as the Eschatological Judge. Then, applying a principle of Christian theology, the one according to which all judgment is given to the Son, the Father judging no one, the Ancient of Days must necessarily be a theophany of Christ as Eschatological Judge. This identification being incontestable—if not, we affirm the absurdity that the Father is the Eschatological Judge—the real problem becomes clear, that of the identity of the Son of Man, and here several interpretations are possible: the Logos Son in his humility thus giving two images of Christ, or the holy people of God, or something else. And while studying the theophanies in the Revelation of St. John, we found that the one manifested in the two apparitions is the same subject: Christ 1) in his glorified humanity, anthropomorphic, and the same 2) in a vision of glory, not in a human form—let us say, an energetic vision. To represent Christ in the first vision, St. John uses the features of the Ancient of Days.

Then we analyzed the Christian writings of antiquity on the subject of the identity of the Ancient of Days. There we found two streams of opinion, sometimes both being present in the same author. We found about thirty (34) authors who speak on the subject among whom only 33% clearly identifies the Ancient of Days with God the Father and the Son of man as Christ, against 33% who identify him clearly with Christ, and still another 33% of the texts do not allow us to answer the question. Therefore, there is no *consensus*

*patrum*, but rather two theologoumena.

On the other hand, the liturgical hymns identify almost unanimously Christ as the Ancient of Days. And finally, as for Christian images, we have a strong majority that place the images of the Ancient of Days in a Christological context and thus manifest the coherence of the tradition: the theophanies of the Old Testament are manifestations of the Logos Son as prefigurations of the incarnation, and the artists place the Ancient of Days almost always in a Christological frame where the figure can be either the Ancient of Days of Daniel or the Eschatological Judge. In both cases, the person represented can only be Christ. Those who want to interpret the Ancient of Days as an appearance of God the Father and the artists who place him in a Trinitarian framework introduce theological confusion, even heresy, by giving the “Father” the characteristic traits of Christ: even inscribing his head in a cruciform halo to say that the Father was crucified.

It is therefore within this cloud of Church witnesses, not only theologoumena or isolated images, that we must place the effort of certain Orthodox to paint the image of God the Father in the Trinity by using the vision of the Ancient of Days as a manifestation of the Father and by applying the principle “what is visible can be painted” to this theophany thus producing images of God the Father, God the Son and the Holy Spirit as a dove. This image has been given the title of “the New Testament Trinity.”

Joachim of Flore (Calabria, Italy), a 12<sup>th</sup> century “heretic saint,” arrived on the scene of Western Christianity and gave it a new schema of history. He identified three historical periods: God the Father acted in the Old Testament (the reign of the Law); God the Son, from incarnation until 1260 (the reign of grace); and the Holy Spirit, after this date until the end of time (the reign of freedom). All his doctrines and prophecies were not accepted, but at least one idea remained: the Old Testament is the domain of the manifestation and reign of the Father. This notion was combined with Augustine’s idea which had already been in existence for centuries and entered into the Trinitarian thought of the West, according to which each Person of the Trinity or the three together could manifest themselves in the Old Testament. This interpretation has forever marked Catholic and Protestant theology.

We believe that it is well known by art historians<sup>108</sup> that even though there are some examples in the East of the image of the Ancient of Days placed in a Trinitarian context, such images took root and bloomed in the medieval West because of the theological climate established by Augustine and Joachim of Flore and of the weak influence in the West of the Council Nicaea II, which elaborated the iconology of the Church. Some Latin theologians themselves were to respond to reproaches aroused by the anthropomorphic images of the Trinity where the Ancient of Days was identified as God the Father. The protests came from within as well as from outside the Latin Church, with little effect, however. Several centuries later, Pope Benedict XIV<sup>109</sup> accepted such images, yet did not encourage them, and canonized for the Roman Catholic Church the theological justification by appealing to the vision of the Ancient of Days as a theophany of God the

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<sup>108</sup>Dieu et ses images, pp. 152–241.

<sup>109</sup>Boespflug, *Dieu dans l’art, Sollicitudini Nostrae de Benoît XIV (1745) et l’affaire Cresence de Kaufbeuren*, Paris, les Éditions du Cerf, 1984.

Father.

And when the Orthodox began to suffer the theological and artistic influence of Catholics and later Protestants—they also welcomed such influence, we must not forget—an influence whose first controversy on the Orthodox soil was that between the diak Ivan Vishkovaty and Metropolitan Macarios of Moscow at the Council of Moscow in 1551. Since that time, the popularity of the representations of God the Father in images of the Trinity, identified as the Ancient of Days, has continued to take root in the thinking of the faithful and the hierarchy. These images, it must be said, never ceased to provoke protests and even conciliar decisions against them.

So, we have two opposing visions: 1) that of the iconology elaborated by an ecumenical council according to which the Logos Son was manifested in the Old Testament, and these theophanies, including that of the Ancient of Days, are prefigurations of the incarnation of the Logos Son in Jesus Christ. Thus this incarnation is the only legitimate basis for the production of a portrait image of God and 2) that founded on the Trinitarian doctrine of Augustine of Hippo, strongly reinforced by the historical vision of Joachim of Flore and canonized for Catholics by Benedict XIV, according to which the Old Testament theophanies are not exclusively Christological, being the appearance of one or another of the Divine Persons or of the three together, and that the theophany of the Ancient of Days is an appearance of God the Father. And by applying the principle “what is visible can be represented,” the followers of this interpretation have accepted an iconographic principle other than that which Nicaea II defined and thus justify images of God the Father.

We hope to have shown that the first vision is not one among several theories, but the dogmatic iconology of the universal Church sanctioned by the highest ecclesiastical authority, one ecumenical council while the other is at best a theologoumenon that is supported by certain ecclesiastical authors and images, but which the universal Church has not retained. And the most ironic thing of all is that those who accept the visions of Augustine and Joachim of Flore as well as the interpretation of the Ancient of Days as a theophany of God the Father including the images of Him believe that they defend Orthodoxy, the Fathers, the Holy Tradition of the Church and the ecumenical councils, but in reality they support a theological and artistic vision which has its source elsewhere than in the dogma of the Church.



## Excursus 1

What are the theological errors that are behind the identification of the Ancient of Days as a theophany of God the Father as well as the images of him?

1. The law, the prophets and the psalms speak not only of “me,” Jesus, but also of the Father, of the Holy Spirit, or of the three Personnes, ultimately designating the entire Old Testament as the domain of the Father’s manifestation. It is unconvincing to say that the Father has manifested himself only once and to accept that all the other theophanies are from the Logos Son. We find, in writing and in images, the tendency to substitute the Father everywhere in the Old Testament where the patristic tradition sees a manifestation of the Logos Son. In the long run, the notion that the Old Testament speaks of “me” has become a dead letter.
2. We have access to the Father directly and not necessarily through the Son. Jn 14: 6: “No one goes to the Father without going through me. One of the points of the iconology of the Council of Nicaea II states that an image establishes a relation between the type and the prototype, between the real person and his image. From this relationship, we also have a relationship with the prototype, a communion; we have access to him or her through his image. If we have access to the Father through his image in the Ancient of Days—we must apply the logic of the council—we do not need to go through Christ to have a relationship with the Father. Christ is no longer the only image of the Father: “He is the image of the invisible God.” The Father may have an artificial image (type) other than an image (type) of Christ who is himself the prototype’s type, the Father. The exclusivity of Christ as a path to the Father is weakened. On two different occasions, we personally saw two images of God the Father alone, much like Pantocrator. What about those who worship the Father in his “image” without going through Christ?
3. God the Father became flesh. According to the iconology of Nicaea II, it is possible to make an image of God by painting the visible features of the humanity of the Incarnate Son Logos. Since he became flesh, assumed a true, visible humanity, the hypostasis (the Person) of the Logos Son can be represented. The only exception to this rule is for angels who have taken human forms to accomplish their missions. The iconology of the Church accepts these images of a docetic humanity—the angels only had the appearance of a human body—only for them. It says nothing of a docetic humanity of the Father. Only the Logos Son manifested himself in his “docetic” humanity before the incarnation to prepare humanity to believe that he who was seen as a foreshadowing of the incarnation in the Old Testament, in Christ is truly man. Therefore, the implication of an anthropomorphic image of the Father or the Holy Spirit is clear: they have become incarnated.
4. When some artists transfer certain characteristic features of Christ to the image of God the Father, they declare that the Father was crucified (cruciform halo) or spoke to Moses (*ho ôn* in the halo). Let us imagine the reverse. If we had a graphic way to indicate that God the Father is unbegotten—I do not know what that would be, but for the sake of our argument let us say there was one, the letter B—and if this symbol were painted on an image of Christ, what would be the theological affirmation? Answer: The Logos Son is unbegotten, of course. Such a sign transfer designating a personal characteristic of the

Father would be an iconographic and theological heresy. So, should we not say, therefore, the same thing when we see a cruciform halo on the image of the Ancient of Days taken as God the Father? And what to say of a cruciform halo on a dove? What is the dogmatic statement? Answer: The Father or the Spirit has been crucified!

5. If the Ancient of Days is God the Father, the latter becomes the Eschatological Judge, which contradicts the Scriptures (Jn 5: 22) The Ancient of Days in the Vision of the Prophet Daniel is certainly the Eschatological Judge. If we say that the Ancient of Days is God the Father, then the Father also becomes the Eschatological Judge, but the Father judges no one and has given all judgment to the Son. There is a dogmatic as well as an iconographic problem.

## Excursus 2

It is commonly admitted that the fathers of the first centuries understood that the Logos Son was manifested in the Old Testament; it is also accepted that Augustin of Hippo broke with this tradition by proposing another interpretation. Although all admit that Augustine is the author of a new interpretation of the Old Testament theophanies, not everyone agrees on the evaluation of this novelty. The West followed Augustine applauding his genius while the East condemned the new doctrine that would separate Westerners from the common patristic tradition. This difference of opinion about Augustine's new point of view manifested itself in an unsuspected context: in the Roman Catholic Church, between two scholars at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In his article, Father Legeay quotes all the patristic texts that testify to the Christological nature of theophanies. Father Legeay:

We have no difficulty in recognizing that his authority [that of Augustine] has led many writers after him to embrace the position that he exposes: the divine theophanies of the Old Testament cannot be exclusively attributed to the second Person of the Holy Trinity The divine manifestations mentioned there and the apparitions of God to the Patriarchs must be attributed sometimes to the whole Trinity, sometimes to one of the three Divine Persons . . . It seems possible to prefer, to St. Augustine's opinion, the almost unanimous feeling of the Fathers of the first four centuries of the Church<sup>110</sup> who do not hesitate to teach that it is the Son of the Father, Our Lord Jesus Christ, not yet born, who manifested himself by the various apparitions of which we have spoken before.<sup>111</sup>

The other author, Father Jules Lebreton, in his reply to Father Legeay, defends the novelty of Augustine and praises his ingenuity:

The study of the ancient history of the dogma of the Trinity led us to the opposite feeling [to that of Father Legeay] [. . .] We recognize that, up to Saint Augustine, most of the Fathers have seen apparitions in the theophanies of the Son of God; but we

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<sup>110</sup>Underlining by the author.

<sup>111</sup>Legeay, P., « L'Ange et les Théophanies, d'après la doctrine des Pères », *Revue thomiste* X, 1902, (pp. 138–158 & 405–424) & XI, 1903, (pp. 46–69 & 125–134), pp. 405 & 407–408.

think that St. Augustine's criticism of this exegesis is decisive and that the theologians, who for the most part followed him, and among them St. Thomas Aquinas, did not go astray. [. . .] If the Catholic theologians have, as a whole, adhered to this doctrine, it is not only and above all because of the prestige of St. Augustine; it is because they have recognized the luminous firmness of his teaching. [. . .]

this construction is not a precarious building, hastily erected in the face of an adversary . . . it is a construction not polemical, but theological; all his efforts tend not to refute an adversary, but to know God.<sup>112</sup>

It almost sounds like a discussion between a Catholic and an Orthodox, but no, it's a discussion between two Catholic theologians. What is important here is that both recognize that Augustine introduced a new vision of Old Testament theophanies. The hermeneutic tradition up to him was undisputed. Even the Arians used it to defend their doctrine of the essential inferiority of the Logos Son to the Father. But in spite of the fact that the Arians evoked this doctrine, the Fathers did not see fit to reverse the common tradition concerning Old Testament theophanies. This ancient hermeneutic tradition has even survived, or at least reappeared, within the Roman Catholic Church, in the writings of Father Legeay. The latter makes an important distinction, underlined in his text above: we have the opinion of a theologian, Augustine, in the face of an almost unanimous opinion of the Fathers of the Church. This distinction is fraught with consequences because Augustine of Hippo is the source of a personal theology which, after centuries, will justify the direct portrait images of God the Father. The opinion of Augustine, as Father Legeay said, spread more and more to the point of ousting the common opinion of the "Fathers of the Church," at least in the West, and partly in the East. Although Augustine himself did not use his idea to defend the images of God the Father, he is the first to say that the Father manifested himself as a man to Daniel in the guise of Ancient of Days. Then a theological tradition began with Augustine and gained more and more ground to dominate Western theological thought. It passes by Thomas Aquinas and is repeated by his successors and is found in all the justifications of the images of God the Father until our days. Eastern thought, continued in the patristic theology of the Orthodox Church, did not receive the novelty of Augustine and, like Father Legeay, preferred and prefers "the almost unanimous feeling of the Fathers of the first four centuries of the Church.

Here is one of the points of Augustine's position: the Lord, not being able to manifest himself according to his divine nature which is essentially invisible, created "things, beings" which he used to represent himself when he wanted to speak or appear to a patriarch or a prophet. He never manifested himself to anyone. Things or created beings began to exist to fulfill their mission and ceased to exist once the mission was accomplished. This point of view will be affirmed by Barlaam of Calabria during the 14th-century Palamite controversy.

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<sup>112</sup>Lebreton, Jules, « Saint Augustin, théologien de la Trinité : Son exégèse des théophanies », *Miscellanea Agostiniana* vol. 2, 1931 (pp. 821–836) pp. 822 et 836.

Opposing the theology of St. Gregory Palamas, according to which God manifests Himself in His energies, not in His essence, but in His glory, in the Old Testament, in the New, and in the Church. The position of Barlaam of Calabria was essentially that of Augustine: God manifests himself, even in the light of Tabor, through created things. St. Gregory opposed the opinion of Barlaam/Augustine with his doctrine of the essence of God and his energies. It is therefore not illogical to assert that the condemnation of Barlaam of Calabria's opinion was, without explicitly doing so, a condemnation of Augustine's opinion of Old Testament theophanies. What is certain is that the patristic tradition of the past or of today has not received nor receives the ideas of Augustine on the theophanies or those of Barlaam on the light of Tabor.

## ANNEX 1

St. Irenaeus of Lyons,<sup>113</sup> *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*

44. And again Moses tells how the Son of God drew near to hold converse with Abraham: And God appeared unto him by the oak of Mamre in the middle of the day. And looking up with his eyes he beheld, and, lo, three men stood over against him. And he bowed himself down to the earth, and said: Lord, if indeed I have found favor in your sight. And all that which follows he spoke with the Lord, and the Lord spoke with him. Now two of the three were angels; but one was the Son of God, with whom also Abraham spoke, pleading on behalf of the men of Sodom, that they should not perish if at least ten righteous should be found there. And, whilst these were speaking, the two angels entered into Sodom, and Lot received them. And then the Scripture says: And the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven: that is to say, the Son, who spoke with Abraham, being Lord, received power to punish the men of Sodom from the Lord out of heaven, even from the Father who rules over all. So Abraham was a prophet and saw things to come, which were to take place in human form even the Son of God, that He should speak with men and eat with them, and then should bring in the judgment from the Father, having received from Him who rules over all the power to punish the men of Sodom.

45. And Jacob, when he went into Mesopotamia, saw Him in a dream, standing upon the ladder, that is the tree which was set up from earth to heaven; for thereby they that believe on Him go up to the heavens. For His sufferings are our ascension on high. And all such visions point to the Son of God, speaking with men and being in their midst. For it was not the Father of all, who is not seen by the world, the Maker of all who has said: Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me, or what is the place of my rest? and who comprehends the earth with his hand, and with his span the heaven—it was not He that came and stood in a very small space and spoke with Abraham; but the Word of God, who was ever with mankind, and made known beforehand what should come to pass in the future, and taught men the things of God.

46. He it is who spoke with Moses in the bush, and said: Seeing have I seen the affliction of my people that is in Egypt; and I am come down to deliver them. He it is who came forth and came down for the deliverance of the oppressed, bringing us out from the power of the Egyptians, that is, from all idolatry and impiety; and delivering us from the Red Sea, that is, delivering us from the deadly confusion of the Gentiles and the grievous vexation of their blasphemy. For in them the Word of God prepared and rehearsed beforehand the things concerning us. Then He set forth in types beforehand that which was to be; how in very truth He has brought us out from the cruel service of the Gentiles, and a stream of water in the desert has He made to flow forth in abundance from a rock; and that rock is Himself; and has given twelve fountains, that is, the teaching of the twelve apostles. And the obstinate

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<sup>113</sup>Chapters 44- 46, translated from the Armenian with introduction and notes by Armitage Robinson, Kindle Edition, New York, The Macmillian Company, 1920. In this first text, Irenaeus, a man from Smyrna in the East, installed during the second century in Lyon in the West, expresses the common vision of the Fathers, before Augustine, about the theophanies of the Old Testament: they are manifestations of the Logos Son prefiguring the incarnation.

unbelievers He brought to an end and consumed in the wilderness; but those who believed on Him, and in malice were children, He made to enter into the inheritance of the fathers; whom not Moses, but Jesus puts in possession of the heritage: who also delivers us from Amalek by the expansion of His hands, and brings us to the kingdom of the Father.

## ANNEX 2

Hilary of Poitiers,<sup>114</sup> *On the Trinity*

### Book IV

16 But let us see what increase of profit we may draw from this distinction of God Who commands and God Who executes.

23 *And she called the Name of the Lord that spoke with her, You are God, Who have seen me.* First He is the Angel of God; then He is the Lord, for *She called the Name of the Lord*; then, thirdly, He is God, for *You are God, Who have seen me*. He Who is called the Angel of God is also Lord and God. The Son of God is also, according to the prophet, the *Angel of great counsel*.

25 Afterwards there appear to him three men. Abraham, though he sees three, worships One, and acknowledges Him as Lord.

28 Thus the sacred narrative makes it clear that two of the three were mere angels; it had previously proclaimed the One as Lord and God by the words, *And the Lord said to Abraham*,

29 And now there falls on Sodom and Gomorrha the vengeance of a righteous judgment. What can we learn from it for the purposes of our inquiry? *The Lord rained brimstone and fire from the Lord*. It is *The Lord from the Lord*; Scripture makes no distinction, by difference of name, between Their natures, but discriminates between Themselves. For we read in the Gospel, *The Father judges no man, but has given all judgment to the Son . . .*

30 Jacob, when he fled through fear of his brother, saw in his dream a ladder resting upon the earth and reaching to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it, and the Lord resting above it,

31 Nor was it to Abraham only that God appeared in human guise; He appeared as Man to Jacob also. And not only did He appear, but, so we are told, He wrestled; and not only did He wrestle, but He was vanquished by His adversary.

42 Everything, in fine, that exists owes its existence to His action. He it is that instructs Abraham, that speaks with Moses, that testifies to Israel, that abides in the prophets, that was born through the Virgin from the Holy Spirit, that nails to the cross of His passion the powers that are our foes, that slays death in hell, that strengthens the assurance of our hope by His Resurrection, that destroys the corruption of human flesh by the glory of His Body.

### Book V

17 His merciful and mysterious self-revelations are in no wise inconsistent with His true heavenly nature; and His faithful saints never fail to penetrate the guise He has assumed in order that faith may see Him. The types of the Law foresaw the mysteries of the Gospel; they enable the Patriarch to see and to believe what hereafter the Apostle is to gaze on and

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<sup>114</sup>Translated by E.W. Watson and L. Pullan. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 9, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1899. Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/330204.htm>>. Hilary of Poitiers, the Athanasius of the West, reinforces the theology already expressed by Irenaeus of Lyons: what was seen by the prophets, the "docetic" humanity of Christ before the Incarnation, became reality after the Incarnation, in the real and non-illusory humanity of Christ.

publish. For, since the Law is the shadow of things to come, the shadow that was seen was a true outline of the reality which cast it. God was seen and believed and worshipped as Man, Who was indeed to be born as Man in the fulness of time. He takes upon Him, to meet the Patriarch's eye, a semblance which foreshadows the future truth. In that old day, God was only seen, not born, as Man; in due time He was born, as well as seen. Familiarity with the human appearance, which He took that men might behold Him, was to prepare them for the time when He should, in very truth, be born as Man. Then it was that the shadow took substance, the semblance reality, the vision life. But God remained unchanged, whether He were seen in the appearance, or born in the reality, of manhood. The resemblance was perfect between Himself, after His birth, and Himself, as He had been seen in vision. As He was born, so He had appeared; as He had appeared, so was He born. But, since the time has not yet come for us to compare the Gospel account with that of the prophet Moses, let us pursue our chosen course through the pages of the Law. Hereafter we shall prove from the Gospels that it was the true Son of God Who was born as Man; for the present, we are showing from the Law that it was true God, the God, Who appeared to the Patriarchs in human form. For when One appeared to Abraham as Man, He was worshipped as God and proclaimed as Judge; and when the Lord rained from the Lord, beyond a doubt, the Law tells us that the Lord rained from the Lord in order to reveal to us the Father and the Son.

24 I have also shown that the Law, gradually unfolding the Gospel mystery, reveals the Son as a Person by manifesting God as obedient, in the creation of the world, to the words of God, and in the formation of man making what is the joint image of God, and of God; and again, that in the judgment of the men of Sodom the Lord is Judge from the Lord; that, in the giving of blessings and ordaining of the mysteries of the Law, the Angel of God is God.



### ANNEX 3

Augustine of Hippo, *On the Trinity*<sup>115</sup>

33. I do not know in what manner these men understand that the Ancient of Days appeared to Daniel, from whom the Son of man, which He deigned to be for our sakes, is understood to have received the kingdom; namely, from Him who says to Him in the Psalms, "You are my Son; this day have I begotten You; ask of me, and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance; and who has "put all things under His feet." If, however, both the Father giving the kingdom, and the Son receiving it, appeared to Daniel in bodily form, how can those men say that the Father never appeared to the prophets, and, therefore, that He only ought to be understood to be invisible whom no man has seen, nor can see? For Daniel has told us thus: "I beheld," he says, "till the thrones were set, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened," etc. And a little after, "I saw," he says, "in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Behold the Father giving, and the Son receiving, an eternal kingdom; and both are in the sight of him who prophesies, in a visible form. It is not, therefore, unsuitably believed that God the Father also was wont to appear in that manner to mortals.

34. Unless, perhaps, some one shall say that the Father is therefore not visible, because He appeared within the sight of one who was dreaming; but that therefore the Son and the Holy Spirit are visible, because Moses saw all those things being awake; as if, forsooth, Moses saw the Word and the Wisdom of God with fleshly eyes, or that even the human spirit which quickens that flesh can be seen, or even that corporeal thing which is called wind;—how much less can that Spirit of God be seen, who transcends the minds of all men, and of angels, by the ineffable excellence of the divine substance? Or can anyone fall headlong into such an error as to dare to say that the Son and the Holy Spirit are visible also to men who are awake, but that the Father is not visible except to those who dream? How, then, do they understand that of the Father alone, "Whom no man hath seen, nor can see"? When men sleep, are they then not men? Or cannot He, who can fashion the likeness of a body to signify Himself through the visions of dreamers, also fashion that same bodily creature to signify Himself to the eyes of those who are awake? Whereas His own very substance, whereby He Himself is that which He is, cannot be shown by any bodily likeness to one who sleeps, or by any bodily appearance to one who is awake; but this not of the Father only, but also of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And certainly, as to those who are moved by the visions of waking men to believe that not the Father, but only the Son, or the Holy Spirit, appeared to the corporeal sight of men—to omit the great extent of the sacred pages, and their manifold interpretation, such that no one of sound reason ought to affirm that the person

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<sup>115</sup>Chapter 18, 33–35, "The Vision of Daniel," translated by Arthur West Haddan, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 3, edited by Philip Schaff, Buffalo, NY, Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887. Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/130101.htm>.

of the Father was nowhere shown to the eyes of waking men by any corporeal appearance;—but, as I said, to omit this, what do they say of our father Abraham, who was certainly awake and ministering, when, after Scripture had premised, “The Lord appeared unto Abraham,” not one, or two, but three men appeared to him; no one of whom is said to have stood prominently above the others, no one more than the others to have shone with greater glory, or to have acted more authoritatively?

35. Wherefore, since in that our threefold division we determined to inquire, first, whether the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit; or whether sometimes the Father, sometimes the Son, sometimes the Holy Spirit; or whether, without any distinction of persons, as it is said, the one and only God, that is, the Trinity itself, appeared to the fathers through those forms of the creature: now that we have examined, so far as appeared to be sufficient what places of the Holy Scriptures we could, a modest and cautious consideration of divine mysteries leads, as far as I can judge, to no other conclusion, unless that we may not rashly affirm which person of the Trinity appeared to this or that of the fathers or the prophets in some body or likeness of body, unless when the context attaches to the narrative some probable intimations on the subject. For the nature itself, or substance, or essence, or by whatever other name that very thing, which is God, whatever it be, is to be called, cannot be seen corporeally: but we must believe that by means of the creature made subject to Him, not only the Son, or the Holy Spirit, but also the Father, may have given intimations of Himself to mortal senses by a corporeal form or likeness. And since the case stands thus, that this second book may not extend to an immoderate length, let us consider what remains in those which follow.

## ANNEX 4

Thomas Aquinas,<sup>116</sup> *The Summa Theologiæ of St. Thomas Aquinas*

**Question 90.** The form of the judge in coming to the judgment

**Article 1.** Whether Christ will judge under the form of His humanity?

**Objection 1.** It would seem that Christ will not judge under the form of His humanity. For judgment requires authority in the judge. Now Christ has authority over the quick and the dead as God, for thus is He the Lord and Creator of all. Therefore He will judge under the form of His Godhead.

**Objection 2.** Further, invincible power is requisite in a judge; wherefore it is written: “Seek not to be made a judge, unless you have strength enough to extirpate iniquities.” Now invincible power belongs to Christ as God. Therefore He will judge under the form of the Godhead.

**Objection 3.** Further, it is written: “The Father . . . has given all judgment to the Son, that all men may honor the Son as they honor the Father.” Now equal honor to that of the Father is not due to the Son in respect of His human nature. Therefore He will not judge under His human form.

**Objection 4.** Further, it is written: “I beheld till thrones were placed and the Ancient of Days sat.” Now the thrones signify judicial power, and God is called the Ancient by reason of His eternity, according to Dionysius. Therefore it becomes the Son to judge as being eternal; and consequently not as man.

**Objection 5.** Further, Augustine says that “the resurrection of the soul is the work of the Word the Son of God, and the resurrection of the body is the work of the Word made the Son of Man in the flesh.” Now that last judgment regards the soul rather than the body. Therefore it becomes Christ to judge as God rather than as man.

**On the contrary,** it is written: “He has given Him power to do judgment, because He is the Son of man.”

Further, it is written: “Your cause has been judged as that of the wicked—by Pilate” according to a gloss—therefore, cause and judgment you shall recover—that you may judge justly,” according to the gloss. Now Christ was judged by Pilate with regard to His human nature. Therefore He will judge under the human nature.

Further, to Him it belongs to judge who made the law. Now Christ gave us the law of the Gospel while appearing in the human nature. Therefore He will judge under that same nature.

**I answer that,** Judgment requires a certain authority in the judge. Wherefore it is written:

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<sup>116</sup>Supplement to the Third Part, Question 90, Article 1, Second and Revised Edition, 1920, literally translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province Online Edition Copyright © 2017 by Kevin Knight.

<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/5090.htm#article1>

Thomas Aquinas, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, clearly recognizes that it is Christ in his glorious humanity who will judge the living and the dead at the end of time, but he also clearly indicates that the Ancient of Days—the Father from whom all judgment has its origin—passes judgment to the Son of Man—the Logos.

<http://docteurangelique.free.fr/bibliotheque/sommes/7supplementreginald.htm>

“Who are you that you judge another man’s servant?” Hence it is becoming that Christ should judge in respect of His having authority over men to whom chiefly the last judgment will be directed. Now He is our Lord, not only by reason of the Creation, since “the Lord He is God, He made us and not we ourselves”, but also by reason of the Redemption, which pertains to Him in respect of His human nature. Wherefore “to this end Christ died and rose again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.” But the goods of the Creation would not suffice us to obtain the reward of eternal life, without the addition of the boon of the Redemption, on account of the obstacle accruing to created nature through the sin of our first parent. Hence, since the last judgment is directed to the admission of some to the kingdom, and the exclusion of others therefrom, it is becoming that Christ should preside at that judgment under the form of His human nature, since it is by favor of that same nature’s Redemption that man is admitted to the kingdom. In this sense it is stated that “He . . . was appointed by God to be Judge of the living and of the dead.” And forasmuch as by redeeming mankind He restored not only man but all creatures without exception—inasmuch as all creatures are bettered through man’s restoration, “Making peace through the blood of His cross, both as to things on earth, and the things that are in heaven”—it follows that through His Passion Christ merited lordship and judicial power not over man alone, but over all creatures, “All power is given to Me, in heaven and in earth.”

**Reply to Objection 1.** Christ, in respect of His Divine nature, has authority of lordship over all creatures by right of creation; but in respect of His human nature, He has authority of lordship merited through His Passion. The latter is secondary so to speak and acquired, while the former is natural and eternal.

**Reply to Objection 2.** Although Christ as man has not of Himself invincible power resulting from the natural power of the human species, nevertheless there is also in His human nature, an invincible power derived from His Godhead, whereby all things are subjected under His feet. Hence He will judge in His human nature indeed, but by the power of His Godhead.

**Reply to Objection 3.** Christ would not have sufficed for the redemption of mankind, had He been a mere man. Wherefore from the very fact that He was able as man to redeem mankind, and thereby obtained judicial power, it is evident that He is God, and consequently is to be honored equally with the Father, not as man but as God.

**Reply to Objection 4.** In the vision of Daniel, the whole order of the judicial power is clearly expressed. This power is in God Himself as its first origin, and more especially in the Father Who is the fount of the entire Godhead; wherefore it is stated in the first place that the “Ancient of Days sat.” But the judicial power was transmitted from the Father to the Son, not only from eternity in respect of the Divine nature, but also in time in respect of the human nature wherein He merited it. Hence in the aforesaid vision it is further stated: “Lo, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and He came even to the Ancient of Days . . . And He gave Him power and glory, and a kingdom.”

**Reply to Objection 5.** Augustine is speaking by a kind of appropriation, so as to trace the effects which Christ wrought in the human nature to causes somewhat similar to them. And since we are made to the image and likeness of God in respect of our soul, and are of the same species as the man Christ in respect of our body, he ascribes to the Godhead the effects wrought by Christ in our souls, and those which He wrought or will work in our bodies

he ascribes to His flesh; although His flesh, as being the instrument of His Godhead, has also its effect on our souls as Damascene asserts, according, that His “blood” has cleansed “our conscience from dead works.” And thus that “the Word was made flesh” is the cause of the resurrection of the souls; wherefore also according to His human nature He is becomingly the Judge not only of bodily but also of spiritual goods.

## ANNEX 5

Thomas Netter of Walden,<sup>117</sup> *Doctrinale Antiquitatum Fidei Ecclesiae Catholicae*, tome 3, tit. XIX, ch 155, pp. 277 ff.

Title 1, Section 155

That the heretics oppose the customary image of the Trinity in the Church, and why the Jews did not venerate images that they had made.

2. Table of Contents

Chapter 1: It is demonstrated, against Wycliff's disciples, that God the Father has been seen in human form.

Chapter 2: The whole Trinity [all three Persons] has appeared in a bodily form.

Chapter 1 It is demonstrated, against Wycliff's disciples<sup>118</sup>, that God the Father has been seen in human form.

The heretics are offended by all images but especially by that of the Trinity. They [love to] launch anathemas against it. In their petition which has already been mentioned, conclusion 8<sup>119</sup>, they say the following: "These forbidden and imaginary things are for the lay people a book of errors, and in addition, the customary image of the Trinity is the most abominable." Here are the disciples of Wycliffe. They point to the customary image where the Father has the appearance of an old man, the Son of a young man, and the Holy Spirit the form of a dove. When they began to express their thoughts, by preaching, their argument [against the image of the Trinity] was that we cannot conceive of the spiritual and uncircumscribable nature of the divine substance; how then can we represent it in a sensible form? They [the heretics] say that "the Father was not a man nor was he seen as a man; why, then, do they [the Catholics] boldly give him the image of a man, whom we have not found anywhere [in the Scriptures]?"

What audacity they [the heretics] have in saying that; the Scriptures respond to the disciples of Wycliffe. In the psalms, the prophet gives hands to the Lord God: "The firmament makes known the work of his hands." He gives him feet: "We will worship at his

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<sup>117</sup>Thomas Netter of Walden, an English theologian (1375–1430), opposed John Wycliffe and his followers who condemned the images of the Trinity where the Father and sometimes the Holy Spirit were painted in human form. To justify these images against the attacks of the Wycliffites, he resorted to the vision of the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man.

<https://books.google.ca>

booksid=HemgkbqmT3MC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\_ge\_summary\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

<sup>118</sup>John Wycliffe, 1330–1385, was an English theologian and churchman who advocated reforms of doctrine and practice in the English and Roman Churches. He made the first complete translation of the Bible into English and is often referred to as the "morning star of the Reformation" for his ideas similar to those of the Protestant Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Wycliffe>

<sup>119</sup>The Lollards, a dissident, religious group in England in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, propagated the ideas of Wycliffe, and others, right up to the beginning of the Reformation in England. They prepared a document of 12 statements, known as "The Twelve Conclusions." Netter here attacks the eighth conclusion.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Lollards>

footstool.” The prophet gives him shoulders: “He carried them on his shoulders.” He gives him fingers: “Work with your fingers, the moon and the stars.” He gives him a breast: “From my bosom, I have begotten you before the morning star.” He gives him an arm: “and his arm will rule.” He gives him eyes: Let your eyes see justice.” He gives him ears: “Let your ears be attentive.” He gives him entrails: “Thanks to the bowels of tenderness [tender love] of our God.” He gives him a heart: “My heart was filled with good words.” In a word, the Scripture attributes to God the Father all the parts of the human body. What is missing? Whoever possesses any part, does he not possess the whole man? But what Scripture does with words, why cannot the artist do with signs (images, drawings, etc.)? What fault lies with a painter who gives God an eye, when Scripture attributes to him? Does the brush commit a greater sin than the pen on this question; does the image commit a greater sin than the letter...? [...]

God the Father himself frequently appeared to the Fathers in a human form, and Wycliffe's disciples deny this. They thus give aid to the Arians who denied that the Father ever became visible so that he would be greater than the visible Son.<sup>120</sup>

The holy fathers maintain the same opinion, because in comparison with the Son, the Father appeared as the Ancient of Days, with white hair and clothing like snow, while his Son appeared in his almost human form: both being seen in visible form in the eyes of the prophets. In order to express paternity, he [Daniel] shows us the image of old age, to show that the Father exists before time, and that he is the creator of the ages. [...]

But it is not normal for the Scriptures to jump abruptly from one person to another, and so the one who speaks here to Adam seems to be the same who said: “Let there be light, let there be a firmament” (Gn 1, 3, 6), and who appeared in the other days of creation. Now we recognize that this person is God the Father, who by his word created the world.

## Chapter II: The Whole Trinity Appeared in a Corporeal Form

It is enough that God the Father appeared to Abraham, as he wanted, and otherwise, as he wanted to appear to all. So if he wanted to appear in human form, and that in the form of an old man, it is not inappropriate for him to appear as an old man. The Son was also in the form of a younger man, not only because he is a man of the Virgin, but [so] that we do not believe that he had taken his origin from a Virgin, as Photinus [Bishop of Sirmium, 343] said: and the Holy Spirit also appeared as a dove, which the Church accepts as fitting. [...]

So whether by this mode or by that, we represent the Trinity; we adopt the likeness under which it is possible to discern it with fidelity. If there are different appearances, they show emanations from the Persons; if there are similar appearances, they show their equality. In both cases, resemblance with plurality, but not plurality as to the origin of the Persons.

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<sup>120</sup>The Arians did in fact say that the Son, and not the Father, became visible in the Old Testament theophanies. In that, they followed the general opinion of the Fathers. However, they used that opinion to strengthen their argument that the Son was lower in status than the Father, that the Son was created because he who becomes visible is lower than he who remains invisible. The Father was greater than the Son because he did not show himself in the Old Testament; only the Son did.

Consequently, this very image of Daniel's Ancient of Days is worthily regarded as being instituted to confuse the bad faith of Arius, which always denies a single co-eternal cause within the same essence. For this reason, the Church once instituted this image, so that, according to the opinion of Daniel, the Son of the Father may appear younger compared to the older Father, according to our way of thinking [...]



## ANNEX 6

Alberto Pio<sup>121</sup>, *Tres et viginti libri in los lucubrationum varioarum, Desiderii Erasmi Roterdami*, Paris, 1531, *De imagine cultu*, Book VIII, pp. 139–140.

On the veneration of sacred and holy images

Now that these points [of the preceding chapters] have been refuted, we have yet to refute what these points attempt to prove, as much by the testimony of the Scriptures as by that of examples. We believe we have proved, by the authority of the fathers, what can be done as well as what is suitable and authorized. In fact, everyone agrees that we must accept and do what the Almighty has taught by example and in words, and so it has been shown that he can be represented not only in an image [created by an artist's imagination], but also in an image he in truth used to represent himself. In the book of Genesis, it is written as follows: "God [the Father] made man in his image." Therefore, God [the Father] has an image, that is, his Son, the eternal Word, but this image—man was created in the likeness of this image—naturally represents his own essence. Thus, at this point, following the very learned Origen, we must understand a double image: one of the Word representing the divinity of God the Father and the other indicating the image of man, so that man becomes the image of the image of God. [...] So, it is clear that the Word is the first image and the natural one. But man is not the image of the one [the Word] who is himself the true image of God<sup>122</sup>: either these words are to be understood according to what Origen means, or absolutely, that man is the image of God in the same way that the first words indicate. "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness." Indeed, if man is the image of the image—since this image [the Word] is the true God—man would truly be the image and likeness of God. [But even though this is not the case], man does share with God free will and intelligence, which have not been attributed to any other material creature. In truth, the other animals are entirely without reason. Therefore, since it is manifest that the Lord has declared that man was created in his own image and likeness, God can be properly represented in images according to the human form. Indeed, in such a form, God appeared to Abraham in the Mambré Valley when Abraham saw three men, but worshipped only one. Moreover, in the same form, God appeared in a vision to the prophet Daniel (for thus says Daniel): "I looked until the thrones were set, and the Ancient of Days sat down, his robe being white almost like snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was a flame of fire, and a thousand thousands served him, and ten

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<sup>121</sup>Alberto Pio, count of Carpi, had a controversy with Erasmus of Rotterdam on several subjects, including images of the anthropomorphic Trinity. Erasmus called them superstitious, but Pio defended them by appealing to the vision of the Ancient of Days in Daniel. Pio wrote this document only twenty years before the controversy at the Moscow Council (1553–1554) where Ivan Viskovaty protested against the same kind of image. Metropolitan Macarius defended himself by evoking Daniel's vision.

<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=ucm.531795082x;view=1up;seq=7>

<sup>122</sup>Man is not the natural, uncreated image of the Son, sharing his very divine nature, as the Son is the natural, uncreated image of the Father, sharing his very divine nature: "God from God, true God from true God." Man is rather the created image of the Son, reflecting his divine nature, but having a created, "undivine" nature. Without this hierarchy of images, man, and each man, would be the natural, uncreated image of the Son thereby created an unlimited number of persons in the "Trinity."

thousand groups of ten thousand helped him.” You have heard that God Most High represented himself voluntarily and in which image? I repeat, as an old man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on a throne of fire. Moreover, this form designates this first “parent” and original cause whom we call God the Father, and the following words of the prophet confirm this. So here is what follows: “I was looking and with the clouds of the sky, there was someone there, like a son of man, and he was coming to the Ancient of Days who had him given the primacy of honor, a kingdom, which all peoples, nations, and tongues would serve, as well as an eternal power.” It is quite clear that these words can only designate the Lord Jesus Himself, who has received from God the Father Himself the kingdom and power. So the previous words testify of the Ancient of Days and describe him to indicate the cause, the origin according to which the Father has a priority of cause over the Son. For this reason, it cannot be said that he [God the Father] was represented in human form because he intended to assume human nature as God the Father, neither to dress as a man nor to be a man in the future, but he, always invisible and incorporeal, wanted to represent himself in corporeal and visible form, which blessed Augustine testifies to in the second book on the Trinity, saying: “. . . it would be too reckless to affirm that God the Father never showed himself to the patriarchs or the prophets under a sensible figure.” Yet they had visions of God, who does not change, but who represented himself in changing images of various creatures, each image replacing the previous one; these visions manifested God for reasons and at times that he judged appropriate. [...] he who can create a bodily image which men can see in dreams can certainly make the image of a physical creature that waking people can see, even though God in himself cannot be seen physically. But it is quite certain that not only the Son or the Holy Spirit but also the Father himself can show himself in a bodily form that people can perceive by the senses. And the Divine Power was not only represented to Daniel in a sentient and especially human form, but also to the other prophets, such as Ezekiel to whom he had shown the image of himself, and then he said, “And above the firmament over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness as it were a human form. And upward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were gleaming bronze, like the appearance of fire enclosed round; and downward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him. Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.”

This was the vision of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. This is how the Almighty appeared, both to Ezekiel and to Daniel, having represented himself in the sentient form of a man, as testified by Scripture. I omit the other representations, for there is sufficient evidence to admit and assert that the divine Power may be represented with images so that the Lord Himself is represented not only by words which refer to Him, but also in visible images and sentient representations. If written words and letters can point to and designate divine things which are in themselves quite different, why is it not allowed to also make some likenesses, by forming other images with a stylet or a chisel? In fact, thanks to an image, all men who are deaf and cannot understand anything, either by voice or by writing, are able to learn something; how will you tell them the things of God, if you remove all kinds of images? It is clear that many are by nature deaf mutes; many are also blind. Is it permissible, on the one hand, to teach the blind to know the Lord by voice, while, on the

other hand, it is not permissible to initiate the deaf into his mysteries by sight because nothing can be presented to their eyes. [If both are possible], then the deaf will understand the same thing that was presented to the blind through hearing? [If only the written form is possible], the condition of the deaf will be far more serious than that of the blind. Now, therefore, it is clear, not only by the authority of the Scriptures, but also by divine examples, that it is true and according to natural reason that God Himself and the divine mysteries are represented in images, and this is what we wanted to show from the beginning.

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