

Short Study Paper No. 0

ACTUAL OR DECREED EXISTENCE?

Dear Brothers and Sisters, one of the points that John Stevens made against Robert Hawker and others who held to the standard Nicene and Chalcedonian concepts of the Trinity and Christology concerned the real or decreed existence of Jesus Christ the Man.

It seems that those who denied the concept of the Antiquity of the God-Man maintained that He existed only in the Decrees of God before creation. The Nicenists called this a decreal (?) existence. They maintained that Christ, as the God-Man, had no real or actual existence before the incarnation, except as God only.

John Stevens answered by noting that if this be the case then it would follow that the statements that present Jesus Christ as the First Born or the Beginning of God's creation have no real meaning because ALL BEINGS HAD A DECREAL EXISTENCE BEFORE CREATION AT THE SAME TIME IN THE DECREES OF GOD.

He further stated that these verses attribute to Jesus Christ, as the God-Man, an existence before any other beings (he was speaking of His humanity) and that arising from this antiquity, Jesus Christ has a place of prominence beyond any other beings.

Here are the verses dealing with the word, Firstborn.

Matthew 1:25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Luke 2:7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Romans 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be conformed* to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Colossians 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

Colossians 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.

Hebrews 11:28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

Hebrews 12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

Beginning of the Creation of God:

Revelation 3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

John Steven's position was that if Christ only had a decreal existence before creation rather than a real or actual existence as the God-Man, these verses would be meaningless. His main point was that a decreal existence would not give Jesus Christ any priority over any other beings since they also had a decreal existence before creation.

I agree with John Stevens on this point. Please share with me your views on this point. Debtor.