FORMATION OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Volume 2

The Nicene Faith PART 1

JOHN BEHR

FORMATION OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY
VOLUME 2
The Nicene Faith

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ISBN 0-88141-266-X
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Cover design: Amber J. Schley

THE FORMATION OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

VOLUME 2

The Nicene Faith

Part One

True God of True God

by

JOHN BEHR

ST VLADIMIR'S SEMINARY PRESS
CRESTWOOD, NEW YORK
2004

A family has underwritten this volume in honor of their heavenly patron, St Gregory the Theologian.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Behr, John.
The Way to Nicaea / by John Behr
p. cm. — (The formation of Christian theology; v. 1)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-88141-224-4 (alk. paper)
1. Theology, Doctrinal—History—Early Church, ca. 30-600. 2. Theology, Doctrinal—History—Middle Ages, 600-1500. I. Title II. Series
BT23.B47 2001
230'.13—dc21 2001019386

ISBN 0-88141-260-0 (v. 2 pt. 1 : alk. paper)
ISBN 0-88141-265-1 (v. 2 pt. 2 : alk. paper)
ISBN 0-88141-266-X (v. 2 pts. 1 & 2 set : alk. paper)

ST VLADIMIR'S SEMINARY PRESS
575 Scarsdale Road, Crestwood, NY 10707
1-800-204-2665

ISBN 0-88141-260-0 (part 1)
ISBN 0-88141-265-1 (part 2)
ISBN 0-88141-266-X (parts 1 & 2 set)

In loving memory of my father,
Archpriest Nicholas Behr

Contents

PART TWO

One of the Holy Trinity

Abbreviations

Primary Texts

Apollinarius of Laodicea

Anak.	*Anakephalaiosis*
Union	*On the Union in Christ of the Body to the Divinity*

Athanasius of Alexandria

Adelph.	*Letter to Adelphius*
Ant.	*Life of Antony*
Arians	*Orations against the Arians*
Councils	*On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia*
Def. Ar.	*Defense against the Arians* (also known as the *Second Apology*)
Encycl.	*Encyclical Letter*
Epict.	*Letter to Epictetus*
Ep. Egyp.	*Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya*
Flight	*Defense of his Flight*
Hist. Ar.	*History of the Arians*
Inc.	*On the Incarnation*
Nicaea	*On the Council of Nicaea* (also known as *On the Decrees of the Council of Nicaea*)
Marcell.	*Letter to Marcellinus*
Pagans	*Against the Pagans*
Serapion	*Letters to Serapion*
Tome	*Tome to the Antiochenes*

Basil of Caesarea

Spirit	*On the Holy Spirit*
Eun.	*Against Eunomius*

Eunomius of Cyzicus

Apol.	*Apology*

Gregory of Nyssa

Abl.	*To Ablabius, That There Are Not Three Gods*
Antirrh.	*Antirrheticus against Apollinarius*
Eun.	*Against Eunomius*

EpPet. *Letter to Peter, On the Difference between* Ousia *and* Hypostasis (= Basil *Ep.* 38)
Song *Commentary on the Song of Songs*
Theoph. *To Theophilus, Against Apollinarius*

Marcellus of Ancyra
Frag. #V (#K-H) Fragments according to the numeration in the editions of Vinzent (Klosterman, Hansen)

Journals, Series, Multi-Volume Works and Others

ACO *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, ed. E. Schwartz (Berlin and Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1927–44)
ACW Ancient Christian Writers
AJAH *American Journal of Ancient History*
CSEL Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CH *Church History*
CT T. Mommsen and P. T. Meyer, eds., *Theodosiani libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Simondianis et Leges Novellae ad Theodosianum Pertinentes*[2] (2 vols. in 3 parts, Berlin, 1954); translations can be found in P. R. Coleman-Norton, *Roman State and Christian Church: A Collection of Legal Documents to A.D. 535* (3 vols. London: SPCK, 1966)
EH *Ecclesiastical History*
EOMIA C. H. Turner, ed., *Ecclesiae Occidentalis Monumenta Iuris Antiquissima* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899–1939)
FC Fathers of the Church
GCS Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
GNO Gregorii Nysseni Opera
GOTR *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*
Hahn A. Hahn and G. L. Hahn, *Bibliothek der Symbole und Glaubensregeln der alten Kirche*, 3rd ed. (Breslau: Morgenstern, 1897)
HJ *Heythrop Journal*
JECS *Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JTS *Journal of Theological Studies*
LCL Loeb Classical Library
Mansi J. D. Mansi, ed., *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* (Florence, 1759–98)
NPNF P. Schaff and H. Wace, eds., Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, second series (repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983–87)
OCP *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*
OECT Oxford Early Christian Texts
PG Patrologia Graeca
PL Patrologia Latina

PO	Patrologia Orientalis
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
RB	*Revue Bénédictine*
REG	*Revue des Études Grecques*
RHE	*Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique*
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
SP	*Studia Patristica*
SVTQ	*Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*
TS	*Theological Studies*
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
Urk.	H. G. Opitz, ed., *Athanasius Werke*, vol. 3, pt 1, *Urkunden zur Geschichte des Arianischen Streites* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1934)
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
ZKG	*Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*
ZNTW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Urchristentums*

Preface

This volume of "The Formation of Christian Theology" explores the theological reflection of the fourth century, the period in which Christianity became Nicene Christianity. The significance of this era cannot be overstated: the central elements of Christian theology articulated during the fourth century have been, until very recently, the common inheritance of all Christians, of whatever tradition. As J. N. D. Kelly said of the Creed of the Council of Constantinople, the final, defining monument of the fourth century, "It is . . . one of the few threads by which the tattered fragments of the divided robe of Christendom are held together."[1] As this legacy has come under increasing criticism from various sides, and has indeed been abandoned by some, it is not surprising that there has been a renewed interest in the Nicene faith.[2]

The previous volume in this series, *The Way to Nicaea*, charted the theological reflection during the first three centuries which led to Nicaea and the debates of the fourth century, not with a view to finding earlier anticipations of an already known Nicene faith, but as a response to the question posed by Jesus Christ: "Who do you say that I am?" As such, the work carried out there is not simply a background which can be left behind, as we turn from a supposedly "primitive Christianity" to the elaboration of an intellectually more satisfying Nicene faith. Not only would this result in detaching the Nicene faith from its moorings, but, in so doing, it would risk misunderstanding the content of the Nicene faith itself. The legacies of Irenaeus and Origen and the specter of Paul of Samosata were powerful forces in the fourth century, without which the fourth-century developments cannot be understood properly. The way to understand Nicaea and her protagonists must take into account their own inheritance.

[1]J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (London: Longman, 1972), 296.

[2]To mention but two books which have appeared during the course of writing this volume: C. R. Seitz, *Nicene Christianity: The Future for a New Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2001); and L. T. Johnson, *The Creed: What Christians Believe and Why It Matters* (London: DLT, 2003).

Like *The Way to Nicaea*, this work primarily consists of the examination of particular theologians: especially Athanasius, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa, together with their opponents, Arius, Aetius, and Eunomius, and Apollinarius of Laodicea. No Latin writer has been treated at length. Undoubtedly important though figures such as Hilary of Poitiers and Marius Victorinus were for the reception of Nicene Orthodoxy in the West, their contribution to the settlement arrived at and sealed by the Council of Constantinople was minimal. Even figures such as Eusebius of Caesarea and Marcellus of Ancyra, who were unquestionably important for the course of fourth-century polemics, have not been treated in full here: to have done so would have made an already lengthy work excessively long. Their role, however, has been noted in the introductory chapters and the historical survey. Most importantly, this work is not intended as an exhaustive catalogue of positions, but as a presentation of the theological reflection of those figures who prepared the way for the councils of Nicaea and Constantinople and in whose work we find the proper context for interpreting their creeds.

The fourth century is a complex period to study and even more so to present. Unlike the first three centuries treated in *The Way to Nicaea*, there is an overarching, continuous narrative involving all those studied here. The primary concern, however, is the way in which they thought out their vision of the Christian faith on their own terms. Thus, while following the pattern set in *The Way to Nicaea*, of providing a short biographical sketch and notes on their works and the controversies they were engaged in, I have also provided, in Chapter Three, a historical overview of the numerous councils and controversies from 318 to 382. To describe the transition from the debates discussed in the previous volume to those discussed here, I have also presented, in Chapter Two, the few figures from the turn of the century about whom we know much at all, and in whose writings we can see adumbrated many of the issues concerning, in particular, the legacy of Origen and Paul of Samosata, which flared up in later decades.

But before we can turn to this exploration, some broader issues need to be addressed. We need to consider the categories we use to analyze the controversies of the period. Being sensitive to the way in which various categories came to be deployed during the course of the controversies enables us to see other aspects of the debates and so have a firmer understanding of their par-

ticular contours as well as a fuller picture of the debates themselves. Chapter One begins this necessary critical work.

Then, on a broader scale still, we need to reflect on how we stand in respect of the study undertaken, our own theological perspectives and presuppositions. We need to be aware of our own stance, so that we can engage in a fruitful dialogue. Of particular importance for this study are the questions of what we mean by "Trinitarian theology," "Incarnation," and "orthodoxy." Such topics are discussed in the Introduction, which is thus placed outside the main body of this work, devoted to the fourth century itself.

The Introduction and Chapter One are developed in the light of, and are based upon, the explorations undertaken in *The Way to Nicaea* and this volume. Those not familiar with the subject—both the primary texts and modern patristic scholarship, as well as issues in modern theology—may find these introductory pages hard-going. Nevertheless, they are important, serving to scrutinize certain presuppositions that usually remain tacit. Only by doing this will we be open to the challenges offered by the figures we will encounter and thus see the Christian faith afresh. It might be profitable to return to these pages, once the issues discussed there have been given flesh by the fuller studies that follow.

I would like to thank all those without whom this book could not have been written. In particular, Fr Andrew Louth, who has acted as a much needed theological "sounding board" and graciously read through the manuscript, offering valuable suggestions. I would also like to thank the faculty of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary for granting me a sabbatical during the spring of 2003, and my students, my other "sounding board." There are many who have helped in the production of this book, and to all I am grateful. In particular I would like to thank Paul, Carol, Brent, and Deborah for their diligence and sharp eyes. Finally, this work would not have been possible without the patience and understanding of my sons, Felix and Rufus, and especially my wife, Kate, who was concerned with the living, whilst I was concerned with the living faith of the dead.

INTRODUCTION

Presuppositions and Perspectives

This volume, *The Nicene Faith*, examines the theological reflection of the fourth century, from the initial debates that occasioned the Council of Nicaea to their resolution at the Council of Constantinople. It continues the previous volume, *The Way to Nicaea*, not only chronologically, but thematically: the figures who populate the pages to come are already heirs to rich theological traditions, inheriting distinct approaches to the task of theology. Of particular importance for the debates in the fourth century, as we shall see, were the complex legacy of Origen and the controversy over Paul of Samosata. Most important, however, and supporting both of these, was the anchoring of Christian theological reflection in the canon and tradition of the gospel according to Scripture. Normative Christianity, as established by the end of the second century on the basis of the manner in which the gospel was proclaimed from the beginning, affirmed that it was in *this* matrix that the scriptural Christ, the abiding focus of Christian theology, is encountered and contemplated.

The question of the proper starting point, the "first principles" of theology is one to which those engaged in its discipline must continually return; however, their continual temptation is to do otherwise.[1] Without being firmly grounded on its proper foundation, the vast body of reflection developed within theology risks collapsing into dust. It is not simply that the first principles are elementary stages, to be transcended by higher realms of more elevated reflection, but that they provide the necessary perspective within which the more abstract discussion takes place and is to be understood. The proper order, the *taxis*, of theology must be maintained if it is to retain its proper coherence. *The Way to Nicaea* showed clearly how Christian theology

[1]As Rowan Williams notes, "Theology, in short, is perennially tempted to be seduced by the prospect of by-passing the question of how it *learns* its own language" (idem, *On Christian Theology* [Oxford: Blackwell, 2000], 131).

developed first and foremost as faith in the lordship and divinity of the crucified and exalted Christ, as proclaimed by the apostles according to the Scriptures. The Passion of Christ stands as the definitive moment in the revelation of God, the eschatological apocalypse which unlocks the Scriptures,[2] and so enables Christians, retrospectively, to view the work of God from the beginning and, prospectively, by the continued contemplation of the exalted Christ who is still the coming one, to participate in this work, embodying or incarnating the presence of God in this world through their own witness or *martyria*.

The Way to Nicaea charted the developments that were to culminate in the debates and councils of the fourth century. In encountering each early Christian thinker, it was important to explore his reflections on his own terms, rather than simply looking for anticipations of later milestones, such as the councils of Nicaea or Chalcedon. When Irenaeus, Hippolytus, or Origen wrote their treatises, they were not doing the preparatory work for Nicaea, even if to understand Nicaea one must first engage with their work. The way to Nicaea is not plotted retrospectively from Nicaea, as if it were itself the starting point, but with reference to the revelation of God in Christ, the subject of the Christian confession from the beginning; if Nicaea is a definitive moment in Christian identity, it is because it preserves the truth of *the* definitive moment. If we overlook this basic fact, then we risk both misunderstanding the landmarks that we think we already know and, more seriously, substituting other first principles, taking something other than Christ and his Cross as constitutive of the identity of Christianity. Having explored that crucial stage of reflection in *The Way to Nicaea*, we can now turn to the formation of the Nicene faith in the fourth century.

"Trinitarian Theology"

A book entitled *The Nicene Faith* will be presumed to be about "Trinitarian theology." This book is not. Not because it is also about other things—Christology, exegesis, spirituality, and all the other aspects which together make up

[2]On the retrospective opening up of Scripture by the Cross, see J. Behr, *The Way to Nicaea* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 27–28, 118–30, 169–73. R. Hays speaks of the "eschatological *apocalypsis* of the Cross" in *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 169.

"Nicene Christianity"—but because the very term "Trinitarian theology" risks undermining the principle stated in the previous paragraphs. The results of the debates which shook the fourth century are too easily reduced to shorthand formulae, such as the "three *hypostases* and one *ousia*" of "the consubstantial Trinity." However, the very familiarity of such phrases can result in their being detached from the debates that produced them and divorced from the content that they seek to encapsulate. A typical example of what remains when the formulae are isolated in this way, and then synthesized into larger metaphysical systems, is the entry under "Trinity" in the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*: "The central dogma of Christian theology, that the one God exists in three Persons and one substance, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is one yet self-differentiated; the God who reveals Himself to mankind is one God equally in three distinct modes of existence, yet remains one through all eternity."[3] These "facts of dogma" have been assumed as a given, and so Trinitarian theology concerns itself with reflecting on how the one God can simultaneously be three eternally distinct persons, without the plurality destroying the unity or the unity undermining the reality of the distinctions. In its textbook form, such theology begins with what can be known and said of this God—that he is one, the uncreated origin of all creation, love, goodness and so on; and then proceeds to analyze how this same God is three—how the persons of the Trinity are related, their different characteristics and relationships.[4] Having explained this "immanent" Trinitarian theology, describing the being of such a God as it is in itself, the next step is to relate this Trinity to the activity of revelation, the economy of salvation recorded in Scripture, the "economic" dimension of Trinitarian theology. But now, because of the position already established, it is simply assumed, beginning with Augustine, that the theophanies described in the Old Testament were not uniquely manifestations of the Son and Word of God, but of any of the three, or the Trinity itself, the one Lord God, as Augustine put it.[5] Finally, it is claimed, first by Peter Lombard, though it is still a common presupposition, that while it was the Son who became man, as Jesus Christ, it was nevertheless possible (and that it still is would seem to be the working

[3]F. L. Cross, ed., 3rd ed. rev. E. A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1641.

[4]The classic critique of such theology is Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. J. Donceel (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1986 [1967]).

[5]Cf. Augustine *De Trinitate* 3.1.3.

presupposition for much modern theology), for the Father and the Spirit also to be incarnate.[6] Trinitarian theology is thus made into a realm unto itself, requiring subsequent reflection on "the Incarnation" of one of the three divine persons: Triadology followed by Christology. In this perspective, the Trinity and the Incarnation are taken as being the linchpins of Christian theology—Christian faith is "Trinitarian" and "incarnational," the unquestioned premise for most modern theology.[7]

One effect of assuming those shorthand formulae as presuppositions or first principles is that the reflection of the authors of the New Testament is effectively separated from that of the fathers, those who continued in the tradition established by the apostles (and uniquely by them). The patristic period is also itself divided into distinct controversies—Trinitarian followed by Christological—establishing the already known dogmas of Christianity, in which the writings of Scripture are only used, it is claimed, in an ad hoc, proof-text manner. This perception of a disjunction between the authors of the New Testament and the fathers parallels (and is probably due to) the parting of the ways, in modern times, between, on the one hand, scriptural studies, which attempt to establish the original authorship, redaction, context, and perhaps even the "meaning," of their texts, or the original history of "the Jesus movement," and, on the other hand, patristic studies which trace the development of already known dogmatic positions or, as became fashionable in the latter part of the twentieth century, to mine their works for anything other than theology. Serious engagement with scriptural scholarship, let alone Scripture, is generally absent from patristic studies, "neo-patristic syntheses," and dogmatic works during the twentieth century, and likewise, the fathers, when treated theologically, are usually consulted only to confirm what is already believed. It is thus perhaps not surprising that when scholars, trained in the historical-critical methodologies of scriptural studies, have attempted to come to terms with the dogmas articulated in patristic theology, they have tended to speak in term of "the myth of God Incarnate."[8] In this perspective, dogma is inevitably, as Harnack put it, the work of the Greek

[6]Cf. Peter Lombard *Libri IV Sententiarum* 3.1.2.

[7]Classically expressed in the various essays in *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation*, ed. C. Gore (London: 1889); for a profound reflection on the topic, see K. Rahner, "The Theology of the Incarnation," in idem, *More Recent Writings*, Theological Investigations, vol. 4 (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1966), 105–20.

[8]Most notoriously in the collection of essays edited by J. Hick, *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM, 1977).

spirit on the soil of the gospel—if only because it has been forced into this mold by Harnack himself and those who have followed him.[9]

More important, however, for the orientation of much modern theology, is that, construed in terms of the gradual development of a dogmatic edifice, the reflection of the fathers has effectively been divorced from the given revelation of God in Christ and been made to retell that revelation in a different manner, so that the Word of God is no longer the locus of God's self-expression (for it is now held that any of the three appeared in the Old Testament theophanies), and the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, is not so much "the exact imprint of the very being" of the Father (Heb 1.3), but is rather the incarnation of a divine person which could have been otherwise if so desired. This, to be blunt, is nothing short of the distortion of the gospel itself. Rather than establishing that what is seen in Christ, as proclaimed by the gospel, truly is what it is to be God, that he is divine with the same divinity as his Father, a recognition only possible in the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12.3), Trinitarian theology, in the style outlined above, concerns itself with the heavenly existence of three divine persons.[10] Such Trinitarian theology is indeed a "mystery," an exercise in reconciling unity and diversity best left to theological specialists, for, as Rahner pointed out, it has little relevance for most Christians.[11]

Considered in this perspective, the claim that the doctrine of the Trinity is not found within the pages of Scripture, except by a forced exegesis, is understandable.[12] The apostolic writers do not speak of the one God as self-differentiated into three, nor do they appeal to the various passages from the

[9]A. von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. N. Buchanan from 3rd German ed. (London and Edinburgh: Williams & Norgate, 1894), 1.17, 21–22. A. McGrath points out, "From its beginnings, the history of dogma has been written about by those concerned with its elimination" (*The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundation of Doctrinal Criticism* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997], 138).

[10] The revelation of God in Christ is further marginalized when, as is commonly done, the interrelationship of the Trinity, as persons in communion, is taken as the constitutive element of our own existence in the image of God; here Christ is but one of the persons in communion and so is no longer himself the locus of the revelation of God and of our contemplation. But, according to the New Testament, followed by the fathers, it is Christ alone who is the image of the invisible God (Col 1.15), in whose pattern Adam was already molded (Rom 5.14), and to whose image we are conformed (Rom 8.29) when we are crucified with him (Gal 2.20, etc.). For a critique of such theology, see K. Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity," *New Blackfriars* 81 (2000): 432–45.

[11]Rahner lamented the fact that most Christians are "almost mere 'monotheists'" (*The Trinity*, 10).

[12]For a particularly trenchant statement, see A. Buzzard and C. F. Hunting, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity's Self-Inflicted Wound* (San Francisco, London, & Bethesda: Christian Universities Press, 1998).

Old Testament to which recourse would be made later on, once the doctrine of the Trinity begins to be established—passages from Genesis, such as the plurality of the divine fiat ("Let *us* make . . ." Gen 1.26) and the visitors to Abraham (Gen 18), references throughout Scripture to the Word and the Spirit of God or to his Wisdom (e.g., Ps 32.6, LXX; Prov 8.22), the vision of Isaiah (Is 6), or the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man (Dan 7). Trinitarian theology did not develop as an attempt to explain such features of Scripture and to present it in such a fashion obfuscates the issue.

Nevertheless, as already intimated, the Christian faith is intrinsically Trinitarian. The basic proclamation of Christianity, that Jesus is Lord, the one of whom the Spirit spoke through the prophets, makes necessary a confession of faith in the Trinity—God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ his Son, and the Holy Spirit. When used in its fullest sense as the spoken (and in the Septuagint, the written) substitute for the divine, unspeakable tetragrammaton, *YHWH*, the term "Lord" applies to God alone. So, to claim that God has bestowed this "name above every name" upon the crucified and exalted Christ (Phil 2.9) is to recognize in Christ what it is to be God, to assert that Christ shares in the divinity of God, while being other than God himself: "For us there is one God the Father . . . and one Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 8.6). The divinity of Jesus is further expressed in the apostolic writings by attributing to him actions which, according to Scripture, belong to God alone, such as forgiving sins (cf. Mk 2.7) and being active in creation (cf. Col 1.6; Jn 1.3). By the end of the first century, Jesus is unambiguously referred to as "God" (ὁ θεός, Jn 20.28), and within a few decades, Pliny reports how the Christians in his area gathered at daybreak "to sing hymns to Christ as if to God."[13] Furthermore, to say "Jesus is the Lord," that is, the one spoken of in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, is only possible by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12.3), the Spirit of God, who proceeds from the Father as another Advocate or Counsellor alongside Jesus (Jn 14.16; 15.26), and who now dwells in the hearts of Christians, teaching them all things and enabling them also to call on God as Father—Abba! (Rom 8.9–17; Gal 4.6).[14]

[13] Pliny *Ep.* 10.96: *carmen Christo quasi Deo dicere.*

[14] It is noteworthy that in the early creedal statements, the "rules of truth," all the various points affirmed of Christ in the second article of the Nicene Creed, come under the third article of the statement of faith, for this is what was spoken by the Spirit through the prophets; in the Nicene Creed, what the Spirit speaks is left unspecified. Cf. Behr, *Way to Nicaea*, 36. Again, if Nicaea itself is taken as the starting point, this coherence is obscured.

The apostles were not interested in the images and analogies of plurality found in Scripture, nor in reconciling plurality and unity. But they certainly were concerned to explain, through the medium of Scripture, how the Lord Jesus relates to the one God, his Father, in the Spirit. This basic scriptural grammar of Trinitarian theology—that the one God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made known in and through the Spirit—is preserved in the most abstract discussions of the fourth century, in the creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople, and in liturgical language.[15] Yet this fundamental grammar is overlooked when the point of these discussions is neglected and the resulting formulae are taken in abstraction, as referring to an "immanent" Trinity—one God existing in three Persons—which is then presupposed and superimposed upon the scriptural revelation. At this point, it is not enough simply to assert the identity of the "economic" Trinity and the "immanent" Trinity, or to emphasize that the "economic" basis of our knowledge of the Trinity—that it is only through the revelation of the Son in and through the Spirit that we can speak of God as Father—must correspond to how the Trinity actually is in "immanent" terms.[16] These two dimensions of Trinitarian theology, economic and immanent, should never have been separated, even if they are subsequently reunited.[17] That Trinitarian theology results from reflecting on how the

[15]See, especially, the prefaces to the eucharistic prayers in the liturgies of Sts. Basil and John Chrysostom, addressed to God, yet always together with his Son and Holy Spirit.

[16]Rahner's maxim, that "*the 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity*" (*Trinity*, 22), has nevertheless provoked a veritable renaissance of reflection on the Trinity.

[17]It is doubtful that the distinction, drawn in this manner, between "immanent" and "economic" Trinitarian theology really corresponds, as is often asserted, to the patristic usage of "*theologia*" and "*economia*." C. M. LaCugna, for example, states that, despite their infrequent use of these terms, the Cappadocians had firmly established their meaning: "Theology is the science of 'God in Godself'; the economy is the sphere of God's condescension to the flesh. The doctrine of the Trinity is *Theology* strictly speaking. In later Greek Patristic theology, usage will remain generally the same. . . . Having discovered that it was possible to make inferences about *theologia* on the basis of *oikonomia*, theologians began to reflect on *theologia* itself, in some cases before or without considering the economy of salvation." (*God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* [San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991], 43 and passim). Yet her own comment on the passage she cites as support for this claim in fact suggests otherwise: "Theodoret . . . contrasts the human and divine natures of Christ with the words *oikonomias/theologias*" (ibid., 52). In other words, the distinction applies to the two aspects of Christ, whether *he* is spoken of as human or as divine. It is in this manner that the term "theology" is used from very early on; Eusebius records a passage from an early third-century document, the *Little Labyrinth*, which asserts that in the works of many earlier writers "Christ is spoken of as God" (θεολογεῖται ὁ Χριστός, *EH* 5.28.4–5). Even when a contrast is made, it is between two different ways of speaking of the same subject, as for instance in the classic passage of Gregory of Nazianzus, where he distinguishes between

crucified and exalted Lord Jesus Christ reveals the one and only God as Father, in and through the Holy Spirit, who also enables adopted sons crucified with Christ to call upon the same God as Father, means that Trinitarian theology has less to do with the heavenly existence of three divine persons than with this new manner of confessing the one God—as Father, in the Son, by the Holy Spirit.

Nicene Orthodoxy

The reconstruction of the history of Christian theology outlined above, in terms of a discontinuity between the apostles and those who followed them, and then the periodization of the development of dogma—Triadology followed by Christology—has significant implications for the question of where right belief, orthodoxy, is to be found. The very notion of "orthodoxy," and, together with it, the idea of deviation or "heresy," is, of course, a perennial issue for Christianity and one which grows ever more complex. Walter Bauer's *Orthodox and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, the book which revolutionized twentieth-century studies on orthodoxy in early Christianity (at least when it was translated into English), was not nearly radical enough![18] Not only, as Bauer claims, does "heresy" precede "orthodoxy" in some locations, but the earliest Christian documents we have, the letters of Paul, address errors within the Christian communities. Orthodoxy, as examined in *The Way to Nicaea*, has less to do with recapturing a pristine past than envisioning the future, contemplating the crucified and exalted Christ who is still the Coming One.

The question of *Nicene* orthodoxy is especially important today. Through the controversies of the fourth century, the Council of Nicaea became a standard reference point and remained so thereafter. The world of Nicene Christianity embraces not only matters pertaining to dogmatic theology (the use

what belongs to Christ according to the "economy" and what belongs to him by nature (*Or* 29.18). For Gregory, the Holy Spirit is also to be included in "theology," as identical expressions (of divinity) are applied to each of the three (*Or* 31.3). Yet, although Christ and the Spirit are "theologized" in this way, they remain the subject of reflection, not "God in Godself." The distinction between "economy" and "theology," as elaborated by Athanasius, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa will be discussed in detail in their respective chapters.

[18]W. Bauer, *Rechtglaübigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1934); trans. of 2nd ed. (1964, ed. by G. Strecker) by R. Kraft et al., *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971).

of the term "consubstantial"), but also spirituality (liturgy, prayer, piety) and also includes both a history (marked by particular events) and a geography (with its own sacred centers)—all the things which make up a "world." But over the last couple of centuries, the foundations of this world have been steadily eroded, and a new world has been constructed, with a new geography and, especially important, a new sense of history.[19] Christianity today, in all its various forms, clearly finds itself torn between these two worlds: the world in which it developed into its classical form and the world in which even Christians now live. It is perhaps the relegation of this "Nicene world" to books that stimulated the intense interest, in recent times, in the debates of the fourth century. The last decades of the twentieth century saw a number of excellent monographs published on various individual figures—Eusebius of Caesarea, Arius, Asterius, Marcellus, Athanasius, Eunomius, Basil of Caesarea, and Gregory of Nazianzus. As yet only a few authors have sketched out in articles a revised history of the fourth-century controversies, and even fewer have ventured to undertake a full survey of the fourth-century debates, notably, Manlio Simonetti, *La crisis ariana*, and Richard Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God.*[20]

The result of all this scholarship is that the question of Nicene orthodoxy is now much more complex than it was thirty or forty years ago. It is no longer possible to refer to the debates that resulted in the settlement of "Nicene Orthodoxy" as the "Arian controversy." It is not adequate to repeat the story of how the arch-heretic Arius perverted the originally pure faith, was condemned at the Council of Nicaea, yet established a movement that continued in opposition to Nicaea, reappearing hydra-like in a variety of forms ("semi-Arianism," "neo-Arianism") until the Cappadocians took over the baton of Nicene orthodoxy from Athanasius and finally defeated the heresy at the Council of Constantinople. This story, as we shall see in Chapter One, simply does not hold up.

Given these fruits of recent work, it is not surprising that, having surveyed all the material in a weighty tome, Hanson concludes that "the story is the story of how orthodoxy was reached, found, not of how it was maintained."[21]

[19]Cf. H. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974).

[20]M. Simonetti, *La crisis ariana nel iv secolo* (Rome: Augustinianum, 1975); R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988).

[21]Hanson, *Search*, 870.

It was, he asserts, "a process of trial and error," error, he specifies elsewhere, not only on the part of the "heretics" but also shared by the "orthodox" too.[22] More specifically, this process of trial and error involved a (further) break with the past—with the theology of Irenaeus, Tertullian and Hippolytus—in the elaboration of "a genuinely Christian doctrine of God."[23] This is done, he claims, in "a return to Scripture," despite what he calls their "inadequate equipment for understanding the Bible."[24] Through all these developments, or rather this "discovery,"[25] an abiding truth was established. As he puts it:

> The shape of Trinitarian doctrine finally achieved in the fourth century, then, was necessary, indeed we may say permanent. It was a solution, *the* solution, to the intellectual problem which had for so long vexed the church.[26]

Such does indeed seem like a reasonable inference from the current state of historical scholarship. It is, however, a deeply problematic conclusion. Can one really claim a permanent status for an explanation articulated for the first time, as Hanson claims, in the fourth century? Are the fourth-century figures even as fixated with the articulation itself anyway? It is noteworthy that the terms *hypostasis* and *ousia* do not appear in the Creed of Constantinople, while the formula "three *hypostases* one *ousia*" appears in the pages of the Cappadocians only a few times.[27] As I have already suggested, Trinitarian theology, let alone Nicene orthodoxy, cannot be reduced to this formula. Hanson's conclusion seems to have substituted the explanation for that which it is explaining, as if the theoretical edifice elaborated in the fourth century is itself the permanent point of reference in which the human spirit finds rest.

Part of the disquiet with Hanson's conclusion can be alleviated by Richard Vaggione's recent observation that such investigations into the fourth-century controversies have begun from the wrong starting point, from that which is most abstract, and therefore most unlikely to have provoked the

[22]Ibid., 873; and idem, "The Achievement of Orthodoxy in the Fourth Century AD," in R. Williams, ed., *The Making of Orthodoxy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 142–56, at 153.

[23]Hanson, *Search*, 873.

[24]Ibid., 872, 875.

[25]Ibid., 875

[26]Hanson, "Achievement of Orthodoxy," 156.

[27]A point noted by J. T. Lienhard ("*Ousia* and *Hypostasis*: The Cappadocian Settlement and the Theology of 'One *Hypostasis*,'" in S. T. Davies, D. Kendall, and G. O'Collins, eds., *The Trinity* [Oxford: OUP, 1999], 99–121, esp. 99–103), who gives as his only example Gregory Nazianzen *On the Great Athanasius* 35.

majority of Christians into action. More important, Vaggione argues, is the interpretative framework within which the dogmatic formulae are set or (using Newman's distinction between "notional" and "real") the way in which these abstract propositions are apprehended as "real" by the religious imagination: the world was not torn apart simply by a single "iota," it was "not doctrine *per se*, but doctrine imagined" that incited the Christian masses to take part in what would otherwise have been a barely intelligible controversy (as it is still often presented).[28] This is an important point: at stake are different paradigms within which doctrinal formulations take flesh. The similarity of terms and expressions, yet difference of paradigm or imaginative framework, explains why most of the figures in the fourth century seem to be talking past each other, endlessly repeating the same point yet perennially perplexed as to why their opponents simply do not get it.

Once we enter into their own worlds, however, we find that very similar sounding formulae are used to tell very different versions of the "Christian story." The non-Nicene insistence that Scripture is to be applied in a univocal manner to Christ, both those things which seem more divine and those which seem all too human, results in a very strong emphasis, well brought out by Vaggione, on an absolutely unitary subject: "If, as the non-Nicenes claimed, it was truly crucial that there be one and only one Christ, and that the Logos be a single subject throughout, then that unity had to extend to his *entire* history and not merely to its earthly portions."[29] The Word of God is here understood as a distinct self-subsisting entity, *with his own history*, in which existence as Jesus Christ is but a phase. In this style of exegesis, Vaggione continues, the hierarchy entailed by this story "became not only narrative but a metaphysical reality."[30] And in this construction, the Logos unambiguously falls upon our side of the gap between God and everything else: he is a creature, even if not as one of the other creatures.

Vaggione has skillfully introduced us into the world of the non-Nicenes. But his sketches of what the Nicene world looks like are much less successful. In fact, with only a few exceptions, the "Christian story" as told by the Nicenes has been very inadequately represented during the twentieth

[28]R. P. Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 103.

[29]Ibid., 127.

[30]Ibid., 128.

century.[31] In Hanson's hands, for instance, Athanasius' Christ turns out to be no more than the Word of God wearing a "space-suit" of human flesh, enabling him to be active within the world and its history, yet remaining untouched by anything that afflicts the flesh.[32] This docetic charade is made complete, or completely unintelligible, when it is then claimed that, in this picture, the Word allows his flesh to exhibit the weaknesses proper to the flesh so that we might not think that he was not really human!

The inadequacies of presupposing categories such as Word-flesh/Word-man have been noted and are increasingly realized.[33] I would suggest, however, that a deeper reason for the difficulties of explaining Nicene Christianity is our own context, in particular, our own presuppositions about what Scripture is and how it is to be read. Until very recently, studies of patristic exegesis have tended to operate with the assumption that Scripture is what we think it is and that it is to be interpreted in the way that we carry out scriptural exegesis—that is, through historical-critical methods claiming to deliver the true (because original) meaning of the text of Scripture. Not surprisingly, given our own concern for history, investigations into patristic exegesis have usually proceeded by drawing up an opposition between Antiochene typology, based in a Semitic sense of history (and therefore good) and Alexandrine allegory, based in a Platonic escape from the history represented in the text (and therefore bad).[34] Again, it is increasingly realized that such facile contrasts say more about our own prejudices and that they are simply inadequate as models for understanding patristic exegesis.[35] This is also paralleled, and strengthened, by an increasing dissatisfaction among scriptural scholars with the historical-critical methodologies that so fascinated twentieth-century scriptural scholarship.[36]

Nevertheless, this realization has not percolated into studies of patristic doctrine. A striking example of this is Hanson's treatment of the way in which

[31]A noteworthy exception is K. Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

[32]Cf. Hanson, *Search*, 450, 456.

[33]See esp. R. A. Norris, "Christological Models in Cyril of Alexandria," *SP* 13.2, TU 116 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1975): 255–68.

[34]On such dichotomies, see esp. J. Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation: A Study of the Two Testaments* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 34–64.

[35]See esp. F. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[36]Amongst the many works, see esp. L. T. Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (San Francisco: Harper, 1997).

Athanasius uses Prov 8.22: "The Lord created me at the beginning of his ways." Hanson notes that these words were applied by all sides to the Son,[37] but that Athanasius, following the "peculiar views" of Marcellus of Ancyra and Eustathius of Antioch, referred these words specifically to the human flesh of Christ[38] and that "later pro-Nicene writers borrowed their very implausible practice of reading into the Old Testament references to the incarnate Word at places where before everybody had seen references to the pre-existent Logos."[39] Hanson's overall conclusion is that, in this period,

> the expounders of the text of the Bible are incompetent and ill-prepared to expound it. This applies as much to the wooden and unimaginative approach of the Arians as it does to the fixed determination of their opponents to read their doctrine into the Bible by hook or crook.[40]

Hanson clearly has no time for the style of exegesis practiced during this period. A similar incredulity in the claims of such exegesis (that Prov 8.22 applies to Christ as man) is tacit in most modern works on the period.[41]

But then Hanson continues with this extraordinary statement:

> It was much more the presuppositions with which they approach the Biblical text that clouded their perceptions, the tendency to treat the Bible in an "atomic" way as if each verse or set of verses was capable of giving direct information about Christian doctrine apart from its context, the "oracular" concept of the nature of the Bible, the incapacity with a few exceptions to take serious account of the background and circumstances of the writers. The very reverence with which they honoured the Bible as a sacred book stood in the way of their understanding it. In this matter they were of course only reproducing the presuppositions of all Christians before them, of the writers of the New Testament itself, of the tradition of Jewish rabbinic piety and scholarship.[42]

[37]Hanson, *Search*, 227.

[38]Ibid., 234.

[39]Ibid., 235.

[40]Ibid., 848.

[41]The difficulty that Vaggione has in comprehending the Nicene world is perhaps because he takes the style of exegesis exemplified by Augustine as being normative for Nicene theology. Cf. *Eunomius*, esp. 84, ftn. 34; 85; 135,

[42]Hanson, *Search*, 848–49.

What they were doing is simply wrong, even if it is a practice going back to the apostles themselves and their proclamation of the gospel! Recent work on the understanding and use of Scripture in antiquity, by scholars such as James Kugel and John Barton, confirm the general points made by Hanson.[43] According to Kugel, four basic assumptions governed the understanding of Scripture in antiquity.[44] First, it is a fundamentally cryptic document, where the true meaning of the text is a hidden, esoteric message; from a Christian perspective, of course, it is Christ who unlocks the Scriptures so that his disciples see how it all speaks about him. Second, it is a relevant text; it is not so much a record of things that happened in the past, but a text written down for us, now. Third, it is perfect and perfectly harmonious; from a Christian perspective, again, it all speaks about Christ. And fourth, as a consequence of the first three assumptions, Scripture is regarded as being divine or divinely inspired—what the prophets spoke by the Spirit is revealed to the apostles by the same Spirit, bestowed upon them by Jesus Christ to lead them into the full knowledge of himself.

Seen from this perspective, the issue between the Nicenes and the non-Nicenes is a matter of exegesis. Both sides took Scripture as speaking of Christ. The non-Nicenes, however, insisted on an absolutely univocal exegesis, which applied all scriptural affirmations in a unitary fashion to one subject, who thus turns out to be a demi-god, neither fully divine nor fully human—created but not as one of the creatures. And, at least in the modern reading of this, this demi-god is a temporal being, with his own history—the "preincarnate Logos" who eventually, as one phase in his existence, animates a body, becoming the man Jesus Christ. For the Nicenes, on the other hand, Scripture speaks throughout of Christ, but the Christ of the kerygma, the crucified and exalted Lord, and speaks of him in a twofold fashion, demanding in turn a "partitive" exegesis: some things are said of him as divine and other things are said of him as human—yet referring to the same Christ throughout. Seen in this way, the conflict turns upon two different ways of conceptualizing the identity of Christ.

If this is right, then, as Hanson notes without realizing the import of his observation, Nicene orthodoxy has a greater claim to continuity with earlier

[43]Cf. J. L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); J. Barton, *Holy Writings–Sacred Text: The Canon in Early Christianity* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).

[44]Kugel, *Traditions*, 14–19.

Christianity than previously thought; the exegetical practice of the Nicenes does indeed reproduce that of the writers of the New Testament itself: Paul proclaimed that Christ died and rose according to the Scriptures, and the four canonical Gospels expand on this by narrating accounts of Christ in an interpretative engagement with the Scriptures. If this is the case, then serious doubts must be raised regarding claims that orthodoxy was discovered or constructed for the first time in the fourth century. Certainly the formulae of dogmatic theology are expressed more precisely in the fourth century than earlier, in response to various questions newly raised, and they continue to be refined thereafter. In the following century, the question of partitive exegesis is made more precise when challenged by those who would take it as implying two subjects in the one Christ. But these formulae were not themselves the focal point of Christian faith, rather they express the parameters of the engagement with the Scriptures in the contemplation and worship of Christ. The Christian project, as it were, remains the same: its object is not to recover the historical Jesus on the basis of a historical approach to Scripture, nor to arrive at a more perfect metaphysics, but to contemplate the Christ who is still the coming one. The content of orthodoxy is not protological, but eschatological.

It has recently been argued by Maurice Wiles that belief in a semi-divine mediator flourishes in contexts which assume that the gap between God and creation is populated by various levels or realms of such beings, combined with a belief in the pre-existence of souls.[45] In such a world, one can imagine great cosmological dramas, myths being played out in an almost Gnostic fashion. Wiles also suggests that the "third and final death" of Arianism in the late eighteenth century was due to a changing perception of the world.[46] However, the ability of modern scholarship, with its historicist presumptions, to imagine how the non-Nicene world looked, and its inability to comprehend the Nicene world, suggests that "Arianism" has not yet been laid to rest. Rowan Williams has described the Creed of Nicaea as being "the first step in the critical demythologizing of Christian discourse"[47]—not, that is, a Bultmannian demythologizing of the gospel, but of *our* theological language, how it is that

[45]M. Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism through the Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 161–64.

[46]Ibid., 164.

[47]R. Williams, "The Nicene Heritage," in J. M. Byrne, ed., *The Christian Understanding of God Today* (Dublin: Columbia Press, 1993), 45–48, at 45.

we think that we speak. This brings us back to the point from which we began, the necessary task that theology must continually undertake of returning to its first principles. As is proper, then, studying the Nicene faith compels us to reexamine our own theological discourse and its presuppositions.

* * *

In view of the foregoing reflections, which result from the explorations presented in *The Way to Nicaea* and in this present volume, Christian theology, at least as vindicated by the councils of Nicaea and Constantinople, has been shown to be very much, and in a very specific manner, an exegetical task. The importance of this point cannot be overstated. Here Christian theology was not a philosophical enterprise, attempting to articulate a fundamental ontology, whether of being or of communion, or both, describing the ultimate structures of "reality," and narrating a history of God's activity of creation and within creation. What vantage point could possibly justify such presumption? To undertake theology in this manner reduces the Christian confession to an odd mixture of metaphysics and mythology. Such, indeed, as I have already noted, is a position which much modern scholarship finds in the theology of those who did not subscribe to the faith of Nicaea. Rather, Christian theology, as established as normative by the end of the second century, on the basis of the way in which the gospel was proclaimed from the beginning, and then reaffirmed by Nicaea and Constantinople, is an exegetical enterprise, reflecting on the revelation of God in Christ through the engagement with the Scriptures, understood as having been spoken, by the Spirit, of Christ, and so to be read in a reciprocally "spiritual" exegesis.

To refocus theology in this manner does not, however, make it any the less problematic. The issues it raises began to be addressed already in the works of Justin and Irenaeus.[48] These issues became more acute during the third century and dominated the fourth century, and they still continue to demand attention. How can it be claimed that Jesus Christ is God, and yet also be maintained that there is only one God? On the other hand, if there is only one true God, the one Jesus calls upon as Father, what is the status of Jesus himself: is he divine with the same divinity as his Father, or a being somewhere between God and man, or merely an inspired, divine man?

[48]Cf. Behr, *Way to Nicaea*, esp. 104, and 106 n.27, where contrasts between Justin and Irenaeus similar to those between the non-Nicenes and Nicenes are noted.

Equally important is the manner in which God is the Father of his Son, Jesus Christ: is the existence of the Son the result of a volitional act of God, such that God could have chosen to be otherwise, or does the revelation of God in Jesus Christ express what God in fact *is*? The affirmation, made by the Council of Nicaea and developed by Athanasius, that God is eternally the Father of his Son, means that in God there is a complete identity between nature and will; God does not first exist by himself, only subsequently to beget the Son. This identity of divine nature and activity, and the claim that the Son is as fully divine as the Father, means, moreover, that the divinity of God is fully revealed in Christ, so that "he who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14.9). That "in him the whole fullness of divinity dwells bodily" (Col 2.9) means that there is no surplus of divinity beyond this revelation, awaiting discovery through other means. The divine nature is not a passive object for human thought attempting to comprehend what God "really is" in himself, for God has revealed himself as he is. This also has significant implications for understanding how theological language functions. Later in the fourth century, the Cappadocians, arguing against Eunomius, point out that God is not an object against which the adequacy of our words about him are somehow to be measured, but rather that God is known in and through his revelation, which expresses what God indeed *is*, and within which alone it is possible to think and speak about God: "In thy light we see light" (Ps 35.10 LXX).

PART ONE

True God of True God

I

The Fourth Century: Controversies and Categories

The fourth century was riddled with theological controversy. But before we survey that history and begin examining the key figures of the period, we must pause to reflect on the overall shape of these debates. Over the last couple of decades, there has been an increasing awareness that the task of finding adequate categories for discerning the contours of the fourth-century debates is both more important and more difficult than was previously realized.[1] More important, for how we categorize the debates will profoundly influence what we see as problematic and how we understand the points at issue. More difficult, for the debates are already presented, by those involved in them, in polemical terms; not that such classifications are merely rhetorical constructions, nor should they be taken as such, but it must be borne in mind that such terms may well reveal more about the concerns of those who use them than about those to whom they are applied.[2] The difficulty in adequately understanding this period is, of course, further exacerbated by the passage of time and the inevitable loss of important evidence, though the passing of time has only increased what was already obscure; the early fifth-century church historian Socrates likens the period to "a battle fought at night, for neither party appeared to understand distinctly the grounds on which they calumniated one another."[3] Clearly, great caution needs to be taken when approaching a period as complex as the fourth century.

[1]Cf. J. T. Lienhard, "The 'Arian' Controversy: Some Categories Reconsidered," *TS* 48 (1987): 415–37; R. Lyman, "A Topography of Heresy: Mapping the Rhetorical Creation of Arianism," in M. R. Barnes and D. H. Williams, eds., *Arianism after Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth-Century Trinitarian Conflicts* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 45–62; M. R. Barnes, "The Fourth Century as Trinitarian Canon," in L. Ayres and G. Jones, eds., *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 47–67.

[2]Cf. Lyman, "Topography of Heresy," 46.

[3]Socrates *EH* 1.23.6.

Until the last decades of the twentieth century, the debates of the fourth century have been described almost without exception as "the Arian controversy." The picture given, in nearly every textbook of church history, is of a clearly defined controversy along the following lines: Around 318, Arius, a presbyter in Alexandria, began to preach that the Son of God was created, and that therefore there was a time when he was not. Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, held a synod, which condemned Arius' teachings. Arius withdrew to Asia Minor, where he gained many converts to his doctrines, especially from other students of Lucian of Antioch. Due to the increasing turmoil, Emperor Constantine took matters into his own hands and convoked a council of bishops from all parts of the empire, held in Nicaea in 325. The council rejected Arianism, and by its creed, with the key term "consubstantial" (*homoousios*) at its heart, clearly proclaimed the true standard of orthodox teaching. However, after this initial victory, it eventually became clear that the majority of Eastern bishops in fact remained of an Arian persuasion, though in ever more subtle forms (the so-called semi-Arians). Seeing this state of affairs, various emperors, in particular Constantius, promoted Arianism as the true faith, using force when necessary. During this period, the Nicene faith was defended, almost single-handedly and through many persecutions and exiles, by the great Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria. The darkest hour was in 360, when, as Jerome commented, "the whole world groaned and marveled that it was Arian."[4] But it was the moment before the dawn, for after the death of Constantius in 361, a new era began. Athanasius was able to hold a council reconciling various parties of the East, and his championing of Nicene orthodoxy was continued by the Cappadocians who, in their struggle with the "neo-Arians," worked out the classical expression of Nicene orthodoxy. The struggle against Arianism was finally sealed by the Council of Constantinople in 381, where the Nicene Creed was reaffirmed, with a few additions concerning the Holy Spirit, so definitively vindicating Nicene orthodoxy.

However, there are several aspects of this account, especially its details, which indicate that the story must be more complex. For instance, if Arius really was the originator of a new heresy, as he is thus portrayed, then it is difficult to account for the wide and ready support he found in Syria and Asia Minor. Arius must have stood for some aspect of traditional Christianity,

[4]Jerome *Altercatio Luciferiani et orthodoxi* 19 (PL 23, 181b).

which others felt was now coming under attack. More striking is the fact that the term "consubstantial," and even the Council of Nicaea itself, were hardly mentioned by Athanasius for some twenty years after 325; neither of these were originally the rallying points that they would later become.[5] Parallel to this apparent lack of interest in Nicaea and its creed is a similarly surprising absence of the term "Arian."[6] Arius had, after all, been condemned by Nicaea; although Athanasius had to rebuff various attempts, led especially by Eusebius of Nicomedia, to have Arius reestablished in Alexandria, his main problem during these years was with the Meletians, schismatics whose reconciliation Nicaea had also tried to establish. Athanasius first began to use the designation "Arian" (or his preferred term, "ariomaniac") in his *Festal Letters 10* and *11*, written in 338 and 339 respectively. These terms are also used in the letter issued by the council of Egyptian bishops, which met in Alexandria in 338 in support of Athanasius (and in fact written by him),[7] and in his own much more contentious and ferocious *Encyclical Letter*, written upon his arrival in Rome in June or July 339.[8] Although the term "Arian" does, at least in the *Festal Letters*, indicate certain theological concerns, echoing the arguments of Alexander prior to Nicaea, the "Arians" referred to in these texts are the local Egyptian adherents of Arius. His opponents abroad, those engaged in a "conspiracy" to get him ousted from Alexandria, Athanasius describes as "the Eusebians" (οἱ περὶ Εὐσέβιον), the followers of Eusebius of Nicomedia; although they are said to be "supporters and associates of the ariomaniacs," or even to "be engaged in the same heresy," they are not actually described

[5]Athanasius refers, almost in passing, to the Council of Nicaea and the term *homoousios* in his *Orations against the Arians* (*Ar.* 1.7 and 1.9 respectively), begun c. 339–40; he only began a full defense of the term *homoousios* in *On the Council of Nicaea* 18ff (c. 345–55), yet, although he is here writing in defense of Nicaea, it is only really in his letter to Emperor Jovian (*Ep.* 56; written c. 363) that he appeals to the council as being in itself an apostolic, catholic norm of faith. Cf. H. J. Sieben, *Die Konzilsidee der Alten Kirche*, Konziliengeschichte, B, Untersuchungen (Paderborn *et al.*: Schöningh, 1979), 25–67.

[6]Cf. M. Wiles, "Attitudes to Arius in the Arian Controversy," in M. R. Barnes and D. H. Williams, eds., *Arianism after Arius*, 31–43.

[7]The letter is preserved in Athanasius' *Defence against the Arians* (*Def. Ar.*) 3–19; on the composition and date of this work, see T. D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 36–40, 192–95. Barnes points to a later comment by Athanasius (*Def. Const.* 4.2) as an admission of his authorship of this letter. Barnes also suggests that "most of the works of Athanasius which relate to his career (except the *Encyclical Letter*) were not in any real sense 'published' by him: hence he was free to retouch them whenever the fancy took him" (ibid., 195).

[8]On the date of Athanasius' arrival in Rome, and that it was there that he composed his *Encyclical Letter*, see Barnes, *Athanasius*, 50.

as "Arians."[9] Nor, for that matter, do the charges that they raise against Athanasius pertain to doctrinal issues; they concern, rather, his use of force in securing his position as bishop of Alexandria.[10]

The most interesting phase in the categorization of the conflict occurs in the following years. When Marcellus of Ancyra, another stalwart defender of Nicaea deposed from his see, arrived in Rome in the spring of 340 and supported Athanasius' reports about what was happening in the East, Julius of Rome began to take up their cause. It is possible that the idea of a council in Rome was first proposed by the "Eusebians" themselves,[11] but now that Athanasius and Marcellus were already there, they decided not to attend. Julius sent two of his presbyters to the East to pursue the matter, but they were detained in Antioch until January 341,[12] when a council of ninety-seven bishops assembled on the occasion of the dedication of a church building begun by Constantine. This council composed an indignant letter in reply to Julius, which is no longer extant but is summarized by Sozomen.[13] A short passage preserved by Athanasius, sometimes called "The First Creed of Antioch," probably belongs to this letter. It begins with an expression of shock at the implications of Julius' letter:

> We have neither been followers of Arius (for how should we as bishops follow a presbyter?) nor have we accepted any form of faith other than that which was handed down from the beginning; indeed we, being examiners and testers of his [Arius'] faith, have admitted him rather than followed him.[14]

Besides indicating a marked change in the relations between bishops and presbyters compared to the previous century, when presbyters and teachers were invited to councils to address the bishops and examine their faith,[15] the Eastern bishops were clearly taken aback by the way in which they had been

[9]Cf. *Encycl.* 2, 5–7. The point is made by Wiles ("Attitudes to Arius," 35), who comments: "The distinction is admittedly a fine one, but I think it is significant that at this stage the name itself is not directly applied to them." T. D. Barnes conflates these categories in his treatment of the "Letter of the Council of Egyptian Bishops" and Athanasius' *Encyclical Letter* (*Athanasius*, 37–39, 47–48).

[10]See the way these charges are related in the Letter of the Council of Egyptian Bishops.

[11]Cf. Athanasius *Def. Ar.* 21.3.

[12]Athanasius *Def. Ar.* 25.3.

[13]Sozomen *EH* 3.8.

[14]Athanasius *Councils* 22; Hahn §153.

[15]Cf. Behr, *Way to Nicaea*, 208–12.

described as having followed Arius. Julius, in turn, held his own council in Rome in the summer of 341, which declared Athanasius innocent of the charges raised against him and Marcellus to be orthodox. The letter issued by Julius after the council probably reflects the way in which each exiled bishop presented his case to him. Before the council, Marcellus, having waited for a year and three months and wanting to depart, had written a letter assuring Julius of his own orthodoxy and claiming that his opponents, whom he claims to have completely refuted at the Council of Nicaea, were now "deceiving their hearers and hiding the truth" that they still persisted in their former errors.[16] Thus, the term "Arian" is applied, in the Letter of Julius, to those condemned by the Council of Nicaea (in particular, Pistus and Secundus) and to the opponents of Marcellus. On the other hand, even if, as Athanasius claimed, all the charges raised against him (which pertained to the use of violence, not doctrine) resulted from a "conspiracy" hatched to aid the "Arian" cause, the "Arians" in his case are still a local group in Alexandria, and so, Julius continued to refer to Athanasius' opponents as "the Eusebians."[17] Yet it is from this time onwards, beginning with his *Orations against the Arians*, Athanasius himself began to call all his opponents "Arian."[18]

In view of these considerations, it is clear that those who opposed Nicaea should not be reduced, too hastily, to one uniform group, the "Arians." Rather, those who were suspicious of Nicaea, and especially the term "consubstantial," form a much larger tradition of theology, which looked back to Lucian of Antioch as its common teacher.[19] This seems not to have been a

[16]Confession of Marcellus, frag. 129, preserved in Epiphanius *Panarion* 72.2–3. The errors in question are those condemned by Nicaea.

[17]The Letter of Julius is preserved by Athanasius in *Def. Ar.* 21–35; for Pistus and Secundus, see ibid., 24; for "the Eusebians," ibid., 27–31; and for Marcellus, ibid., 32–33. For the "conspiracy" against Athanasius, see *Encycl.* 2, 6–7; and the Letter of the Council of Egyptian Bishops, in his *Def. Ar.* 6–8, 17.

[18]Athanasius, as noted, attributed the Eusebian "conspiracy" to oust him as being motivated by their sympathy for the Arians; that they themselves could be called "Arian" may have been suggested to him by Marcellus, as argued by M. R. Barnes ("Fourth Century," 53–55). Marcellus' influence may also be seen in the fact, noted by T. D. Barnes, that, in his *Orations against the Arians*, Athanasius quotes nine passages from Asterius as if from a complete text, while he seems to quote Arius' *Thalia* by memory; it is certain that Marcellus would have brought a copy of Asterius' work with him to Rome (*Athanasius*, 55). It is also possible that describing all his opponents as "Arian" was prompted by their denial of being "followers of Arius" in the "Dedication Creed" cited above.

[19]The suggestion, developed by J. H. Newman in his *Arians of the Fourth Century* (1833), that the controversy was between "Antiochene" and "Alexandrian" theology, has been dropped by most modern scholarship. Cf. Lienhard, "The 'Arian' Controversy," 419.

tightly unified body, as would be suggested by the term "school," but instead what has been described as "a loose and uneasy coalition" of theologians.[20] Such a picture is in fact preserved for us by the non-Nicene Philostorgius in his *Ecclesiastical History.* On this wider canvas, Arius was regarded as a witness to, not as the author of, their tradition. In some ways, Arius was not particularly important: no one appealed to his authority, nor were his writings preserved by later non-Nicenes. Indeed, Arius was even considered by some to have been in error.[21] However, as Arius was held to have been unjustly persecuted for the faith, no one was prepared to forsake him outright.[22] Yet Athanasius' polemic was so effective that even the later opponents of Nicaea come to be described as "Arians"—the "semi-Arians" and "neo-Arians," figures who populate histories of dogma.[23] It is his persuasive rhetoric that results in all those opposed to Nicaea, for whatever reason, being described as "Arian," of varying shades. Once this collective designation is put into question, however, it can be seen that there is no obvious or certain connection between the theology of Arius in the 320s and those who stood opposed to Nicaea several decades later, in the 350s and 360s.[24] There certainly are similarities, but not enough to substantiate the claim that later non-Nicene theology descended from Arius himself, a later stage, as it were, in the development of "Arian theology." Arius was, without doubt, the catalyst in a doctrinal crisis which had been slowly fermenting, and Nicaea marks the point at which the dividing lines became explicit, even if the chasm it forces open is only gradually recognized later on. It is because of Arius' importance in this capacity that Athanasius settled on the term "Arian" to describe his opponents, claiming a link between his current opponents and the historical Arius, so that they would also be brought under the divine opprobrium

[20]R. Williams, *Arius: History and Tradition*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2001), 166. For a recent sketch of this wider tradition, see Vaggione, *Eunomius*, esp. 39–49, 60–73.

[21]Philostorgius *EH* 2.3.

[22]Cf. Vaggione, *Eunomius*, 41–43.

[23]The term "semi-Arian" was introduced by Epiphanius to discredit Basil of Ancyra and those who preferred the term *homoiousios* and by Gregory of Nazianzus to describe those who refused to recognize the divinity of the Spirit; the term "Neo-Arian" was only introduced in 1909 (by M. Albertz), as a designation for Aetius and Eunomius, supposedly less misleading than the title "Anomoian" given to them by their opponents (Wiles, "Attitudes to Arius," 42).

[24]M. R. Barnes comments that "if one does not *assume* Arius' influence it suddenly becomes very difficult to *prove* Arius' influence, particularly if one is suggesting a consistent pattern of Arius' influence on later generations" ("Fourth Century," 54).

expressed in the manner of his death and ultimately under the same condemnation of Nicaea.[25]

Similar caution, however, needs to be taken with regard to Nicaea and those who supported the council; they also should not be too hastily reduced to a uniform group, the "Nicenes." Beginning in the 340s, Athanasius presented himself as the stalwart defender of Nicaea, and it is his version that is enshrined by church historians of the fifth and sixth centuries. The attention of nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians was also captivated by the figure of Athansius as the dominant Nicene figure. However, this fascination should not be accepted uncritically, for there were, as we shall presently note, others who claimed to represent "Nicene" theology. In many ways, what Nicaea was to stand for was not a given from the beginning; that it has become identified with the position of Athanasius is a measure of the power of his theology. Moreover, for all his importance in defending Nicaea, it cannot simply be assumed that his theology is the same as that of later supporters of Nicaea, such that they can all be classified together as uniformly "Nicene." Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa, the "Cappadocian Fathers," were instrumental in preparing the way for the resolution achieved at the Council of Constantinople in 381 and then in securing it.[26] However, although Basil seems to have read Athanasius' work *On the Councils*, the extent to which their theology depends upon a detailed knowledge of the writings of Athanasius is debatable and yet to be fully studied.[27] Their polemical strategies, as indicated by their use of the terms "Arian" and "consubstantial," also seem to differ significantly.[28] Whilst Harnack's notorious claim, that the Cappadocians subjected the pure faith of Nicaea and Athanasius to the theology of the "semi-Arians," resulting in a

[25]On Arius' death see Athanasius *Ep. Egyp.* 19, and *Ep.* 54. Wiles quips that for Athanasius, "the dead Arius was not even a whipping boy, but the whip" ("Attitudes to Arius," 43).

[26]It should be noted that grouping Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa together as the "Cappadocian Fathers" is a modern approach based upon our perception of their contribution to the resolution of the fourth-century debates and the elaboration of "Trinitarian theology"; the more traditional grouping, going back to the eleventh century, is that of the "Three Hierarchs," Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian (of Nazianzus), and John Chrysostom (the "golden-mouthed") as "the paragons of a true rhetoric, based not on style alone but also on theological content." G. L. Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric*, ΑΝΑΛΕΚΤΑ ΒΛΑΤΑΔΟΝ 17 (Thessalonika, 1973), 123.

[27]Cf. R. Williams, "Baptism and the Arian Controversy," in M. R. Barnes and D. H. Williams, eds., *Arianism after Arius*, 149–80, at 157; M. R. Barnes, "Fourth Century," 54.

[28]Cf. M. R. Barnes, "Fourth Century," 58–62.

"Neo-Nicene" position, is undoubtedly extreme, it cannot be unquestioningly presupposed that they simply followed Athanasius.[29]

Given all these considerations, the picture of the "Arian controversy" of the fourth century, as seen from Athanasius' polemics, cannot be taken straightforwardly. But this need not mean that there was no theological controversy in the fifteen years between Nicaea and the time that Athanasius begins to settle on the term "Arian" for his opponents.[30] Rather, as has been recently noted, it seems that the problem after Nicaea was not with the "Arians," but with the Nicenes themselves.[31] Athanasius had been repeatedly charged with using violence and had begun to respond by claiming that all the charges against him were veiled attacks by "Arians." But Marcellus, on the other hand, another staunch supporter of Nicaea, had actually been condemned specifically for heresy by a council in Constantinople in 336, and this was shortly followed by two multi-volume works written directly against him—the *Ecclesiastical Theology* and *Against Marcellus*—by Eusebius of Caesarea, the venerable scholarly bishop, who had, somewhat grudgingly, given his support to Nicaea. Thus, in the decade before Athanasius began his *Orations against the Arians*, the question of the Nicene faith was already hotly debated, though the protagonists of this debate were both purportedly Nicene. The fascination with Athanasius, and his account of the Arian conspiracy, has effectively obscured from sight the problem that many bishops in the East, even those who had lent their support to Nicaea, had with the way in which Nicene theology was being presented after the council.

Particularly problematic for some was the way in which Marcellus promoted the Creed of Nicaea as an affirmation of the absolutely unitary character of God. Marcellus had taken the term *homoousios* in a very full sense to mean not only "similar in being," but "the very same or identical in being." It was not legitimate, according to Marcellus, to speak in terms which suggest any duality in God; to speak of two *hypostases* or *ousiai* would be to fall into

[29]A. von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. of 3rd German ed. (1894) (London: Williams and Norgate, 1894–99), vol. 4, 80–89. The term "Neo-Nicene" ("Jungnizänismus") goes back to T. Zahn, *Marcellus von Ancyra* (Gotha, 1867), 87. Cf. A. de Halleux, "'Hypostase' et 'Personne' dans la formation du dogme trinitaire," *RHE* 79 (1984): 311–69, 623–70; reprinted in idem, *Patrologie et Oecuménisme: Recueil d'études* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), 113–214, at 117.

[30]As supposed by Wiles, "there is no evidence of a continuation of the theological argument leading up to and debated at Nicaea" ("Attitudes to Arius," 33).

[31]M. R. Barnes ("Fourth Century," 51–53) following recent work on Marcellus, especially that of Lienhard.

ditheism. The Word of God, therefore, was not to be counted as a second divine being. Rather, it is only as incarnate that the Word can be spoken of as other than God, for that which is spoken of with regard to the flesh does not apply to God. This leads to the claim, for which Marcellus was notorious, that it is only as incarnate, as Jesus Christ, that the Word is to be called "Son." The theology that Marcellus was presenting as "Nicene" was bound to raise the concerns of the majority of Eastern bishops, especially his understanding of the term *homoousios*. Besides its materialist connotations and unscriptural character, the word also had against it the fact that it had been condemned by the council that had met in Antioch in 268 to deal with Paul of Samosata.[32] The majority of Eastern bishops might have been prepared to resort to the term *homoousios* for the purpose of condemning Arius,[33] but Marcellus now seemed to them to be advocating a return to some kind of modalism on the basis of Nicaea itself. The specter of Paul of Samosata provided his opponents with a ready model to which Marcellus could be assimilated. They claimed that, as Marcellus denied the hypostatic existence of the Word of God, he must hold that Christ was merely human, having both body and soul, and so, again from their point of view, he must also be proclaiming two sons of God (the Word and Jesus), charges which had been raised against Paul and also denied by him.[34] In contrast, Eusebius asserted that even prior to the Incarnation the Logos was an independent, divine *hypostasis*, a second God, and, following the suggestion of those who condemned the Samosatene, he held that the Word took the place of the soul in Christ, as the only principle of animation, so guaranteeing the substantial unity of the one Jesus Christ.

To appreciate fully the dynamics of this earlier debate, it must be noted that Eusebius was responding to an attack launched by Marcellus, principally against Asterius the Sophist, another disciple of Lucian of Antioch, and the letter written by Asterius in defense of the exiled Eusebius of Nicomedia. But in his *Contra Asterium*, Marcellus had also criticized a letter from Eusebius of Caesarea himself,[35] singling out his apparently ditheistic theology, evident, for

[32]Cf. Behr, *Way to Nicaea*, 218–20.

[33]This is, of course, how Athanasius (*On the Council of Nicaea*, 20) presents the introduction of the term *homoousios* at the Council of Nicaea.

[34]Cf. Behr, *Way to Nicaea*, 213–18, 227–35.

[35]In his *Contra Asterium*, Marcellus also criticized three other letters, from Eusebius of Nicomedia, Paulinus of Tyre, and Narcissus of Neronias; for analyses of these letters and the points Marcellus found objectionable see J. T. Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum: Marcellus of Ancyra and Fourth-Century Theology* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 69–103.

instance, in his assertion that the Word was "another God, distinct from the Father in essence and power."[36] Ironically, in view of the problems that Eusebius would draw out of Marcellus' theology, Marcellus had also accused Eusebius of teaching that Christ was a "mere man."[37] It is also important to note that Marcellus was not alone in raising concerns about Eusebius' theology. Another significant figure to do so was Eustathius of Antioch, also an uncompromising supporter of Nicaea, who was popular enough to have a following in Antioch devoted to his teaching some fifty or sixty years later. According to Socrates, who admits that he was unable to understand the point of contention, as the term *homoousios* continued to trouble various bishops after the Council of Nicaea, they engaged in "a too minute investigation of its import." In these exchanges, Eustathius charged Eusebius with "polytheism," only to be subsequently deposed, for being a "Sabellian," by a council (326/7 or 330) headed by none other than Eusebius of Caesarea.[38] Moreover, as Eustathius specifically criticized his opponents for denying the presence of a human soul in Christ,[39] it is probable that it is this conflict that provoked Eusebius to develop the idea that the Word takes the place of the soul in Christ, a teaching that he then finds lacking in Marcellus.[40]

From these further reflections, it is clear that before Athanasius entered the fray with his anti-Arian writings, and even before Marcellus became an object of concern, there was already conflict, in the years immediately following the Council of Nicaea, over the presentation of the Nicene faith. But one can go still further back, for the points at issue in these clashes—the existence of the Word as an independent self-subsisting being, a *hypostasis*; the presence or absence of a human soul in Christ; and accusations of teaching that Christ was merely human or of proclaiming "two sons"—are behind the charges previously raised against Origen as related in the *Apology for Origen*

[36]Cited in Marcellus, Frag. 117, ed. Vinzent (82, ed. Klostermann, Hansen).

[37]Cf. Frags. 126–8 V (100–102 K-H).

[38]Cf. Socrates *EH* 1.23.6–24.3; that it was for "Sabellianism" that Eustathius was deposed is related by the non-Nicene, George of Laodicea, who "abominated the term *homoousios*."

[39]Eustathius frag. 15, though his opponents here remain nameless. Text in M. Spanneut, *Recherches sur les Écrits d'Eustathe d'Antioche, avec une édition nouvelle des fragments dogmatiques et exégétiques* (Lille: Facultés Catholiques, 1948).

[40]Cf. Behr, *Way to Nicaea*, 213–14. It is noteworthy that there are only intimations of this idea in Eusebius' earlier works (e.g., *Demonstration of the Gospel* 7.1.24; 10.8.74); more concrete affirmations are found in his work against Marcellus (e.g. *Ecclesiastical Theology* 1.20.40; cited and discussed, briefly, below, pp. 74–75.

written by Pamphilus in the opening years of the fourth century. They are also, of course, issues that arose in connection with the condemnation of Paul of Samosata by the Council of Antioch in 268, and, as indicated above, they were still very much associated with his name. The points which were raised against the "loose and uneasy coalition" of theologians opposed to Nicaea, and those they raised against the Nicenes, strongly suggest that the theological outlook of the Eastern bishops hesitant about Nicaea was defined in opposition to Paul, a hostility which seems to be spread throughout Asia and Syria, though the roots of this tradition clearly go back further still.

It seems then that the controversy over Arius was the catalyst that brought two larger traditions of theology into conflict. What was at stake between them is not simply particular points within the same paradigm (for example, whether the Son is created or uncreated), but, as explored in the Introduction, the way in which theology is approached and, correspondingly, the way in which doctrine is, as Vaggione put it, "imagined."[41] Putting it in such terms, however, must not be taken as suggesting that there were clear lines differentiating two camps from the beginning. Indeed, that they were speaking within two different paradigms was barely noticed by those involved in the fourth-century controversies, with the result that they usually failed to address each other. As also noted in the Introduction, the difficulty in discerning the contrast between these two approaches, or perhaps more accurately the predominance of one so that the other possibility is not even contemplated, is equally evident in much modern scholarship.

That there were two distinct styles of theology in the first half of the fourth century has been suggested by others: Joseph Lienhard describes them as being "miahypostatic" and "dyohypostatic," while Rowan Williams refers to the latter as being a "pluralist *eikon* theology."[42] As these designations indicate, the two key beliefs of those opposed to Nicaea were that, first, the Son is a separate *hypostasis*, distinct from, yet dependant upon, the Father, and that, second, the Son perfectly resembles, is the image of, the Father. It is the second belief, that the Son images the Father, that is generally held to be the most important but is threatened by the first belief, that the Son is a distinct

[41]Cf. Introduction, pp. 10–11.

[42]Cf. Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum*, 28–46; idem. "The 'Arian' Controversy," 420–37; Williams, *Arius*, 166.

entity in his own right. *The Way to Nicaea*, on the basis of an examination of the first three centuries, discerned a similar contrast, simmering at the end of the third century ready to erupt in the fourth, but presented it in terms of different approaches to understanding the identity of Christ.[43] One possibility, found in Justin Martyr and in those who opposed Paul of Samosata, approached the identity of Christ in terms of a "personal subject" (a distinct *hypostasis*), whose personal identity remains the same while acting in different ways throughout time, such that existence "as" Jesus Christ is but one phase in the biography of the Word, perhaps to be understood, as suggested by Malchion at the Council of Antioch, as the "ensouling" of an inanimate body by the Word. The alternative approach understood "identity" in terms of "identifying properties," so that the identity of Christ is revealed in the properties which mark him out—those, that is, that are proclaimed in the gospel. Here, it is the crucified and exalted Christ who remains the subject of theological reflection, the one who is acknowledged as the Word of God and Son of the Father. In this approach, the pre-existence, and indeed the eternal existence, of Christ are not temporalized; that is, they are not understood in terms of the previous existence of a particular being before becoming Jesus (and so identified by other characteristics, such that it seems to imply "two sons"). Rather, they are understood in terms of the scriptural matrix within which the Gospel was proclaimed: Christ, and the gospel proclaiming him, is the subject of Scripture from the beginning. All of these issues, and many more, we will find explored in great depth as we encounter the figures whom we have only begun to treat.

With regard to the later history of the fourth century, Williams suggests that it was the tension between the two central tenets of the "pluralist *eikon* theology" of the non-Nicenes that eventually resulted in the break up of the coalition into the various trajectories of later non-Nicene theology: the "Anomoians" emphasized the Son's eternal hypostatic distinctness and dependence of the Father, while the "Homoiousians" held to the central importance of the Son's perfect resemblance to the Father.[44] The radical "Anomoian" theology of Aetius and Eunomius alienated a significant number of non-Nicene theologians, as well as the Cappadocians and so, as a common enemy, prepared the way for a resolution. It was, Williams further argues, the genius of

[43]Cf. Behr, *Way to Nicaea*, Epilogue, esp. 238–39.
[44]Williams, *Arius*, 166.

Athanasius, and then the Cappadocians, to persuade those for whom the similarity of the Son to the Father was most important that Nicaea alone could do justice to this (so maintaining that God really is revealed in Christ), even if this required a certain amount of "demythologizing" of the way in which the distinct subsistence of the Son is conceptualized.[45]

A further important factor paving the way for an eventual resolution again concerns Marcellus. Apart from a temporary break in communion, on account of Marcellus' association with Photinus, Athanasius never condemned Marcellus.[46] Even when urged by Basil of Caesarea, after his election in 370, to condemn Marcellus, so that Basil could win over the Westerners and also resolve the schism at Antioch in favor of Meletius (rather than Paulinus, the leader of the Eustathians, who were in communion with Marcellus), Athanasius simply left Basil's letters unanswered. In the early 370s, then, there were a number of bishops willing to stand by Marcellus, even against the daunting figure of Basil. Eusebius' polemic against Marcellus continued to be repeated in increasingly stereotyped patterns during the mid-fourth century. But, as Lienhard has noted, there were also a number of works written between 340 and 380 which offer a much more subtle and constructive criticism.[47] These works do not attack Marcellus himself, but rather tackle a caricature of his teaching presented under the name of Sabellius. They use the term *homoousios* only occasionally; they are as explicitly opposed to Arius as to Sabellius; and they also accept the validity of speaking of "two *hypostases*," while making it clear that no subordination is meant by it. Though Marcellus is not rehabilitated, his concerns are addressed, while at the same time, the caricature of his teaching, which had caused such consternation amongst his earlier opponents, is emphatically rejected.

However, the different approaches to conceptualizing the identity of Christ continue to be debated, with surprising twists. The ideas developed by Eusebius in his polemic against Marcellus, the seeds of which can be traced back to the Council of Antioch in 268, continued to be effective. Most notorious, of course, for advancing the position that the Word took the place of

[45]Ibid.

[46]Cf. J. T. Lienhard, "Did Athanasius Reject Marcellus?" in M. R. Barnes and D. H. Williams, eds., *Arianism after Arius*, 65–90.

[47]Cf. Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum*, 210–40; idem, "The 'Arian' Controversy," 435–36. The works in question are: Ps-Athanasius, *Fourth Oration against the Arians*; Ps-Athanasius, *Contra Sabellianos* (PG 28, 96–121); Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Sabellianos et Arium et Anomoeos* (PG 31, 600–617); and (Ps?) Gregory of Nyssa, *Adversus Arium et Sabellium* (GNO 3.1, 71–85).

a soul in Christ is the pro-Nicene Apollinarius of Laodicaea. Apollinarius developed his theology in reaction to those whom, he thought, taught that in Christ there were "two sons" or "two persons" (the Word and the man Jesus). It is unlikely that his opponent here is Diodore of Tarsus, for his debate with Diodore was late, even if Diodore indeed taught such, which is far from certain. A much more likely candidate is again Marcellus, as he was presented in Eusebius' polemic.[48] As Spoerl has suggested, Marcellus does not really hold a "dyoprosopic" Christology, but a "monoprosopic" Christology, for according to Marcellus, the only distinct *prosopon* or *hypostasis* is that of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, once Trinitarian theology begins to be assumed as a given in the later fourth century, then it becomes easy to see an emphasis on the distinct human existence of Christ as an assertion of a second person alongside the Word.[49] But Marcellus does not seem to have spoken of an other subject in the one Christ; his point was that it is only as speaking about the flesh of Christ that one can speak of the Son as being other than God, the Father, for as divine he is the very same. Apollinarius, in reaction to those whom he regarded as splitting the one Christ into "two sons," developed a very strongly "monoprosopic" Christology. Although it is for holding that the Word took the place of the soul in Christ, resulting in a strictly singular being, that Apollinarius is widely known (and which the term "Apollinarian" customarily designates), greater attention was paid in antiquity, as recent scholarship has come to recognize, to the manner in which Apollinarius collapsed, as it were, the *communicatio idiomatum*, resulting in a single subject, certainly, but the singularity of an eternal divine man who brought his flesh down from heaven.[50] In response to this challenge, Gregory of Nyssa, in particular, emphasized the Passion of Christ as the proper locus for theological reflection, in which it contemplates the human reality of Jesus transformed

[48]Cf. K. M. Spoerl, "Apollinarian Christology and the Anti-Marcellan Tradition," *JTS* n.s. 43, no. 2 (1994): 545–68.

[49]Cf. Spoerl, "To begin with, I think that at least in the case of Marcellus . . . the perception of a dyoprosopic Christology results partly from projecting the grid of emerging Trinitarian orthodoxy onto his Christological reflection. . . . When one applies to his theory the view articulated in express opposition to him . . . the Christological equation inevitably concludes with a dyoprosopic conclusion: one divine πρόσωπον + one human πρόσωπον = two πρόσωπα in Christ" ("Apollinarian Christology," 558).

[50]R. A. Greer, "The Man from Heaven: Paul's Last Adam and Apollinarius' Christ," in *Paul and the Legacies of Paul*, ed. W. S. Babcock (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990), 165–82, 358–60 (endnotes); B. E. Daley, "'Heavenly Man' and 'Eternal Christ': Apollinarius and Gregory of Nyssa on the Personal Identity of the Savior," *JECS* 10.4 (2002): 469–88.

into the divinity of the God made manifest through the Cross, so maintaining both the human face of Christ and the singularity of the one eternal Son of God. This is developed by Gregory as part of a larger theological vision, which through the allegorical reading of Scripture, holds out the possibility of transformation in Christ to all Christians. Further challenges, regarding the allegorical reading of Scripture as much as Christology (for the two cannot really be separated) were raised by Diodore and subsequently Theodore of Mopsuestia, though the ensuing controversy goes beyond the confines of this present volume.

These reflections on the difficulties of categorizing the debates of the fourth century have been presented in fairly abstract terms and, as such, may have seemed rather abstruse. They have, nevertheless, been necessary, for from them it is clear that there was a continuous theological debate before and after Nicaea. Even if the depiction of it as the "Arian controversy" is largely the work of Athanasius, it is not simply a diversionary tactic employed to avoid the charges raised against him. More importantly, it is clear that one cannot take the fourth-century debates as beginning with Arius and culminating with Constantinople. To do so restricts the content of these debates, and thus the "Nicene faith" itself, to a particularly understood "Trinitarian theology," one which concerns itself, rather abstractly, with the second person of the Trinity, whether he is created or eternal, semi-divine or as divine as the Father—an "immanent" Trinitarian theology needing to be complemented by the christological affirmations about how he became man. Attention has already been drawn, in the Introduction, to the problems inherent in approaching theology, and its history, with the presupposition that it can be divided up in such a manner. From the wider context of the fourth-century debates, as sketched out in this chapter, it is clear that there was a greater continuity between the supposedly "Trinitarian" debates of the fourth century, and the "christological" debates of the following century: there is a continuous debate, focused on Jesus Christ and how we speak of him as divine and human, without implying any duality in God or any divisive duality in Christ. To understand the fullness of these debates, we must begin before Arius by examining the ways in which key issues begin to be raised at the turn of the fourth century by Methodius, Pamphilus, and Lucian. This theological background will be explored in Chapter Two. Chapter Three will then provide an overview of the history of controversies and

councils sparked off by Arius and Nicaea, so preparing the ground for the detailed exploration of the key figures of the fourth century.

2

Theological Background

Having considered the methodological problems involved with exploring the Nicene faith—what we are doing and how we are doing it—we can now turn to the background of the controversies that resulted in its formulation. Our knowledge of theological reflection at the end of the third century and the beginning of the fourth is extremely sketchy at best. Even the three figures about whom we do know something—Methodius of Olympus, Lucian of Antioch, and Pamphilus of Caesarea—are either strikingly absent (Methodius) from the primary account of the pre-Nicene era, that of Eusebius of Caesarea, or are reported (Lucian) in contradictory fashion. This is largely because those who do provide us with information are themselves deeply involved in the controversies that have their roots in this period. Nevertheless, we can use these three figures like trigonometric points, as it were, to chart the development of particular issues as they were debated at the turn of the century, although given the paucity of information about them, any reconstruction will necessarily be conjectural. This is, nevertheless, an important task, for many of the points raised during these years—concerning the relationship between the temporality of created being and the eternity of the divine, and especially regarding the identity of Christ, in particular whether acknowledging in him the presence of a human soul necessitates considering him to be a "mere man" and so proclaiming "two sons" or "two Christs"—reverberate across the later decades of the fourth century. The controversy later ignited by Arius concerned issues already being discussed, and ones which, moreover, arose as a result of coming to terms with the legacy of Origen and the condemnation of Paul of Samosata, helping to create the specters that would loom over future theological reflection. After examining the transition from the third to the fourth century, we will then be in a position to survey the history of the fourth-century controversies and so prepare the way for a full examination of the key figures in the formulation of the Nicene faith.

Methodius of Olympus

Very little is known about Methodius of Olympus, an educated Christian, perhaps a presbyter or bishop, living and writing probably in the latter decades of the third century in or around Olympus in Lycia, and perhaps martyred sometime after 304.[1] That Eusebius, the usual source for information on pre-Nicene writers, is silent about Methodius, with the exception of a suggestive rhetorical question posed in the *Apology for Origen* composed together with Pamphilus (considered later in this chapter), is probably because of Methodius' reputation as a critic of Origen. It is likely that Methodius was the first to launch an attack against Origen; he is the only earlier authority cited by Eustathius in his own work against Origen.[2] Methodius' dialogue *Aglaophon: On the Resurrection* raises a number of issues concerning the fall, the nature of embodied existence, and the restoration of souls, which contribute significantly to the "Origen" caricatured by later heresiologists and ultimately condemned by the Council of Constantinople in 553. And in his dialogue *Xeno: On Created Things*, Methodius raises arguments against what he understands as Origen's teaching of the eternal creation of the cosmos that form part of the background to Arius' rejection of the eternal generation of the Son. Nevertheless, it is not immediately obvious that Methodius' early work is "anti-Origenist." In fact, many of Methodius' concerns, even those that form the basis of his critique of Origen, are very similar to those of Origen himself. Indeed, an extract from Methodius' work *On Free Will* was actually cited by Eusebius, though attributing it to a "Maximus," and was then included in the *Philokalia*, compiled by Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus, as a text of none other than Origen![3] Thus, it is necessary to consider briefly the way in which Methodius came to attack Origen, before examining the arguments he deploys and his contribution to the background of the fourth-century debates.

Of Methodius' works, only his dialogue the *Symposium* has survived intact in Greek. A number of his other works survive in their entirety in a Slavonic

[1]The most comprehensive and recent treatment is that by L. G. Patterson, *Methodius of Olympus: Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom and Life in Christ* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997). For the scant information on Methodius' life see ibid., 16–21.

[2]Eustathius of Antioch *De engastrimytho* 32 (PG 18.660a). Though often claimed as such, Peter of Alexandria, a close contemporary of Methodius, was not an "anti-Origenist." Cf. T. Vivian, *St. Peter of Alexandria: Bishop and Martyr* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988), 87–126.

[3]Cf. Eusebius *Preparation for the Gospel* 7.21.2–22; Origen *Philokalia* 24.

version, with various extracts preserved in Greek by later writers.[4] Apart from two treatises written in the form of letters, his *On the Leech* and *On Foods*, all Methodius' extant works were written in the form of (Platonic) dialogues.[5] Given this deliberately chosen genre, it is not possible to take passages from the texts as if they were Methodius' own views or those of his opponents, though this was already done in the *Dialogue of Adamantius*, then by Epiphanius, and later by Photius. Methodius allows his literary antagonists to elaborate their own views, showing how they contradict each other and often providing for a resolution. Even in his dialogue *Xeno: On Created Things*, the views expressed by those who speak in Origen's name are not actually ascribed to Origen, but ones that Methodius believes to be consistent with, and entailed by, his position.

Patterson draws attention to several points within Methodius' works that indicate the order in which they were written and help explain the origin of his polemic against Origen.[6] Firstly, in his letter treatise *On the Leech* (10.1–4), Methodius acknowledges that he has not dealt, as he had been asked by his correspondent Eustachius, with the interpretation of Wisdom 7.1–2, but says that he intends to treat this text in his work "On the Body." Methodius does not appear to have written a work with this title, but the text in question is treated in the dialogue *Aglaophon: On the Resurrection* (1.26). As such, this dialogue must have been written later than *On the Leech*. However, between these two works, Methodius' position seems to have undergone some modification. *On the Leech* is an allegorical or spiritual interpretation of Proverbs 30.15, in terms of the passions that disturb the body and cloud the mind. Moreover, before beginning his analysis, Methodius also justifies such interpretation by arguing that some passages of Scripture do not have a literal meaning, giving Jotham's fable about the trees as an example (Jgs 9.7–15; *Leech* 2.3). This is also a position that he accepts when writing the *Symposium* (cf. 10.2, referring to

[4]Methodius' other works are: *On Free Will*; *On the Leech in Numbers and on "The Heavens Declare the Glory of God"*; *On the Discrimination of Foods and on the Heifer in Leviticus with whose Ashes Sinners are Sprinkled*; *Sistelius: On Leprosy*; *Aglaophon: On the Resurrection*; and *Xeno: On Created Thing* (of which there is no Slavonic version, but only the passages preserved by Photius).

[5]"Sistelius," "Aglaophon," and "Xeno," are the names of the chief protagonists. J. A. Robinson suggested that *On Free Will* may have originally been called *Maximus: On Free Will* (*The Philocalia of Origen* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893], xlvi). It has become customary to refer to these dialogues by their subtitle, though it must be remembered that they are not formal treatises on the topics thus indicated.

[6]Patterson, *Methodius*, 26–31.

the same scriptural text). But when he composed his dialogue *On the Resurrection,* Methodius rejects this position in preference for the principle that all Scripture must have a literal and a spiritual meaning (*Resurrection* 3.8.3).

A second important indication is given in his other letter treatise, *On Foods*, also written in response to a request, this time from a woman named Phrenope, for his interpretation of scriptural passages. Methodius not only deals with the rites of purification prescribed for those who have touched dead bodies, which relates to what seems to be the text inquired about (Num 19.11–13), but also explores more fully the spiritual meaning of the Law. For instance, he claims that as the Law contains "a shadow of the good things to come" (Heb 10.1), the distinction of foods enjoined upon Israel for their training in obedience now refers to the necessity for Christians to free themselves from the passions and to study Scripture (*Foods* 8). Methodius also suggests that this spiritual dimension is only intelligible by virtue of the resurrection of the body, which, even when dead, should not be considered impure, as otherwise "the Lord would not raise it up and make it worthy of the kingdom of God" (*Foods* 13.1–6). Particularly revealing, however, is the way in which Methodius opens the work, by apologizing for his delay in replying to Phrenope, who knows "how many sorrows Satan prepared for me after the completion of the work concerning virginity, and again how many complaints he prepared against me, as I was not able to complete the work on the resurrection" (*Foods* 1.1). But, he continues, he will not cease to write, for it is not only now, but since the time of the prophets that the demons "have tried to turn humans away from their Creator and the firstborn and only-begotten Son Jesus Christ," by causing hatred against those who "pursue the study of the Scriptures that lead to the perfection of the soul" (*Foods* 1.3–6). In other words, after writing the *Symposium,* questions had begun to be raised concerning Methodius' own treatment of the resurrection of the body and his interpretation of Scripture, which he believes will be answered by his work *On the Resurrection*, where he deals more fully with the nature of embodied existence and unequivocally affirms the literal sense of Scripture.

What is particularly striking in this emerging controversy is that there is no mention of Origen. Nor, for that matter, is there any mention of Origen in his work *On Free Will*, which contains the very same arguments that he will later redeploy in his *On the Resurrection* and *On Created Things*, arguments regarding cosmological dualism, spiritual resurrection, and eternal creation.

But in these later dialogues, *On the Resurrection* and *On Created Things*, the opponent is explicitly Origen. It is possible that Methodius only gradually came to appreciate the significance of concerns already raised about Origen's teaching.[7] It is equally plausible, however, that Methodius, while retaining the basic shape of arguments learnt from Origen, directed his later polemic against Origen as a result of criticisms being raised against himself. This is implied by the sole surviving contemporary reference to Methodius, from the *Apology for Origen*, written by Pamphilus and Eusebius in the first decade of the fourth century: "How can Methodius, who said this and that from the doctrines of Origen, now have the audacity to write against him?"[8]

Methodius' indebtedness to Origen, as well as the arguments that are echoed in the criticisms that Arius raises later against his bishop, Alexander, can be clearly seen in his early work *On Free Will*.[9] The overarching concern of this dialogue is to demonstrate the inadequacy of cosmological dualism as an explanation for the reality of evil in this world and to argue instead that evil is best explained by the use to which matter is put, so that the cause of evil must be located in human self-determination or free will (τὸ αὐτεξούσιον). The principal protagonist recalls how he had debated with himself about the origin of created things, whether they are "from something eternally coexistent with God or from him alone, not coexisting with him," or, something he regards as impossible, "from nothing."[10] However, when he

[7]As mentioned above, Methodius is the only earlier writer cited by Eustathius of Antioch in his own attack on Origen (*De engastrimytho* 32; PG 18.660a). Although Peter of Alexandria, who would have been a close contemporary of Methodius, wrote on the topic of the Resurrection and against the preexistence of souls, he is not himself the "anti-Origenist" that he is portrayed as being by those who preserved extracts from these works (cf. Vivian, *St Peter*, 97–105, 116–26); Solignac further points out that Peter specifies "they say" these things about the soul, indicates that he does not have Origen in view, but rather his epigones who hardened and interpreted his teaching (A. Solignac, "Pierre d'Alexandrie," *Dictionnaire de spiritualite*, vol. 12 [Paris: Beauchesne, 1985], 1495–1502, at 1501).

[8]It must be borne in mind, however, that this statement is preserved by Jerome (*Contra Rufinum* 1.11), who is involved in his own "Origenist controversy," on which see: E. A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992). Socrates (*EH* 6.13) gives a similar impression of Methodius by classifying him together with Eustathius, Apollinarius, and Theophilus, as εὐτελεῖς: "Worthless characters, who, unable to attain eminence themselves, seek to get noticed by decrying those who excel them."

[9]That this work should be placed before the *Symposium*, and therefore not taken as a covert critique of Origen, see Patterson, *Methodius*, 60–61, 123–25.

[10]*Free Will* 2.9. Although these three alternatives seems to have been a common schema, it is possible that Methodius' protagonist is modeled upon Hermogenes, commonly associated with Valentinus, and whom Tertullian reports (*ad Herm.* 2.1) as having argued from these alternatives to a similar view of matter as this speaker advocates in this dialogue. Cf. Patterson, *Methodius*, 36 n. 2.

thought further about all the evils which beset humans, he concluded that, as it is impossible to ascribe the origin of evil to God, there "coexists with God something called matter," which was "without quality or form, and was born about without order," until God began to work upon it, bringing it as far as possible into order, while "that which was unsuitable for being made into anything, he left as it was, as of no use to him, and from this, it seems to me, evil has flowed to human beings" (*Free Will* 3.9). The possibility of there being two "uncreated" realities (ἀγένητα) was one which exercised contemporary Platonism, and the orthodox speaker in Methodius' dialogue utilizes various conventional arguments, for instance that the existence of two such realities necessitates the existence of a third by virtue of which they are separate, to argue what Christians had long since held, that God alone is uncreated (*Free Will* 5–6). In response to a second protagonist, the orthodox speaker further affirms that "nothing is paltry (φαῦλον) by its nature, but is called evil (κακόν) by the use made of it" (*Free Will* 15.1), and, more specifically, that this depends upon the free will (τὸ αὐτεξούσιον) with which God has created the human race (*Free Will* 16–17). In his final speech, the orthodox character addresses the question of why, if not to bring order to coexisting matter, did God create the cosmos? Noting the presumption of the question, yet also the fact that God has provided us with hints as to his purpose, the orthodox speaker points to God's knowledge of the art, which could not remain inactive, and to the inherent goodness of God (*Free Will* 22.3). He concludes by urging the interlocutors not to deprive God of his omnipotence by suggesting that God worked on "a self-subsisting substance besides himself," for God "gave existence to the universe, which previously did not exist nor has an uncreated constitution"; nor should they consider God as a craftsman, merely imposing form on matter, for he is the creator of substances as well (*Free Will* 22.10). That God was never inactive, that it is the natural goodness of God which resulted in creation, and the rejection of any suggestion of coexistent matter, are all aspects in which Methodius echoes Origen. Both, moreover, emphasize these to argue the same point, that the cause of the ills which afflict human beings does not reside in matter but in the freedom with which rational and spiritual beings alone are endowed.

By the time that Methodius completed his *Aglaophon: On the Resurrection*, however, Origen has come to be identified as the principle opponent, whose errors lie in having succumbed to views similar to those already criticized in

On Free Will. Yet it seems that this dialogue was not originally conceived as a work against Origen. The positions advocated by Aglaophon and Proclus—that souls were not originally embodied, that they have become so as a result of sin, and will be freed from these "garments of skin" in the resurrection—are supported by scriptural passages which were not used for that purpose by Origen. Moreover, the guiding assumptions about embodied existence held by Aglaophon and Proclus are different from those guiding Origen's treatment of physical embodiment of souls and the resurrection.[11] Methodius has brought together a variety of views on the question of the embodiment of the soul, some of which at least derive from Valentinian and other Gnostic teachings, to show how behind them all lies the presupposition that evil results from a cosmological dualism, a criticism already worked out in *On Free Will.* Belief in cosmological dualism is the distinguishing mark, for Methodius, of all philosophical and heterodox teachings compared to the truth of the gospel. In *On the Resurrection,* Methodius continues the critique begun already in *On Free Will,* extending his examination to consider issues which had arisen as a result of his *Symposium,* in particular the relation between such dualism and the nature of embodied existence and its continuance in the Resurrection. In doing this, Methodius comes to single out Origen as having succumbed to such teachings, though Origen is really, as Patterson puts it, a "late-comer" to this dialogue.[12]

Methodius' preoccupation with cosmological dualism, and his newly found conviction that Origen had been unduly influenced by this philosophical rather than Christian explanation of the existence of evil, culminates in his work *Xeno: On Created Things,* which undertakes a criticism of what he

[11]Although Origen certainly regarded the present state of human embodiment as a transitory phase, for the instruction of the soul, it is very doubtful that Origen thought that soul ever existed in a disembodied state. His notion of the soul's descent seems to have souls descending into coarser forms of embodiment, rather than embodiment per se, and was intended to counter any idea that embodiment itself, rather than the rational soul, is the source of evil or sin—the very same point as Methodius is concerned to make; though Origen certainly does lay himself open to the criticism raised by Methodius, that he allows for no continuity between the present body and the resurrected spiritual body. It is important to note that a number of views advanced by Aglaophon and Proclus are not actually attributed to Origen (for instance, their interpretations of the scriptural references to "garments of skin" [Gen 3.21] "the prisoners of the earth" [Lam 3.34] or "I was alive once without the Law" [Rom 7.9]), nor is Origen presented as teaching that the body will be spherical in the Resurrection (Methodius only suggests that if the human form will disappear in the Resurrection, then what is raised might as well be "spherical, or polygonal, or cubical, or pyramidal"; *Res.* 3.15.103); yet in this way Methodius undoubtedly contributed to the "Origen" who was later condemned.

[12]Patterson, *Methodius,* 184–85.

understands as Origen's teaching on the "eternal creation" that parallels in many ways Arius' criticisms of the teaching of the eternal generation of the Son. As all that remains of this work are the passages preserved by Photius, we have no overarching context in which to situate the particular arguments, although several points stand out clearly. After an extract discussing the meaning of not casting pearls before swine (cf. Mt 7.6), Photius introduces the passages dealing with creation by saying that "Origen, who he [Methodius] calls Centaur, says that the universe is coeternal with the only wise and self-sufficient God" (*Created Things* 2.1). As Patterson notes, this is somewhat misleading, for it is not Methodius himself, but one of his speakers, who addresses the Origenist speaker as "Centaur" (*Created Things* 6.1), presumably referring to the mythical beast to exemplify the mixture of philosophy and Christianity to which Methodius now believes Origen has succumbed, and because this reported position is not actually presented as Origen's own view, nor even as one of the Origenist speakers in the dialogue, even if those involved in the dialogue come to agree that it is the erroneous implication of Origen's own position.[13]

The extract continues by having the Origenist speaker arguing that God is only the Creator and the Almighty by virtue of his activity of creating and having something over which he rules, so that "these things were made by God from the beginning (ἐξ ἀρχῆς) and there was no time in which they did not exist (μὴ εἶναι χρόνον ὅτε οὐκ ἦν)." If this were not so, he argues, either there would be a time at which God did not exist or he underwent change when beginning to create. And so he concludes that "it is impossible to say that the universe is not unbegun and coeternal (μὴ εἶναι ἄναρχον καὶ συναΐδιον) with God" (*Created Things* 2.1–2). In the following three extracts, the Origenist speaker is led to agree that, as God is unchangeable, "he was then altogether self-sufficient before the world, being the Father and the Almighty and the Creator, so that he was this by himself and not by virtue of another" (*Created Things* 3.5). Moreover, if God after creating the world took rest, without undergoing change, then, the Origenist speaker further concedes, it is also possible that "he did not change, when he made the world, from what he was when he was not making it," so that one does not have to postulate an eternal other to God (*Created Things* 4.2). Finally, the Origenist speaker accepts that a thing cannot be called "created" if it has no "beginning of creation" (γενέσεως

[13]Ibid., 201–2.

ἀρχὴν), and that having been created, it has a limit to its existence, and thus, it cannot be coeternal with the infinite (*Created Things* 5.1–2). Of particular importance in these exchange is Methodius' introduction of *time* into Origen's reflections on how God is the Almighty, so that Origen is presented as asserting that there was no *time* in which creation did not exist.[14] God's act of creating brings the universe into being, without this necessitating, Methodius insists, any change in God. There is certainly a change for the universe, in that it now is, but Methodius seems to imply that this change *for* the universe should be understood as in some sense comparable to the movements of change *within* the universe, that is, in terms of the "interverals" which mark the process of change in creation, and so in terms of time.[15] Methodius' long struggle with cosmological dualism has thus led him to insist that creation *ex nihilo* demands belief in the temporal beginning of creation, that creation occurred at some point (in a kind of quasi-time) before which God was already what he is eternally. This positing of an "interval," as it were, between God's own eternity and the beginning of his activity of creation, a quasi-temporal period before the creation of the world, points forward to Arius' insistence that there was a "when" when the Son was not.

Two later extracts from *On Created Things* (9 and 11) indicate Methodius' understanding of the role of the Son in relation to God and creation. According to Photius, Methodius differentiated "two formative powers" (δυνάμεις ποιητικάς): one that "creates things from nothing, by its bare will, without delay, effecting them as soon as it wishes, which is the Father"; and the other which "adorns and embellishes (κατακοσμοῦσαν καὶ ποικίλλουσαν), by

[14]Methodius again echoes debates within contemporary Platonism, which in this case centered upon what Plato had meant by saying that the cosmos was "generated" (γέγονεν, *Timaeus* 28b7); Alcinous (Albinus) was clear that this does not mean that "there was a time when the world was not" (οὐκ οὕτως ἀκουστέον αὐτοῦ, ὡς ὄντος ποτὲ χρόνου ἐν ᾧ οὐκ ἦν ὁ κόσμος, *Didaskalikos* 14.3), for, as Plato had also asserted, "time came into being with the heavens" (*Tim.* 38b); Atticus, on the other hand, asserted that the world had indeed come into being *in time*, so that there was a time in which the world was not. Cf. J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, rev. ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 242–44, 252–53, 286–87; R. Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (London: Duckworth, 1983), 268–72, and *passim* for a full discussion of the issues. For the similarities between this debate in Middle-Platonism and that between Arius and Athanasius, see E. P. Meijering, "HN ΠΟΤΕ ΟΤΕ ΟΥΚ ΗΝ Ο ΥΙΟΣ: A Discussion on Time and Eternity," *VC* 28, no. 3 (1974): 161–68; reprinted in idem. *God, Being, History: Studies in Patristic Philosophy* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1975), 81–88.

[15]Cf. Williams (*Arius*, 187): "In however eccentric a sense, then, *diastasis* and perhaps *diastema* [interval] would have to apply, on Methodius' showing, to the gap between creator and creature. There is no causeless separation; separation means change, change means time."

imitation (κατὰ μίμησιν) of the former, the things which already exist, that is, the Son, the almighty and powerful hand of the Father, by whom, after creating matter out of nothing, he adorns it" (*Created Things* 9). The Son, for Methodius, plays a mediatorial role, though not so much in the Father's activity of creating itself, as for earlier writers, but in the adornment of matter after it has been brought into being, thus suggesting another "interval," this time between the Father's activity and that of the Son. Finally, Methodius notes the ambivalent way in which the word "beginning" (ἀρχή) is used in Scripture: on the one hand, Wisdom describes herself as the "beginning" of the ways of the Lord (Prov 8.22), and it is in this "beginning" that God created the heaven and earth (Gen 1.1), yet, on the other hand, the Word, through whom all things were created, was "in the beginning" (Jn 1.1). This means, according to Methodius, that the Father must be thought of as "the beginning out of which the most upright Word came forth," and that "after this particular unbegun beginning (μετὰ τὴν ἰδίαν ἄναρχον ἀρχήν), which is the Father," is the Word who is "the beginning of all other things" (*Created Things* 11). In the course of working out this quandary, Methodius asserts that all created things are "more recent" (νεώτερα) than Wisdom, having come into existence through her, again implying that the Word or Wisdom has some kind of quasi-temporal point of origin subsequent to the Father.

In the *Symposium*, where the influence of Origen is particularly clear, Methodius does seem to affirm that the Son must be considered as eternal.[16] For instance, Procilla affirms that "the apostles and the prophets, who instructed us at great length about the Son of God existing before the ages (τοῦ πρὸ αἰώνων υἱοῦ) and predicated divinity of him (θεολογήσαντες) in a sense above all other men," referred this praise of the Son to none other than the Father, "for it was fitting that he who is greater than all others after the Father should have as his witness the Father, who alone is greater than he" (*Symp.* 7.1.149–50; cf. Jn 14.28). The Origenist background of the hierarchy envisioned here, as well as the eternality of the Son, is clear. More explicitly, Thecla, later in the dialogue, interpreting the conception of a child by the woman in Revelation 12 as the spiritual conception of the Christian by the Church, asserts that it cannot refer to Christ, as he was "conceived long before" (πάλαι κυηθείς) this event (*Symp.* 8.7). Similarly, the verse "You are my

[16]Cf. L. G. Patterson, "The Creation of the Word in Methodius' *Symposium*," *SP* 9.3, TU 94 (Berlin: Akademie, 1966): 240–50.

Son, today have I begotten you" (Ps 2.7), spoken at the time of Jesus' baptism (cf. Lk 3.22), is taken by Thecla to show that the Son is "declared to be his Son unconditionally and without regard to time (ἀορίστως καὶ ἀχρόνως)," for it says "you are," not "you have become," emphasizing that "he has not recently attained to sonship, and that having previously existed he would not ever after terminate it, but simply that, having been begotten before, he is and always will be the same (προγεννηθέντα καὶ ἔσεσθαι καὶ εἶναι τὸν αὐτόν)." Thus the Psalm verse means that "though his Son had already existed in the heavens before the ages, he desired that he should also be begotten for the world, that is, what was previously unknown should be made manifest" (*Symp* 8.9.192–3). Methodius' point in these discourses is to affirm that the Son existed prior to his manifestation in the world, that the baptism of Jesus was not the point at which the Son came into being, but is his being "begotten for the world."[17] With respect to the Son's relation to the Father in eternity, Methodius is less clear. As we have seen, Methodius is convinced that there must be some kind of "interval" between God and creation, for it is impossible for there to be two uncreated, eternal realities. But his determination to read Origen's treatment of creation in temporal terms, rather than the specifically non-temporal ontological sense in which Origen tried to explain the meaning of "beginning," establishes a framework in which the existence of the Son as in some sense subsequent to the Father implies an "interval" between the Father and the Son, were it to be explored fully, which is not done by Methodius himself.[18] Thus, Patterson concludes that when speaking of the Son existing "before the ages," Methodius intends "a vastly prior origin, which he still, somehow, conceives as an origin in time."[19]

[17]Patterson (*Methodius*, 101–2) notes that the distinction Methodius draws, between the begetting of the Son and the Incarnation, seems to respond to a point made by Clement (*Paedagogue* 1.6.25). Regarding the Incarnation itself, Methodius views it in terms of the Adam-Christ typology, though expressed in a highly unusual manner: "[Paul] not only considers Adam as a type and image of Christ, but also that Christ himself became the very same through the descent into him of the Word who existed before the ages (ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο Χριστὸν καὶ αὐτὸν γεγονέναι διὰ τὸ τὸν πρὸ αἰώνων εἰς αὐτὸν ἐγκατασκῆψαι λόγον)," since, "it was fitting that the firstborn of God, his first offspring and only begotten Wisdom, should become human and be joined to the first-formed human being, the first and firstborn of humanity" (*Symp.* 3.4.60). Despite this description of the Word descending into him, Methodius does not seem to have considered the Incarnation as the ensouling of a body by the Word.

[18]Cf. L. G. Patterson, "Methodius, Origen and the Arian Dispute," *SP*17.2 (Leuven: Peeters, 1993): 912–923, at 917.

[19]Patterson, *Methodius*, 135.

Methodius' attack against "Origen" was principally concerned with cosmology, but the logic of this argument takes us directly into the questions that Arius was to raise. There is, in fact, a direct parallel between Methodius' critique of Origen's supposed teaching of the "eternal creation" and the argument of Arius against the "eternal begetting." In each case, whether it is the cosmos or the Son, their eternal existence is taken as being a second co-eternal reality, compromising the status of the sole divine uncreated God. Both Methodius and Arius took Origen's reflections on eternity in a temporal sense and found it problematic, concluding that there was a time in which the world or the Son did not exist. Methodius' determination to establish that creation *ex nihilo* demands a belief in the temporal beginning of the world led him to suggest a kind of quasi-time in which God existed before the world, so opening up a gap in which Arius could further assert that there was a "when" (in a pre-aionion period) when the Son was not. Methodius attention was so caught up with the problems of cosmological dualism that he did not further reflect on the exact status of the Word. But, in Alexandria, Arius was faced with a different problem: his bishop, Alexander, was insisting ever more emphatically on the continuity and correlativity of the Father and Son—eternally God, eternally Son (ἀεὶ θεὸς ἀεὶ υἱός). Arius believed that this compromised the uniqueness of God, and undermined his freedom, in exactly the same way that Methodius believed that Origen's teaching on creation did. Not that Arius was in any way dependent upon Methodius, nor that Methodius should be counted as an "Arian" before the event, but rather that with Methodius we can see concerns emerging that Arius resolved in a particularly drastic manner.[20]

Lucian of Antioch

Although Methodius intimates the shape of the arguments which would become central, he is not himself a significant figure in the later debates. A contemporary of his, however, Lucian of Antioch, seems to have become a rallying point for those dissatisfied with Nicaea. Arius, in his letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, addresses his recipient as "truly a co-Lucianist" (συλλουκιανιστὰ ἀληθῶς).[21] Philostorgius lists many others who were counted as

[20]Cf. Williams, *Arius*, 169–70; Patterson, *Methodius*, 217–20.

[21]Arius, Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia (in Epiphanius *Panarion* 69.6.7; Urk. 1.5).

"disciples of this martyr Lucian" in addition to Eusebius of Nicomedia: Maris, bishop of Chalcedon; Theognis, bishop of Nicaea; Leontius, who became bishop of Antioch; Antonius of Tarsus in Cilicia; Menophantus; Numenius; Eudoxius; Alexander; and Asterius the Cappaodician.[22] "Lucianist" would in fact be an appropriate designation for those who rejected Nicaea and a description which they seem to have used of themselves.

Nevertheless, for all his importance, very little is known of Lucian, and what is said of him seems contradictory. From Eusebius of Caesarea, we learn that "among the martyrs at Antioch, the best in his entire life was Lucian, a presbyter of that community, the same who in Nicomedia, where the emperor was, proclaimed the heavenly kingdom of Christ, first by word of mouth in an Apology, and afterwards also by deeds" (*EH* 8.13.2). According to the martyrologies, Lucian was martyred in Nicomedia on January 7, 312.[23] Eusebius also records that Lucian was "a man most excellent in all things, of temperate life and well versed in sacred learning" (*EH* 9.6.3). Lucian's concern for accuracy is seen most clearly in his editorial work on the Greek Scriptures, which was so influential that Jerome reports that "even today some copies of the Scriptures are called 'Lucianic.'"[24] A concern for accuracy in theology was also characteristic of his disciples, a tradition of "'experts' bearing witness in varying degrees to the 'teaching of the saints,'" in the words of Vaggione.[25] On the other hand, Alexander of Alexandria, writing to Alexander of Thessalonika, after having referred to the condemnation of Paul of Samosata for reviving the teaching of Ebion and Artemas, mentions that "Lucian, who succeeded him, remained excommunicated during the long years of three bishops."[26] The Council of Antioch in 268 replaced Paul by Domnus (the son of the previous bishop, Demetrian), who was very soon succeeded by Timaeus, Cyril, and then Tyrannus.[27] It is possible that by Lucian's "succession" from Paul, Alexander intends an episcopal succession, such that Lucian would have been the bishop of the Paulinian community, or that he is simply referring to a succession of teaching. Either way, it is

[22]Philostorgius *EH* 2.14.

[23]Cf. G. Bardy, *Recherches sur Saint Lucien d'Antioche et son École*, rev. ed. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1936), 71.

[24]Jerome *Illustrious Men* 77.

[25]Cf. Vaggione, *Eunomius*, 45–47, and *passim*.

[26]Letter of Alexander of Alexandria to Alexander of Byzantium (Urk. 14.36): ὃν διαδεξάμενος Λουκιανὸς ἀποσυνάγωγος ἔμεινε τριῶν ἐπισκόπων πολυετεῖς χρόνους.

[27]Eusebius *EH* 7.30.17, 32.2–4.

extremely implausible that Eusebius, or anybody else, would have held Lucian the Martyr in high esteem if he had been a follower of Paul. Thus Loofs claimed, followed by, amongst many others, Bardy (in his revised work on Lucian) and Williams, that the Lucian mentioned by Alexander is another Lucian, not Lucian the Martyr. Loofs argued that, as we already know that Arius was a disciple of Lucian the Martyr, we are inclined to read Alexander's comments about Lucian as also applying to the martyr in a manner which would have been unthinkable for one who, as the recipient of Alexander's letter, only knew Lucian the Martyr as a hero of the faith. The Lucian mentioned by Alexander must therefore be an otherwise unknown figure, the episcopal successor of Paul in the community which remained faithful to Paul, while Lucian the Martyr remained firmly within the Church.[28]

However, it is possible, and more satisfactory, to take Eusebius and Alexander as referring to the same Lucian. Though it is likely that Alexander knew of the death of Lucian, he does not describe him as a martyr for the faith. Indeed, Epiphanius states that it is "the Arians who acclaim [him] (ἐπιψηφίζονται) as a martyr."[29] Nor does Alexander actually describe Lucian as a Paulinian, but suggests rather that the error plaguing the Church is "of Ebion and Artemas" and is an emulation (ζῆλος) of Paul's teaching. The common element between Ebion, Artemas, and Paul is clearly that they all diminished the divine status of Christ, which is manifestly Alexander's concern with Arius. No further link between Lucian, the teacher of Arius, and Paul need be postulated other than that they both, in their own ways, undermine the divinity of Christ, as this is understood by Alexander. In fact, it is very likely that Lucian belonged to the circles which condemned Paul of Samosata. Epiphanius, in a report which Hanson regards as the one indisputable fact regarding Lucian's teaching, says that "Lucian and all the Lucianists deny that the Son of God took a soul, in order that they may attach human passion directly to the Word,"[30] a teaching which Malchion had advanced against Paul at the Council of Antioch. We also know that it was only with the greatest difficulty that the Council of Antioch managed to expose Paul

[28]F. Loofs, *Paulus von Samosata: Eine Untersuchung zur Altkirchlichen Literatur- und Dogmen-geschichte*, TU 14.3 (Leipzing, 1924), 185–86. Cf. Bardy, *Lucien*, 58–59; Williams, *Arius*, 162–63.

[29]Epiphanius *Panarion* 43.1.1. On the importance, for the tradition following him, of Lucian as a martyr, see H. C. Brennecke, "Lukian von Antiochien in der Geschichte des Arianischen Streites," in H. C. Brennecke, E. L. Gramück, and C. Markschies, eds., *Logos: Festschrift für Luise Abramowski zum 8 July 1993* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1993), 170–92.

[30]Epiphanius *Ancoratus* 33 (PG 43.77a); Cf. Hanson, *Search*, 83.

and have him ejected, and that there was a significant number in Antioch who remained faithful to Paul up to the Council of Nicaea, which dealt, in canon 19, with the readmission of these Paulinians to the Church. As such, it is likely that, as Simonetti suggests, there was a reaction in Antioch to Paul's condemnation, and that as a result of this backlash, Lucian found himself outside of the Church in Antioch for a number of years.[31] In this case, the "succession" mentioned by Alexander is only what Alexander perceives as a continuity of teaching, but there is no need to search for anything more, for Eusebius only describes Lucian as a "presbyter" in Antioch, not as a bishop. For all the confusion that his words have caused, Alexander may have only been employing what Stead has described as "reductio retorta"—taunting one's opponents of implicitly holding what they think they are attacking.[32]

For all Lucian's undoubted importance for his followers, nothing of his own hand survives, and even secondary reports are sparse. Epiphanius, as already noted, reports that Lucian denied the presence of a human soul in Christ, as had Malchion at the Council of Antioch. Malchion's concern, in the fragments that remain, was to ensure the unity of the Word and his human body, as the one Christ. It is possible that Lucian developed this teaching in order, as Epiphanius claims, to attach human passions directly to the Word, so as to lessen his divine status, though it is more likely that Epiphanius is drawing this explanation from Eustathius of Antioch.[33] Rufinus gives a report of an apology said to have been delivered by Lucian before his judges, though it has very little to offer that is distinctive: it emphasizes God's transcendence and the sending of the divine Wisdom in flesh to show us the way to God.[34] Jerome mentions that Lucian produced a number of pamphlets (*libelli*) and short letters in addition to his major work of editing, and commenting on, Scripture.[35] Attempts to see Lucian as the founder of the exegetical school of Antioch, defending a literal-historical interpretation

[31]Cf. M. Simonetti, "Lucian of Antioch," in A. di Berardino, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, trans. A. Walford (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 507. A similar sketch is drawn by G. C. Stead, "Arius in Modern Research," *JTS* n.s. 45, no. 1 (1994): 24–36.

[32]G. C. Stead, "Rhetorical Method in Athanasius," *VC* 30 (1976): 121–37: reductio retorta "saddles the opponent with the very proposition which he regards as evidently false" (p. 134). Williams (*Arius*, 161) noted the possible use of "reductio retorta" in this passage, but applied it to Arius himself; though why Alexander would add an otherwise unknown Lucian to the unholy trinity of Ebion, Artemas, and Paul is not explained.

[33]Cf. Eustathius Frag. 17 (ed. Spanneut).

[34]Rufinus *EH* 9.6; text reproduced in Bardy, *Lucien*, 134–49.

[35]Jerome *Illustrious Men* 77.

of Scripture, in opposition to Alexandrian allegory, have largely, and rightly, been abandoned.[36] The only other piece of evidence is the so-called second creed of the Dedication Council of Antioch, in 341, which those present, according to Sozomen, though with some skepticism, claimed to have been written by Lucian.[37] The creed affirms that the Son "was begotten from the Father before the ages, God from God, whole from whole, sole from sole, perfect from perfect, King from King, Lord from Lord." He is, it continues, "unchanging and immutable (ἄτρεπτόν τε καὶ ἀναλλοίωτον), the exact image (ἀπαράλλακτον εἰκόνα) of the divinity and substance and will and power and glory of the Father." After a short article on the Holy Spirit, the creed concludes by affirming that the names of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not given idly, "but signify exactly the particular hypostasis and order and glory of each of those named, so that they are three in hypostasis but one in agreement." Most of these points have echoes elsewhere in the early fourth century, particularly clearly in the creed issued by the Synod of Antioch in 324 and passages from Asterius.[38] Later in the fourth century, Philostorgius charges Asterius for having perverted the teaching of Lucian by asserting that "the Son is the exact image of the substance of the Father (ἀπαράλλακτον εἰκόνα τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς οὐσία)."[39] Philostorgius, following Eunomius, wanted to ensure that the relation between Father and Son was in no way described in the language of "substance," and so, as this phrase does occur in the writings of a disciple of Lucian and in a creed ascribed to him, it is probably a teaching that goes back to Lucian himself. Moreover, as Williams points out, in the early fourth century the term "substance" (οὐσία) is usually used in a particular sense (the primary, individual, substance), rather than in a generic sense (the kind of being something is); it is in the latter sense, implying a substantial relationship between Father and Son, that it was thought problematic by the later non-Nicenes. Indeed, Marcellus preserves an extract from a letter of Narcissus of Neronias, in which he tells how, when asked by Ossius whether he would say that there are "two beings," as Eusebius of Caesarea

[36]Athanasius preserves a passage from Athanasius of Anazarbus, a disciple of Lucian, in which he allegorizes the parable of the hundred sheep (*Councils* 17; Urk. 11).

[37]Sozomen, *EH* 3.5.9. Text in Hahn, § 154.

[38]Synod of Antioch, 324, Urk. 18.10–11; Asterius, in the fragments of Marcellus, esp. frag. 113 V (96 K-H). Williams (*Arius*, 163) also suggests parallels in the statement of faith submitted by Arius and Euzoius to Constantine (Urk. 30), the confession of faith ascribed to Gregory Thaumaturgus (Hahn, §185), and the creed of Eusebius of Caesarea (Urk. 22.4–5).

[39]Philostorgius *EH* 2.15.

had done, Narcissus replied that he "believed that there were three beings (τρεῖς εἶναι πιστεύειν οὐσίας)."[40]

Despite the paucity of evidence, several points do stand out clearly as common teachings of the "Lucianists," teachings which in all probability go back to Lucian himself: first, the emphasis that the Son or the Word is a distinct, concrete being (an ὑπόστασις or οὐσία); second, the significance of the notion of "image" in explaining the relationship between Father and Son; and third, that the Son or the Word took a human body without a soul (a σῶμα ἄψυχον), animating it in place of the soul. These are the elements which led Williams to speak of the position advocated by Lucian and his followers as a "pluralist *eikon* theology," or, in Lienhard's terms, a "dyohypostatic" tradition in distinction to a "miahypostatic" tradition.[41] Not that the followers of Lucian were a tightly unified body, with a highly developed theological system; rather they were a "loose and uneasy coalition," whose characteristic theological emphases were determined in opposition to Paul of Samosata.[42] In fact, given the difficulty which the Council of Antioch had in exposing Paul's errors, it seems that they only came to articulate their own theological stance in opposition to him. Their resolution would have been further heightened if, as argued above, it were indeed Lucian the Martyr who was excommunicated for a period from the Church in Antioch in a pro-Paulinian backlash. Thus, when Arius called upon Eusebius of Nicomedia and others as fellow students of Lucian, he was not simply appealing to those who shared the same theological tradition, but exploiting the anti-Paulinian sentiment spread throughout Asia and Syria.

Pamphilus of Caesarea

Further evidence of the theological issues being debated at the beginning of the fourth century is provided by the *Apology for Origen* written by Pamphilus with the help of Eusebius of Caesarea. Pamphilus, a native of Berytus, studied in Alexandria under Pierius and settled in Caesarea, probably early in the reign of Diocletian. Here Pamphilus continued the work of Origen, collecting his works, sometimes even copying them out, and preparing a list of his

[40]Marcellus frag. 116 V (81 K-H).

[41]Williams, *Arius*, 166; Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum*, 28–46. Cf. above, pp. 31–32.

[42]The term is Williams's (*Arius*, 166), who further comments that Lucian's own teaching "seem[s] . . . to have been little more than a crystallization of the non-Paulinian consensus in Asia and Syria."

works, as well as continuing his work on Scripture.[43] Soon after his arrival in Caesarea, he was joined by Eusebius, who out of respect for Pamphilus took his name as a patronymic. When imprisoned during the persecutions under Maximinus (between 307 and 309), Pamphilus composed, with the help of Eusebius, the *Apology for Origen* in five volumes, to which Eusebius added a sixth volume after the death of Pamphilus as a martyr. All that remains of this *Apology*, however, is a Latin translation made by Rufinus of the first volume.[44] Whether Rufinus knew the rest of the work is not clear. The first volume of the *Apology*, which he presents as being by Pamphilus alone, certainly stands as a complete treatise and could have circulated by itself. It contains an introductory preface; a summary of Origen's teaching, showing its faithfulness to the apostolic preaching and describing his Trinitarian theology (based mainly on texts from Origen's *On First Principles*, the work most criticized by his opponents); followed by a list of charges raised against him and their rebuttal (based principally on other works of Origen). The preface indicates that it is not only going to discuss Origen's doctrinal teaching, but also his zeal for the Scriptures, his work within the Church, his priesthood and preaching activity, and his asceticism, so that, as Junod suggests, it is likely that the subsequent volumes would have dealt with Origen's life and works.[45] If Rufinus did indeed know the remaining volumes of the *Apology*, but did not choose to translate them, it is possible that this was because they contained material harder to reconcile with late fourth-century orthodoxy, or perhaps because of their association with Eusebius, who by the end of the fourth century would have been regarded as theologically dubious, so that he translated only that part which came from the hand of the respected martyr Pamphilus alone. A further problem is raised by Jerome's complaint that Rufinus had tampered with the text, the original of which Jerome claims to have read in the library in Caesarea.[46] That Rufinus had touched up the

[43]Cf. T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 93–94.

[44]That this *Apology* should not, as P. Nautin argued (*Origène: Sa vie et son oeuvre* [Paris: Beauchesne, 1977], 99–153), be conflated with the anonymous apology mentioned by Photius (*Bibl.* 117), has been clearly established by E. Junod, "L'*Apologie pour Origène* par Pamphile et Eusèbe: Critique des principales hypothèses de P. Nautin et perspectives nouvelles," in R. Daly, ed., *Origeniana Quinta* (Leuven, 1992), 519–27; R. Amacker and E. Junod, eds., *Apologie pour Origène*, Tome 2, *Étude, Commentaire Philologique et Index*, SC 465 (Paris: Cerf, 2002), 63–74.

[45]Cf. Pamphilus *Apology* 8–9, 16 (PG 17.545bc, 547bc); Junod, "L'*Apologie*," 522.

[46]Jerome, *Contra Rufinem*, 2.23; 3.12. On Jerome's suggestion that the *Apology* was wholly written

original work in the light of later concerns is probable, though it is still possible, especially in the charges raised against Origen, to discern the issues debated at the beginning of the fourth century.[47]

The charges against Origen, as related by Pamphilus,[48] are as follows:

[1] they claim that Origen taught that the Son of God is "underived" [*innatus*—presumably ἀγέν(ν)ητος];

[2] that, following the myths of Valentinus, he taught that the Son came into existence by an emission [*per prolationem*];

[3] however, contrary to the preceding, they also claim that Origen, following Artemas and Paul of Samosata, taught that Christ, the Son of God, is merely human [*purum hominem*—presumably ψιλῶς ἄνθρωπος], that is, that he is not equally God;

[4] that, again contrary to the preceding, they claim that he said it was δοκήσει [given in Greek], that is, in appearance and by allegory, and not also according to what is recorded in the history, that the deeds accomplished by the Savior were done;

[5] they also affirm that he preached two Christs;

[6] that he completely denied the bodily history of the acts of the saints, which is recorded throughout sacred Scripture;

[7] concerning the resurrection of the dead and the punishments of the impious, they attack him with a not insignificant calumny, that he denied that punishments will be inflicted on sinners;

[8] they found fault with his discussions and opinions on the state and economy of the soul;

[9] lastly, in a totally defamatory manner, they accuse him of μετενσωματώσεως [given in Greek], that is, that he asserted that human souls, after death, transmigrate into mute beasts, such as serpents or sheep, and that the souls of dumb beasts are endowed with reason.

Concern about Origen's allegorical treatment of Scripture (charges 4 and 6) have already been seen in Methodius, though in response, it seems, to similar criticism being leveled against himself. This dissatisfaction has clearly

by Eusebius, or even by Didymus, see R. Williams, "Damnosa haereditas: Pamphilus' *Apology* and the Reputation of Origen," in H. C. Brennecke, E. L. Gramück, and C. Markschies, *Logos: Festschrift für Luise Abramowski zum 8 July 1993* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1993), 151–69, at 164–65.

[47]Cf. Williams, "Damnosa haereditas."

[48]Pamphilus *Apology* 87 (PG 17.578–9).

become more widespread and culminates, a little later, with Eustathius of Antioch's direct attack on Origen and his allegorical interpretation. Similarly, the charges relating to Origen's treatment of the resurrection and the soul (7, 8, and 9) also echo points made by Methodius and, further afield, by Peter of Alexander. The work of Methodius was known to Eusebius, who, in the sixth volume of the *Apology*, written by himself, asked why it is that Methodius, after repeating so much of the teaching of Origen, now criticizes him.[49] Although Pamphilus does not mention Methodius in the first volume of the *Apology*, it is likely that he knew of him, but either that he tactfully refrained from mentioning him, or that he did not associate his name with the concerns about Origen raised by those whom he was addressing.[50] In fact, their concerns, as seen by the other charges, were broader than the issues raised by Methodius and derive specifically from the issues being debated in Alexandria and in the aftermath of the condemnation of Paul of Samosata.

The first charge, that Origen taught that the Son is "underived" (*innatus*), is directly paralleled a few years later by Arius' complaint against Alexander's teaching of the coeternity of the Father and the Son. Likewise, the second complaint, that Origen taught that the Son has come into existence by an "emission" (*per prolationem*), as in the myths of Valentinus, is a point from which Arius, in almost the same words, distances himself.[51] Finally, the remaining two charges both relate to the controversy about Paul of Samosata. The third charge explicitly accuses Origen of reducing the status of Christ to a "mere man," as had Paul. Besides citing passages in which Origen speaks of "one Christ," Pamphilus answered the fifth charge, that Origen proclaimed "two Christs," by defending Origen for having affirmed that Christ had a human soul, on the grounds that Christ himself, in Scripture, referred to his soul.[52] The assumption of his opponents must have been that as Origen had taught that Christ had a human soul, then Jesus Christ and the Word must have been other than each other (and hence that he taught "two Christs"), so that Christ was a mere human being (as Paul had taught). Although Pamphilus suggests that the third charge seems to be contradictory to the first two,

[49]Jerome *Contra Rufinum* I.II.

[50]Cf. E. Junod, "L'*Apologie pour Origène* de Pamphile et la naissance de l'origénisme," *SP* 26 (Leuven: Peeters, 1993): 267–86, at 281–82; Williams, "Damnosa haereditas," 161–62.

[51]Cf. Arius, Letter to Alexander (Urk. 6.3): "Nor is the Father's offspring an emanation (προβολήν) as Valentinus taught."

[52]Pamphilus *Apology* 115–121 (PG 17.588–90).

all these charges do have a certain coherence. Paul seemed to his opponents to have divided Jesus Christ from the Word, reducing Christ to the status of a "mere man" and the Word of God to a word internal to God, rather than a distinct entity. Those already wary about Paul would certainly have been disturbed by any affirmation of the coeternity of the Son with the Father together with an affirmation of Christ's human soul, and the undergirding of this by an allegorizing treatment of Scripture, which facilitates questionable teachings on the soul and resurrection, would only heighten their anxiety.

Given the charges raised against Origen, and the way in which Pamphilus replies to them, those raising these criticisms of Origen must have held that the Word is a distinct entity, other than the Father, and conceptualized the Incarnation in terms of the descent of the Word into a human body. In other words, they shared the same theological outlook as the disciples of Lucian of Antioch. Although Pamphilus addresses the *Apology* to the confessors in the mines, he does not indicate at all clearly who it is that needs to be convinced of Origen's orthodoxy and why this is necessary. Nautin proposed that Pamphilus was responding to an anti-Origenist circle in Caesarea, who were soliciting support from the confessors in an attack against himself.[53] However, that Pamphilus could even write a defense of Origen, and one in which Origen is presented as a respected Christian teacher, priest, and ascetic, implies that his recipients must also have held Origen in some respect.[54] Junod has argued that it is rather the Egyptians, whom we know to have been among the confessors in the Phaeno and the mines of Cilicia,[55] that Pamphilus had in view in his *Apology*, thus addressing criticisms of Origen emanating from Alexandria. Williams synthesizes these two suggestions to develop a highly plausible account.[56] Origen had already come under attack, and his apparent similarity to the views of Paul of Samosata increased the suspicion of the successors of those who had condemned Paul, bishops from Cappadocia, Pontus, Cilicia, Palestine, and Arabia. It is these successors whom Pamphilus probably has in mind when he criticized those who injure

[53]Nautin, *Origène*, 134–44.

[54]In addition to Junod's works noted above, see also his "Origène vu par Pamphile dans la Lettre-Préface de l'*Apology*," in L. Lies, ed., *Origeniana Quarta* (Innsbruck and Vienna: Tyrolia Verlag, 1987), 128–35; and Amacker and Junod, *Apologie pour Origène*, Tome 2, *Étude, Commentaire Philologique et Index*, 75–104.

[55]Cf. Eusebius *Martyrs of Palestine* 11.1, 6; 13.

[56]Cf. Williams, "Damnosa haereditas," 160–64, to which the following paragraphs are heavily indebted.

the faith of the faithful, the simple as well as the more learned, by banning the study of Origen's writings, a censorship which implies episcopal authority. When the Egyptian confessors were imprisoned in the mines of Palestine, they found themselves alongside confessors from Palestine and Cappadocia and so would have encountered a hostility toward Origen, whom they had previously respected, if not always read with diligence. Indeed, in addition to the claim that he followed Artemas and Paul of Samosata, Origen would have been presented as upholding the very positions against which Alexandrian theology had long since struggled and defined itself, that of Valentinus and Sabellius, the reduction of the Word or Son to an "emission" or to a non-distinct aspect of the divine being. It is the anxiety of the Egyptian confessors, which this view of Origen would have caused, that Pamphilus attempted to calm by presenting Origen as firmly committed to the distinct existence of the Son and minimizing his reflection on the human soul of Christ.[57]

If this is the case (and it must be remembered that, given the paucity of information, it can only be conjectural), then the charges to which Pamphilus responds are not actually an official list of charges drawn up by Syrian and Asian bishops, but reflect these local concerns, though now phrased in the language of Alexandrian theology familiar to the Egyptian confessors. Thus, as Williams further points out, these charges not only parallel the idiom of Arius and Alexander, but also intimate the controversy that was to erupt. The Egyptian confessors, needing reassurance about Origen's teaching on the eternity of the Son (that this does not imply that he is *innatus*), do not share the interest shown by Dionysius and Alexander in Origen's teaching on the correlativity of the Father and the Son, but are more concerned with the older enemies of Valentinus and Sabellius. As such, the theology of the Alexandrian bishops seems to have become out of step with the piety of their people, and so, when Arius later began to question this teaching, and affirm instead the priority of the Father over the Son, he would have been giving expression to a concern felt by other Egyptian Christians. Moreover, episcopal theology at Alexandria was increasingly focused on precisely those points of Origen's theology which Pamphilus and Eusebius were keen to minimize.

[57] This (re)presentation of Origen is also evident in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, where he emphasizes Origen's refutation of the Valentinians (*EH* 4.18.1) and Beryllus of Bostra, who denied the pre-existence of the Son as a distinct entity (προϋφεστάναι κατ' ἰδίαν οὐσίας, *EH* 6.33, a passage which concludes by directing the reader to the *Apology* for more such occasions), and also that Origen's pupils were leading figures in the downfall of Paul of Samosata (*EH* 7.28.1).

Thus, in defending Origen against the very position which Arius would also reject, Pamphilus presented an image of Origen underscoring the points which were least acceptable to later fourth-century orthodoxy, and so, unwittingly, contributed to later uneasiness with Origen and his eventual condemnation. In this way, the issues to which Pamphilus responded lead us to Alexandria and foreshadow the onset of the conflict that was to dominate the fourth century.

3

Councils and Controversies: A Historical Overview

Theology does not take place in a vacuum, and the figures studied hereafter were all fully engaged in the controversies that ravaged the fourth century. This period was the arena of the most momentous transition in the history of the Church, certainly compared to any earlier developments and arguably compared to anything later. Over the course of the fourth century, a series of extraordinary events—from the meeting of Constantine and his fellow emperor Licinius in Milan in 313 and their decision to recognize Christianity as a licit religion, so ending its persecution, to the legislation of Emperor Theodosius in 391–92, banning public and private pagan cults—marks the establishment of Christianity in the public domain, no longer as a persecuted body but the imperial religion. No less momentous was Constantine's decision to become involved in ecclesial matters, summoning a council to decide upon matters of faith and attempting, at least, to act upon its decisions. As already discussed in Chapter One, the significance of the council convoked by Constantine, the Council of Nicaea in 325, took most of the fourth century to determine. The immediate cause of the council was a conflict between an Alexandrian presbyter, Arius, and his bishop, Alexander. That this originally local matter could have ignited the fires that consumed the fourth century was because, as we have seen, they were already being stoked by debates in the previous decades, concerning issues that go back to the third century and even earlier. Having examined this background, it is now time to survey the fourth century, before examining the theological reflection that was developed during its course.

To 325: Controversy Erupts

No stranger in the past to theological controversy and clashes of ecclesial vision, the Christian community in Alexandria, in the early decades of the fourth century, was being torn apart in various directions. When the persecutions initiated by Diocletian were intensified under Maximinus, who became Caesar in May 305, Bishop Peter of Alexandria, along with a number of other bishops, went into hiding and delegated a number of "visitors" to continue ministering to their communities. During the confusion created by this situation, Melitius, the newly appointed bishop of Lycopolis, took it upon himself to visit these vacant dioceses and perform ordinations in them, resulting in a rival jurisdiction which continued for several decades. The situation between the bishop and the presbyters of Alexandria was also a matter of tension. Within Alexandria, presbyters still retained a great degree of autonomy, despite the increasing supervision that the bishop of Alexandria now exercised over the Egyptian church at large.[1] Arius was one such presbyter, located at the church of "Baucalis" in Alexandria, who, by the end of the second decade of the fourth century, had established a wide reputation as a popular preacher. Although there is no suggestion that Arius perceived his conflict with his bishop as part of a presbyteral opposition to the growing centrality of the bishop within Alexandria, Alexander, who had become bishop there in 313, clearly wanted to maintain and strengthen the unity of the Christian communities in Alexandria.[2] The Emperor Constantine describes the beginnings of their conflict in terms that suggest that Alexander was trying to consolidate the unity of the Church around himself as bishop by insisting upon a uniformity of teaching. According to Constantine, Alexander had solicited from each of his presbyters what they thought about "a certain passage of the things written in the Law."[3] Socrates also indicates that a concern for doctrinal unity lay behind the initial stages of the controversy, though he reports that it was Alexander who "theologized about the Holy Trinity" in the presence of all his

[1]Cf. Williams (*Arius*, 42): "The bishop of Alexandria occupied at this date what may seem a highly paradoxical position in the Egyptian church: on the one hand . . . he more closely resembled an archbishop or even a patriarch than any other prelate in Christendom. . . . On the other hand, within Alexandria itself the bishop was surrounded by powerful and independent presbyters, supervising their own congregations."

[2]See esp. the Letter Alexander of Alexandria to Alexander of Byzantium (Urk. 14).

[3]Letter of Constantine to Alexander and Arius (Urk. 17.6).

presbyters and clergy.[4] Whatever the initial occasion, very soon there developed the conflict which was to dominate the fourth century, with Alexander affirming the co-eternality and correlativity of the Father and the Son, and Arius maintaining that the Father must in some sense precede the Son.

It is extremely difficult to date the early stages of the dispute with any certainty, for there are very few external indicators for placing the events and documents; only the Council of Nicaea itself can be dated exactly. A key factor in the reconstruction of the events is the relationship between the two letters traditionally attributed to Alexander: the circular letter written after a large council in Alexandria (often referred to by its opening words, ἑνὸς σώματος) and Alexander's letter to Alexander of Byzantium (for the same reason often called ἡ φίλαρχος).[5] Opitz placed these letters in this order, assigning a date of c. 319 to the first and c. 324 to the second.[6] However, given that the presbyter Colluthus is described as a troublesome schismatic in the letter to Alexander of Byzantium yet heads the list of signatories in the circular letter, as well as the fact that the circular letter both presents a more developed version of Arius' teaching, reflecting a knowledge of his work the *Thalia* that is absent from the letter to Alexander of Byzantium, and is also clearly from the hand of Athanasius, it seems more probable that the order of the letters should be reversed.[7] This reversal gives a slightly different playing out of events and means, moreover, that Alexander's letter is more important than is often thought, reflecting the earliest stage of Arius' teaching and also that Athanasius was indeed already writing before the Council of Nicaea.

[4]Socrates *EH* 1.5. Epiphanius alone reports that a complaint about Arius had been lodged with Alexander, prompting him to investigate Arius' teaching (*Panarion* 69.3).

[5]Urk. 4b and 14 respectively; Opitz described the latter as to "Alexander of Thessalonica," but Theodoret (*EH* 1.3.3), who is the only person to have transcribed this letter, specifies that it was sent to Alexander, the archbishop of Constantinople (i.e., Byzantium, at the time of the letter). See also Williams, *Arius*, 267 n.3.

[6]This is how the documents ("Urkunden") are arranged by H. G. Opitz, ed., *Athanasius Werke*, vol. 3, pt 1, *Urkunden zur Geschichte des Arianischen Streites* (Berlin, 1934). See also idem, "Die Zeitfolge des arianischen Streites von den Anfängen bis zum Jahr 328," *ZNTW* 33 (1934): 131–59.

[7]As Williams, *Arius*, 50–54. G. C. Stead ("Athanasius' Earliest Written Work," *JTS* n.s. 39, no. 1 [1988]: 76–91) establishes beyond any reasonable doubt that the ἑνὸς σώματος comes from Athanasius' hand, though he still maintains that it was earlier than ἡ φίλαρχος, on the grounds of the place of Colluthus in each document. However, the reversal of their order, as assumed here, gives rise to no more problems regarding Colluthus, and probably less, than Opitz's order, and the very point that Stead makes regarding the use of the *Thalia* in ἑνὸς σώματος, but not in ἡ φίλαρχος, surely necessitates this reversal. See also Williams's examination of the criticism of his suggestion by Stead and U. Loose ("Zur Chronologie des ariansichen Streites," *ZKG* 101 [1990]: 88–92), in the second edition (2001) of his work (pp. 252–54).

It is likely that the earliest document we have from Arius himself is his letter to Alexander, signed by a number of other presbyters and deacons, explaining their theological position and protesting that this is the traditional teaching, learned from the bishop himself.[8] This letter was probably written soon after controversy erupted in Alexandria, and perhaps in connection with a local synod there, for the letter of Alexander to Alexander of Byzantium mentions that Arius and his followers were expelled from the Church.[9] Alexander also describes the troubles that they had caused in Alexandria, gathering in separate assemblies, splitting the seamless robe of Christ that even the soldiers had not dared divide.[10] Eventually Arius and his followers left, or were forced to leave, Alexandria. They found a welcome refuge in Palestine, as had earlier refugees from Alexandria, and they even received formal approval to assemble as a church, from a synod convened by Paulinus of Tyre, Eusebius of Caesarea, and Patrophilus of Scythopolis.[11] From Palestine, Arius began to solicit support from leading figures in the East; a little later he lists as his supporters Eusebius of Caesarea, Theodotus of Laodicea, Paulinus of Tyre, Athanasius of Anazarbus, Gregory of Berytus, Aetius of Lydda, and nameless others.[12] Many important figures, especially from Syria, Palestine, and Asia Minor entered the fray, writing letters on behalf of Arius.[13] According to Athanasius, it was after he was expelled from Alexandria and had established contacts with the "Eusebians," the disciples of Lucian of Antioch, that Arius composed his work the *Thalia*.[14] Seeing the success of Arius' campaign, that he was requesting and receiving letters of support from others,[15] Alexander

[8]Letter of Arius to Alexander (Urk. 6). The names of three bishops, Secundus of Pentapolis, Theonas of Marmarica in Libya, and Pistus, are also subscribed to the letter, though after the presbyters and deacons, making it likely that these names were added subsequently.

[9]Letter of Alexander of Alexandria to Alexander of Byzantium (Urk. 14.6).

[10]Ibid., (Urk. 14.3–8). These schismatic activities are often placed at a later date, on the supposition that Arius returned to Alexandria, emboldened by the synodical backing he received in Palestine, but there is no clear indication in the primary sources that Arius did, in fact, return to Alexandria in the years prior to Nicaea. Cf. Williams, *Arius*, 253.

[11]Report of the Synod in Palestine (Urk. 10).

[12]Letter of Arius to Eusebius of Nicomedia (Urk. 1.3).

[13]Letters which have been preserved, either in part or whole, are: from Eusebius of Nicomedia to Arius (Urk. 2) and to Paulinus of Tyre (Urk. 8); from Eusebius of Caesarea to Euphration of Balanea (Urk. 3) and to Alexander (Urk. 7); from Paulinus of Tyre (Urk. 9) and Athanasius of Anazarbus to Alexander (Urk. 11); and from George, later bishop of Laodicea, to Alexander (Urk. 12) and Arius (Urk. 13), attempting to reconcile them.

[14]Athanasius *Councils* 15. This is the only explicit indication given, by any source, regarding the circumstances of the composition of the *Thalia*.

[15]Cf. Letter of Alexander of Alexandria to Alexander of Byzantium (Urk. 14.7).

also sought support outside Alexandria, approaching bishops of important sees, such as Alexander of Byzantium[16] and possibly Sylvester of Rome,[17] as well as Philogonius of Antioch and Eustathius of Beroea.[18] As Arius' letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia mentions that Alexander has condemned "all those in the East who say that God exists before the Son underivatively,"[19] it should be placed after a synodal action of Alexander following on from Arius' epistolary activity. The circular letter (the ἐνὸς σώματος) describes just such an event, one which, moreover, follows on from a report of Arius teaching clearly based on his *Thalia*: at some unspecified juncture nearly one hundred bishops from Egypt and Libya gathered in Alexandria to condemn Arius and his followers.[20] It was doubtless the scale of this condemnation that prompted Arius to appeal to the important figure of Eusebius of Nicomedia, perhaps hoping for secular assistance. Arius' cause was taken up enthusiastically, and it was probably Eusebius of Nicomedia who enlisted the help of Asterius the Cappadocian, who around this time composed a short work, the *Syntagmation*, in support of Arius.[21]

In the face of this deteriorating situation, Licinius prohibited the gathering of bishops as councils, thus putting an abrupt halt to the controversy.[22] However, when Constantine conquered the East, in 324, the controversy flared up again, with even greater intensity, for the stakes, with Constantine as emperor, were now so much higher. Constantine himself tried to mediate between Alexander and Arius, writing to them to encourage them to put aside their differences which, he believed, concerned very insignificant matters not essential to the true worship of God.[23] According to Socrates, Constantine sent his letter by the hand of Ossius of Corduba.[24] When Ossius arrived in Alexandria, a council was held, consisting of the presbyters and deacons of Alexandria and the Mareotis. At this council, the schismatic Colluthus, who had managed to get himself consecrated as a bishop, was accepted back into

[16]Letter of Alexander of Alexandria to Alexander of Byzantium (Urk. 14). That this letter was written after Arius and his supporters had left Alexandria is made clear in Urk. 14.7, 57–8.

[17]See the report of the letter of Alexander to Sylvester of Rome, given by Hilary (Urk. 16).

[18]Theodoret *EH* 1.4.62.

[19]Letter of Arius to Eusebius of Nicomedia (Urk. 1.3).

[20]Urk. 4b.11: "Now when Arius and his fellows made these assertions, and shamelessly avowed them, we being assembled. . . ."

[21]See Athanasius *Councils* 18.2–3.

[22]Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 1.51.1.

[23]Letter of Constantine to Alexander and Arius (Urk. 17).

[24]Socrates *EH* 1.7.

the Church in the demoted rank of presbyter.[25] The first signature in the circular letter (ἑνὸς σώματος) is that of the presbyter Colluthus, and so, if it is rightly placed at this juncture, it announced the reconciliation that had been achieved on this score.[26] But the letter also makes clear that the difference with Arius was not insignificant, and with this message, Ossius made his way back to the emperor at Nicomedia.

On his return journey, Ossius stopped in Antioch, where the Church was in chaos following the death of their bishop, Philogonius, on December 20, 324. Eustathius was chosen as the new bishop of Antioch, probably just after the arrival of Ossius, for once there, Ossius presided over a council of over fifty bishops from the East that tried to resolve the affairs of the church there, which involved violations of the canons and erroneous teaching.[27] They also discussed the actions of Alexander of Alexandria against Arius and adopted a creed which echoes Alexander on a number of points, though not all: that there is one Lord Jesus Christ, begotten not from nothing, but from the Father, not as something made (ποιητόν) but genuinely as an offspring, so that he is not a son by appointment or by will; that he always is and not previously was not; and he is immutable and unchangeable, the true image not of the will of the Father but of his very *hypostasis*. The creed concludes by anathematizing those who hold that Christ is a creature (κτίσμα ἢ γενητὸν ἢ ποιητόν), that "there was once when he was not," or claim that it was only by his will that Christ remained immutable. Finally, the council excommunicated three eminent bishops who refused to accept this statement as the apostolic and saving teaching: Theodotus of Laodicea, Narcissus of Neronias, and the venerable aged bishop of Caesarea, Eusebius. This excommunication, however, was only provisional, granting them time for repentance before the forthcoming "great and priestly synod in Ancyra."[28]

[25]Athanasius *Def. Ar.* 74.3–4; 76.3.

[26]Urk. 4b.21. Stead objects to placing the ἑνὸς σώματος at this late date ("Athanasius' Earliest Writing," 91 n. 23), on the grounds that it does not mention Constantine's letter, but given its intransigence with regard to Arius, it would hardly have been diplomatic to have done so. Their willingness to accommodate Constantine's desire for peace is, however, advertised by placing Colluthus' name at the head of the signatories.

[27]See the Letter of the Council of Antioch (Urk. 18).

[28]It must be noted that the only evidence for the Council of Antioch has emerged recently: the letter from the Council of Antioch, preserved only in Syriac (the Greek given above is from the retroversion by Schwartz), was published in 1905, and the letter of Constantine changing the venue of the Council from Ancyra to Nicaea, also in Syriac, was published in 1857. Most scholars accept this evidence as sufficient, though some, especially scholars of Eusebius, regard it as inauthentic. For the

That a great council was to be held in Ancyra probably reflects the importance and activity of Marcellus, bishop of Ancyra at least since 314. Marcellus already seems to have come under attack during the campaign, instigated by Eusebius of Nicomedia, in which Eusebius of Caesarea, Paulinus, and Asterius toured Asia Minor in support of Arius. It is most likely Marcellus who found their theological weak spot and pointed it out to Ossius, who then, most probably at the council of Antioch, pushed Eusebius of Caesarea and Narcissus into affirming that they believed there to be two (or three) *ousiai*, that is, that the Father and Son (and Holy Spirit) are distinct beings or even essences.[29] Nevertheless, the location of the council was changed, by Constantine, to Nicaea, because, he claims, it has a better climate and is more accessible to those traveling from the West, and also, and doubtlessly most important, because it would enable him to be there as a spectator and participant[30]: given the dramatic outcome of the Council of Antioch, and Constantine's increasing inclination towards the position of Eusebius of Nicomedia, Constantine wanted to be present to ensure that peace would be established in the Church.[31]

Around three hundred bishops assembled in Nicaea at the beginning of June 325, under the presidency of Ossius of Corduba. Our sources for what happened at the council are limited, though several issues were clearly discussed and settled. Presumably the excommunicated bishops rehabilitated themselves before the main theological discussion began; Eusebius of Caesarea wrote a letter to his flock, soon after the council, relating how the statement of faith which he presented to the council was accepted by the emperor and, consequently, by all those present.[32] The main theological discussion centered upon the issues raised in Alexandria and more recently in

latter position see D. L. Molland, "Die Synod von Antiochien, 324–5," *ZKG* 81 (1970): 163–81; H. Strutwolf, *Die Trinitätstheologie und Christologie des Euseb von Caesarea* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 31–44.

[29]Marcellus Frag 116 V (81 K-H); cf. A. H. B. Logan, "Marcellus of Ancyra and the Councils of AD 325: Antioch, Ancyra, and Nicaea," *JTS* n.s. 43, no. 2 (1992): 428–46.

[30]Letter of Constantine calling the Council of Nicaea (Urk. 20).

[31]In his *Oration to the Saints*, Constantine referred to Plato's teaching of two gods, with two οὐσίαι. R. Lane Fox argues that this oration was in fact delivered before the Council of Antioch in 325 as an attempt at reconciliation (*Pagans and Christians* [Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1986], 327–62; cf. Logan, "Marcellus," 439–40); though T. D. Barnes argues that the oration was delivered as part of the Easter celebrations at the church of Nicomedia in April 325 ("Constantine's *Speech to the Assembly of the Saints*: Place and Date of Delivery," *JTS* n.s. 52, no. 1 [2001]: 26–36).

[32]Eusebius of Caesarea, Letter to his Church concerning the Council of Nicaea (Urk. 22).

Antioch. Athanasius, who accompanied Alexander to the council as his deacon, many years later describes how Eusebius of Nicomedia and other supporters of Arius agreed to the various expressions suggested by their opponents, "whispering to each other and winking with their eyes," until at last the term *homoousios* was proposed, a term which they found completely unacceptable.[33] Although Athanasius has probably elaborated the account, perhaps based on his own experience in the intervening years before he also settled on the term *homoousios*, his tale does emphasize the point that the creed accepted by Nicaea is clearly formulated to be unacceptable to Arius and his supporters. The creed affirmed the full divinity of Jesus Christ, begotten not made, from the essence of the Father and so *homoousios* with him, and anathematized those who affirmed that the Son was of a different *ousia* or *hypostasis*, or that "before being begotten he was not," or that he came into existence from nothing. Constantine, however, according to Eusebius, presented an interpretation of the main points in this creed which was acceptable to most of the bishops present; in terms of this official interpretation, Eusebius could assure his flock that he had not capitulated to his opponents. Finally, Ossius, on June 19, 325, promulgated the creed and, after he subscribed his own name, notaries of Constantine took the document to each bishop to sign. All the bishops present put their names to the document, with the exception of the two Libyan bishops, Secundus of Ptolemais and Theonas of Marmarica, who were then sent into exile together with Arius and a few presbyters who supported him. Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea eventually subscribed to the creed, though not the anathemas condemning the views which were attributed, erroneously they claimed, to Arius.[34] They were given time by the council to conform, but three months later, after they supported certain Egyptian dissidents summoned to the capital, Constantine also sent them into exile and directed their communities to elect new bishops.[35] The Council of Nicaea also tried to resolve the further problem besetting the bishop of Alexandria, that of the Melitians, by accepting the status of Melitius as bishop of Lycopolis, though he was not permitted to perform any further ordinations, and also recognizing those who had been properly ordained by Melitius, but

[33]Cf. Athanasius *Nicaea* 19–20, probably written in 352.

[34]Cf. Letter of Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea (Urk. 31); Sozomen *EH* 1.21; Socrates assumes that they were exiled at the same time as Arius (*EH* 1.8).

[35]Cf. Letter of Constantine to the Community of Nicomedia (Urk. 27); Letter of Constantine to Theodoret of Laodicae (Urk. 28); and Philostorgius *EH* 1.10.

placing them under those who had been ordained by Alexander, with the provision that should any community so wish, and with the permission of the bishop of Alexandria, the Melitian presbyter might replace Alexander's presbyter after his death. The Council of Nicaea remained in session for another month, having many other items of business to discuss, such as the date of Easter and the propriety of transferring bishops from one diocese to another.

325–337: A Battle at Night

Socrates likens the period after the Council of Nicaea to a battle fought at night, with neither party fully understanding the grounds upon which they criticized their opponents.[36] The council did not bring the peace that Constantine had desired, though in the following twelve years until his death he managed to enforce a semblance of unity. Constantine had given his approval to the creed of Nicaea, and although plots continued to be hatched, accusations made, and bishops deposed and exiled, no one directly challenged the Council of Nicaea or its creed. As Vaggione puts it, "It was safer to reinterpret *homoousios* than deny it; anything more venturesome had to be pursued in private."[37] Theological reflection and debate did, of course, carry on, especially in Syria, Palestine, and Asia Minor, among the students of Lucian of Antioch, described by their opponents as "the Eusebians," the supporters of Eusebius of Nicomedia; their work continued in the tradition that had begun to define itself in reaction to Paul of Samosata, emphasizing, in particular, the independent existence of the Son and expounding his relationship to the Father primarily in terms of the concept of "image."

Although Arius and his supporters were exiled by Nicaea, within a couple of years the situation had reversed, largely through the work of Eusebius of Caesarea. According to Socrates, who admits that he was unable to fathom the point at issue, the term *homoousios* continued to trouble many, and in this context, Eustathius of Antioch charged Eusebius of Caesarea with "polytheism" and was accused in return of being a "Sabellian."[38] Eustathius' opponents also accused him of having made some sarcastic and offensive comments about the Empress Helena, when she made a pilgrimage to the

[36]Socrates *EH* 1.23.6.

[37]Vaggione, *Eunomius*, 61.

[38]Socrates *EH* 1.23.6–24.3; Socrates refers to George of Laodicea to the effect that it was Cyrus of Beroea who accused Eustathius.

Holy Land following the tragic events in her family, and they were able to have Eustathius deposed and replaced by Paulinus of Tyre, by a council held in Antioch in 327 under the presidency of Eusebius of Caesarea.[39] Ascelpas of Gaza and perhaps also five other bishops from Syria and Palestine were deposed by the same council and presumably replaced with bishops approved by Eusebius.[40] Then, on November 27, 327, Constantine wrote to Arius, expressing surprise that he had not shown himself at court and summoning him to appear, with a view to Arius' returning to his home country.[41] Arius, together with Euzoius, submitted a statement of their faith to Constantine, which describes the Son as being "begotten from the Father before all ages," but remaining silent about the *homoousios*.[42] Constantine, nevertheless, appears to have been satisfied with this, for he then wrote to Alexander of Alexandria, requesting that he receive Arius back into communion,[43] and also presented Arius' statement to a local council in Nicomedia, probably one of the local synods that Nicaea had directed to be held two or three times a year, which then duly readmitted Arius into communion.[44] Seeing the winds of fortune change, Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea also wrote to the emperor, claiming that they had never objected to the creed and that, having examined the implications of the term *homoousios* (though, as Williams points out, they do not actually say that they accept it), they are committed to keeping the peace, and so request the same clemency as was shown to Arius.[45] It is probably also at this time that Asterius wrote in support of Eusebius of Nicomedia, defending the letter that Eusebius had written to Paulinus of Tyre. Eusebius and Theognis were soon accepted back, probably at the second yearly session of the Council of Nicomedia. Alexander, however, may have been willing to receive Melitians back into communion, but he adamantly

[39]Following the revised dating suggested by H. Chadwick, "The Fall of Eustathius of Antioch," *JTS* 49 (1948): 27–35 and T. D. Barnes, "Emperor and Bishops, A.D. 324–344: Some Problems," *AJAH* 3 (1978): 53–75, at 59–60; the conventional date of 330–1 was upheld by Hanson, "The Fate of Eustathius of Antioch," *ZKG* 95, no. 2 (1984): 171–79, and idem, *Search*, 208–10.

[40]For Ascelpas see Athanasius *Def. Ar.* 45.2. Elsewhere Athanasius connects the fate of Eustathius and Ascelpas with Euphration of Balaneae, Cymatius of Paltus, Cymatius of Gabala, Carterius of Antaradus, and Cyrus of Beroea (*Flight* 3.3; *Hist. Ar.* 5.2). Cf. T. D. Barnes, "Emperor and Bishops," 59–60.

[41]Letter of Constantine to Arius (Urk. 29).

[42]Letter of Arius and Euzoius to Constantine (Urk. 30).

[43]Letter of Constantine to Alexander (Urk. 32).

[44]See Canon 5 of Nicaea; Williams, *Arius*, 72–75.

[45]Letter of Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea to Constantine (Urk. 31); Williams, *Arius*, 73.

refused any compromise in the case of Arius and sent Athanasius to the imperial court to protest their case.

Alexander died on April 17, 328, while Athanasius was abroad. The young deacon immediately returned to Alexandria where it seems that a number of bishops, followers of both Alexander and Melitius, were debating who should succeed Alexander as bishop of Alexandria. It is possible that some followers of Alexander took it upon themselves to elect Athanasius, excluding the Melitians from the process (perhaps on the grounds that Nicaea had not granted them this right), for, after his consecration as the new bishop of Alexandria, on June 8, 328, charges were repeatedly made that he had been consecrated in secret.[46] Thus, from the beginning of his episcopate, Athanasius faced a twofold struggle: against those Melitians who contested his right to the see of Alexandria, and, outside Egypt, against those who wanted to see Arius fully rehabilitated by being received back into communion in Alexandria. Athanasius maintained Alexander's stance toward Arius and his followers. He was also accused of using force against the Melitians. The Melitians eventually sent a delegation to Nicomedia, where Eusebius managed to obtain for them an audience with Constantine, and by the summer of 330, Eusebius of Nicomedia had formed an alliance with the Meletians. Soon after, further and repeated charges began to be raised against Athanasius. The most serious charge, which Athanasius could not shake for several decades, relates to an incident which happened as he was returning to Alexandria from the Thebaid, having retreated there after the Melitians had complained that Athanasius had demanded that they supply him with linen tunics as part of their general taxation. While traveling through the Mareotis, one of Athanasius' presbyters overturned the altar and broke the chalice of a certain Ischyras, a presbyter ordained by Colluthus, whose pretensions to the episcopate had been rejected by the Council of Alexandria in 324. During the winter of 331/2, Athanasius was summoned to appear before Constantine to answer various charges, including the incident with Ischyras. When Constantine heard Athanasius' version, however, he dismissed the charges. Nevertheless, this particular charge continued to be raised, together with new accusations, most seriously that

[46]For a full survey of the evidence concerning Athanasius' consecration, accompanied by a rather uncritical analysis, see D. W. H. Arnold, *The Early Episcopal Career of Athanasius of Alexandria* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 25–62. The most thorough reconstruction of the career of Athanasius is that of T. D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, for which the following pages are indebted, and where can be found full documentation and analysis.

Athanasius had had Arsensius, bishop of Hyspele, murdered. In the spring of 334, Constantine ordered that these matters be brought before a council in Caesarea in Palestine. Athanasius refused to attend, but instead managed to track down Arsenius, who was hiding near Tyre. After Athanasius communicated this to the emperor, Constantine again dismissed the case.

Finally, after new charges of violence and extortion were raised, Constantine ordered a council to meet in Tyre, in 335, with Athanasius compelled to attend. The council decided to send a commission to the Mareotis to ascertain the truth of the charges. Athanasius and his supporters protested that the composition of the commission was biased and, realizing that the proceedings were hostile toward him, left the council and made his way to Constantinople. Presumably after Athanasius had left, the Council of Tyre also reaffirmed that Arius was to be readmitted to communion as his views were within the acceptable boundaries of Christian theology. While the commission was investigating the matters in Egypt, the assembled bishops adjourned to Jerusalem, where they celebrated the dedication of the new Church of the Anastasis. Marcellus of Ancyra was also at the Council of Tyre and accompanied the other bishops to Jerusalem but did not stay to participate in the dedication and the reception of Arius to communion, going instead to Constantinople to present the emperor with his work *Against Asterius*.[47] When the bishops returned from Jerusalem to Tyre and heard the report of the commission, they deposed Athanasius for having broken the chalice and, in addition, for his refusal to attend the council in Caesarea, for having disrupted proceedings at Tyre with his gang of thugs, and for his flight, which was taken as proof of his guilt.

In Constantinople, Athanasius again managed to persuade Constantine that the charges against him were false, and so, when Eusebius of Nicomedia and five other bishops arrived from Tyre, they found that their condemnation of Athanasius was already rendered void. Realizing the need for something new, Eusebius accused Athanasius with having threatened to prevent the grain ships leaving Alexandria for Constantinople, an action that counted as treason. With Athanasius protesting his innocence, on November 7, 335 Constantine exiled him to Trier, without, however, formally trying him or deposing him from his see.[48] Constantine was also encouraged to hold a

[47]Cf. Lienhard, *Marcellus*, 3.

[48]With regard to Constantine's actions at this and other times, Barnes's comments (*Athanasius*,

council in Constantinople to deal with the case of Marcellus of Ancyra. Despite the protests of Alexander, the aged bishop of Constantinople who had been a supporter of Alexander of Alexandria, against the convening of a council in his see at which he would have no place, in July 336 Marcellus was formally deposed by a council in Constantinople on the charge of heresy and Basil was elected as the new bishop of Ancyra. The same council reaffirmed the readmission of Arius into the communion of the church and pressed the case with Bishop Alexander of Constantinople. Arius, however, died an inglorious death before arriving at the church, at least according to Athanasius' clearly embellished report, and was largely forgotten about thereafter, even by his supporters.[49]

In the years that followed, Eusebius of Caesarea further developed the theological case against Marcellus in his two works, *Against Marcellus* and *On Ecclesiastical Theology*, before he died on May 30, 339. In these works, Eusebius outlines a twofold case against Marcellus that was to be seminal in the theological controversies that followed. Against those, in particular Asterius but also Eusebius himself, who claimed that there were two (or three) *ousiai* or *hypostases* in God, that is, that the Father and Son (and Holy Spirit) are distinct beings, or even essences, Marcellus had argued that it is only in so far as he is human, enfleshed, that the Word can be spoken of as other than God, as his Son, for as God he is the same.[50] This claim is grounded in the partitive exegesis employed by Marcellus, according to which some things are said of Christ as divine and others (e.g., Prov 8.22, "The Lord created me at the beginning of his ways") applies to him as human, to his human flesh. His opponents' mistake, as he saw it, was to confuse these two aspects of Christ, so resulting in a Savior who was different in being to God—another *ousia* or *hypostasis*. Restricting the title "Son" to the incarnate Word, however, Marcellus spoke about the Word who was in the Father and who came forth from

24) are very perceptive: "Although Constantine gave the decisions of councils of bishops legal force, forbidding provincial governors to countermand them, on the grounds that the priests of God were more trustworthy than any magistrate, and thereby bound himself too to accept the decisions of councils, he nevertheless reserved to himself the right to decide whether a particular gathering of bishops was a properly constituted council whose decisions were to be regarded as divinely inspired. Moreover, he both claimed and exercised the right to summon a council of bishops, to refer matters to it, and to define its agenda. Thus he felt himself empowered to acquit a bishop of any criminal charge made against him, but not to convict him: the conviction and consequent deposition of a bishop were the exclusive right and prerogative of a council of his peers."

[49]On the death of Arius, see Athanasius *Ep. Egyp.* 19 and *Ep.* 54.

[50]Cf. Marcellus Frags. 72–75 V (70–74 K-H); 85–86 V (63–64 K-H); 96 V (76 K-H).

the Father for the purpose of creation only in terms of a "creative energy" (ἐνέργεια δραστική).[51] It was this that provided the occasion for the first charge that Eusebius laid against Marcellus, that he taught that the Word was "non-existent" (ἀνυπόστατον, ἀνούσιον) and "one and the same with God."[52] Marcellus thus appeared to Eusebius to have fallen into the error of Sabellius, a name that Eusebius indeed often uses for Marcellus himself, the new Sabellius. His denial of the real existence of the Word of God, at least as understood by Eusebius, provided the grounds for the second charge against Marcellus, that he had misunderstood the Incarnation. Marcellus undoubtedly had a very keen sense of the reality of Christ's human state and even suggests that Christ's words "let this cup pass" (Mt 26.39) indicates a real disagreement between the Father and the Son.[53] To Eusebius, this was rank adoptionism, and he naturally associated it with the error of Paul of Samosata.[54] More specifically, and more portentously, it was his opposition to Marcellus that probably prompted Eusebius into claiming that the Word takes the place of the soul in Christ. Unless one accepts that the Word is a distinct *hypostasis*, he argued, one falls into three possible errors: that the Father became incarnate (the error of Sabellius); that Christ possesses a human soul, so that he is merely a human being (the error of the Ebionites and Paul of Samosata); or that the body functions automatically, without a soul or mind.[55] The only possible alternative, for Eusebius, is that the Word, as a living and subsisting entity, "moves the flesh in the manner of the soul."[56] To Eusebius, then, Marcellus seemed to be advocating, at the same

[51]E.g., Marcellus Frag. 110 V (60 K-H).

[52]Cf. Eusebius of Caesarea *Against Marcellus* 1.1.32; 2.2.32; 2.4.21; *Ecclesiastical Theology* 1.20.15; 1.20.30, etc.

[53]Marcellus Frag. 74 (K-H 73). Eustathius of Antioch (cf. Frags. 41, 47) had also appealed to such verses to emphasize that Christ really did undergo spiritual suffering, the subject of which is the human soul of Christ.

[54]In *Ecclesiastical Theology* 3.6.4, Eusebius accuses Marcellus of renewing the heresy of Paul of Samosata. The adoptionist flavor of Marcellus' position is also noted by Eusebius' successor, Acacius of Caesarea: "You deny the words 'the Word was God' (Jn 1.1); you call him Son of God either only nominally or as a human being, so that God begets what is different in kind. He produces the Son by adoption, in the sense of 'sons have I begotten and reared' (Is 1.2) and of 'you have received the Spirit of adoption' (Rom 8.15) and 'bring to the Lord, you sons of God' (Ps 28.1 LXX)." Fragment preserved in Epiphanius *Panarion* 72.9.5.

[55]Eusebius *Ecclesiastical Theology* 1.20.41–3.

[56]Ibid., 1.20.40: τὴν σάρκα κινῶν ψυχῆς δίκην. As Spoerl notes ("Apollinarian Christology," 568 n. 74), this clearly entails "in place of a soul"; Eusebius envisions two mutually exclusive options: Christ *either* has a human soul, in which case he is merely human, adopted as Son of God; *or* he is the

time, both a radical monotheism and also a distinction between the Word or Son of God, on the one hand, and the man Jesus Christ, on the other—what will later be called a "dyoprosopic" Christology.[57] In this way, a further aspect emerged in the fourth-century controversy over the identity of Jesus Christ alongside the questions raised by Arius (whether Christ is truly divine) and Marcellus ("Sabellius," in what sense the Son is other than the Father), and that is the relationship between Christ and the Word (specifically the error of teaching "two sons," associated with the name of Paul of Samosata). This latter thread is picked up several decades later by Apollinarius, who, whilst being firmly pro-Nicene, hardened Eusebius' suggestions and initiated further controversy.

337–351: Positions Develop

Constantine died on May 22, 337. Following his death, the empire was divided between his three sons, with Constantius taking the eastern part of the empire, Constantinus Britain and Gaul, and Constans Italy and Illyricum. After Constantinus died, invading Italy in the spring of 340, the empire was divided into two, between Constantius in the East and Constans in the West. This division inevitably meant that the unity that Constantine was able to maintain within the Church, such as it was, began to unravel. There certainly was theological reflection and discussion during the previous decade, as the cases of Eustathius, Marcellus and Eusebius demonstrate, but from this point onwards, theological issues return to the center stage. Moreover, during the following couple of decades there were repeated efforts, at a multitude of councils, to draw up new creedal statements. It is during this period that Athanasius developed his theological argument against his opponents, now all described as "Arians," and comes to realize the importance of the Creed of Nicaea, as he understands it, as the rallying point for the unity of the Church.

Word ensouling the body. Eusebius did speak of Christ's human soul in his earlier works, though only in connection with the various scriptural texts demanding this; it was his opposition to Marcellus that hardened his position. Yet compared to Apollinarius, Eusebius' position appears tentative, though very much of a piece with the debates earlier in the fourth century explored in Chapter Two.

[57]Though, as Spoerl notes ("Apollinarian Christology," 557), neither Paul nor Marcellus are really "dyoprosopic"; for both of them "the only distinct πρόσωπον we can observe in the Saviour is the human Jesus." It is Eusebius' presupposition about the distinct *hypostasis* of the Word of God, prior to ensouling the human body, that leads to the claim that Marcellus teaches "two sons," the Word and Jesus; Cf. Spoerl, "Apollinarian Christology," 558, cited above, p. 34 n. 49.

One of the first acts of the new emperors was to grant all exiled bishops permission to return to their sees. Alexander of Constaninople died in the summer of 337, and after a brief period when the see was occupied by his chosen successor, Paul, Constantius, on returning to Constantinople, convened a small council which deposed Paul and transferred Eusebius from Nicomedia (contrary to canon 15 of Nicaea) to be the bishop of Constantinople. Only by November 23, 337 did Athanasius return to Alexandria, having made a point of visiting Constantius on his return journey from the West. However, his troubles began again almost immediately. During the winter of 337–38, a council met in Antioch, which declared Athanasius deposed, and appointed Pistus in his place. Athanasius retaliated with a council in Alexandria, in 338, though this was held after Constantius had already written to Athanasius endorsing the Council of Antioch. Athanasius went to see Constantius in the spring of 338, taking with him the letter which he had drawn up on behalf of the Council of Alexandria, and managed to placate the emperor.[58] On his return to Alexandria, and probably at his request, Athanasius was visited by Antony, the celebrated monk, in a show of solidarity with the bishop. Shortly afterwards Philagrius, who was sympathetic to the case against Athanasius, also arrived in Alexandria, as the city's new prefect. Another council was held in Antioch, in the winter of 338–39, which again deposed Athanasius, this time, in addition to the old charges, on the grounds that he had illegitimately returned to his see amid violence and rioting. A Cappadocian called Gregory was appointed in his place. He entered Alexandria on March 22, 339, and a couple of weeks later, on April 16, Athanasius took flight.

Athanasius arrived in Rome, probably late in 339, and soon proclaimed his version of what had happened in his *Encyclical Letter*. Marcellus, who had returned to Ancyra after the amnesty of 337, had also been deposed and exiled again, probably by the same council of Antioch that had appointed Gregory as bishop of Alexandria, and had also ended up in Rome, early in 340. It is from Marcellus that Athanasius seems to have learned to categorize his opponents outside Alexandria, which even in the *Encyclical Letter* he had referred to as "Eusebians," as "Arians," and then, with this new strategy, he began to write his *Orations against the Arians*.[59] More immediately, Julius, bishop of Rome, took up the cause of both exiled bishops. He proposed that a council

[58]For the letter, see Athanasius *Def. Ar.* 3–19; for his visit to Constantius, see Barnes, *Athanasius*, 41.
[59]Cf. Chapter One.

of both Eastern and Western bishops should be held in Rome to settle the matter, and sent two presbyters to Antioch with an invitation to attend such a council.

Rather than being given an immediate answer, the presbyters were detained until, on the occasion of the dedication of a church begun by Constantine, a council was assembled in Antioch under the presidency of Eusebius now of Constantinople. Constantius was present for the dedication, on January 6, 341, and may have been present during some of the council. Although Socrates describes the real intention of the council as being "to undermine the faith of the *homoousios*," the canons of the council actually open with an appeal to "the holy and great council of Nicaea."[60] No less than four documents are connected with this "Dedication Council," all of which are cited by Athanasius, though no account of the proceedings of the meeting have been preserved into which one might fit these texts. His first extract is from a letter of the council and begins by expressing their indignation and an attempt to distance themselves from Arius:

> We have neither been followers of Arius (for how should we as bishops follow a presbyter?) nor have we accepted any form of faith other than that which was handed down from the beginning; indeed we, being examiners and testers of his [Arius'] faith, have admitted him rather than followed him.[61]

There then follows a creedal statement, formulated in simple and uncontroversial phrases, and perhaps, with its affirmation that Christ "remains King and God unto all ages," directed at Marcellus.

The second document cited by Athanasius is known as the Dedication Creed and was widely associated with Lucian of Antioch.[62] The emphasis in this creed is very much on the independent and eternal existence of the Son and the Spirit, with the Son's relationship with the Father being explained in terms of his existence as the image of God (cf. Col 1.15), the one who reveals the Father: the Son is "begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, whole from whole, sole from sole, perfect from perfect, King from King, Lord from Lord . . . unchanging and immutable (ἄτρεπτόν τε καὶ

[60]Cf. Socrates *EH* 2.8.2; Canon 1 of the Council of Antioch, 341, Mansi, 2.1308c.

[61]Athanasius *Councils* 22; Hahn §153.

[62]Athanasius *Councils* 23; Hahn §154; on the connection with Lucian, see Chapter Two.

ἀναλλοίωτον), the exact image (ἀπαράλλακτον εἰκόνα) of the divinity and *ousia* and will and power and glory of the Father." Moreover, with regard to the names "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit," these, the creed affirms, "are not given lightly or idly, but signify exactly the particular *hypostasis* and order and glory of each of those who are named, so that they are three in *hypostasis* but one in agreement (ὡς εἶναι τῇ μὲν ὑποστάσει τρία, τῇ δὲ συμφωνίᾳ ἕν)." Finally, the creed concludes by anathematising those who teach contrary to the right faith of the Scriptures in claiming that "either time or occasion or age exists or did exist before the Son was begotten," or that the Son should be considered as "a creature like one of the creatures, or a product (γέννημα) like one of the products, or something made (ποίημα) like one of the things that are made." This creed presents a very clear statement of the theology of those who stood opposed to Athanasius and Marcellus, one of the last attempts to do so before the "loose and uneasy coalition" of those who subscribed to this "pluralist *eikon* theology" dispersed along different trajectories in the following decades. Given that some of the key concerns of the Creed of Nicaea are echoed in this Dedication Creed, it is not impossible that those who propounded this creed might have been willing to accept the Creed of Nicaea, though their interpretation of the creed would have been quite different from that currently being propounded by Marcellus, who had denounced any attempt to describe the Son as "the image of the Father's *ousia*" as being incompatible with the Nicene faith.

The third document connected with the council was a creed submitted by a certain Theophronius, as evidence of his right belief.[63] The final statement cited by Athanasius seems to be have been drawn up several months later to be sent to the Western emperor Constans.[64] It is particularly important in that it seems to have been used as the basis for several later creeds. It is a straightforward creed, avoiding all controversial phrases or terms (especially *ousia* and its cognates) and asserting that the kingdom of the Son is unending, and it concludes with an anathema which substantially repeats the anathema of the Nicene creed: "But those who say that the Son is from nothing or from another *hypostasis*, and not from God, and that there was a time or age when he was not, these the holy Catholic Church recognizes as aliens." The addition of the word "time" is significant, as an attempt to make more

[63]Athanasius *Councils* 24; Hahn §155.
[64]Athanasius *Councils* 25; Hahn §156.

precise what is meant (or rather not meant) by affirming that the Son is somehow subsequent to the Father.

According to Sozomen, the bishops gathered at Antioch sent a letter to Julius, presumably drawn up by Eusebius, elegantly written but full of irony and threats, declining his offer of a full council as presumptuous, exceeding the limits of the prestige due to Rome as the school of the apostles.[65] Julius, in turn, held his own council in Rome, drawing up a letter in which he denounced the Council of Antioch, rejected the charges against Athanasius as spurious, and proclaimed Marcellus to be fully orthodox.[66] The increasing scale of the conflict, now a division between East and West, inevitably drew the imperial authorities, whose territory was similarly divided, further into the controversy. Early in 342, the Western emperor Constans proposed that a council be held in the summer of 343 in Serdica, which was on the border between the region ruled by himself and that ruled by his elder brother Constantius. This proposed Council of Serdica turned out to be a disaster. After visiting Constans in Gaul, Athanasius set off for Serdica in the company of Ossius of Corduba, his Western supporters and a number of exiled Eastern bishops, including Paul of Constantinople. When the Eastern bishops arrived at Philippopolis, the westernmost large city in Constantius' domains, they decided, with the advice of the same Philagrius who had successfully installed Gregory as bishop of Alexandria four years earlier, to insist that the exiled bishops, whose cases they were about to review, should not be admitted to the council until they were formally approved.[67] Despite an attempt to break the impasse initiated by Ossius, the two groups in Serdica never in fact met. The standoff was broken by a letter from Constantius, announcing his victory over the Persians. At this news, the Eastern bishops departed, with the excuse that they needed to return to their sees. When they reached Philippopolis, they drew up a synodal letter, in which they criticized Marcellus for his theology, especially for teaching that that the image of the invisible God was created at the conception of the body of Christ and that the reign of Christ would come to an end; Athanasius for his use of violence; and other exiled bishops, such as Asclepas of Gaza and Paul of Constantinople, for the

[65]Sozomen *EH* 3.8.4–8.

[66]Letter of Julius, in Athanasius *Def. Ar.* 21–36.

[67]Hilary in *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, ser. A, 4.1.14–17 (CSEL 65, pp.57–58; trans. Wickham, pp. 28–30); *Festal Index* (of Athanasius' *Festal Letters*) 15.

aggressive manner in which they attempted to regain their sees.[68] After excommunicating their principle opponents, they presented a definition of their faith, which is substantially that of the fourth creed of Antioch, with an addition to the anathema appended to it:

> Likewise, those who say that there are three Gods, or that Christ is not God, and that before the ages he was neither Christ nor Son of God, or that the Father and Son and Holy Spirit are the same, or that the Son is unbegotten, or that the Father did not beget the Son by his choice or will, the holy and catholic Church anathematises.

The Eastern bishops clearly wanted to correct any suspicion that by their affirmation of three hypostases they had fallen into tritheism, or that they did not accept the divinity of the Son, or that before the ages he was already Christ, while also wanting to exclude any possibility of collapsing the reality of Father, Son, and Spirit into one being. The Easterners' statement of faith is again compatible with Nicaea, even if by avoiding its problematic terms, though this time it seems to have been proposed as an alternative.

The synodal letter of the Western bishops, besides denouncing their opponents, reviewed the charges against Athanasius, Marcellus, and Asclepas, though not Paul (presumably they were not able to explain his uncanonical return to Constantinople), and declared them all innocent, defending Marcellus on the grounds that he had advanced these points by way of enquiry rather than as his professed position.[69] Two of the four versions of this synodal letter conclude with a statement of their theological position.[70] It begins by excommunicating those who do not accept that Christ is truly God or properly Son, in distinction from being created (that is, γεννητός rather than γενητός), and criticizing Valens and Ursacius, for teaching among other things that the *hypostases* of the Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct (διαφόρους) and separate (κεχωρισμένας). In opposition to this, the Western bishops at Serdica assert that the faith handed down from the catholic and

[68]The letter and statement of faith survives only in Hilary *Coll. Ant.* ser. A, 4.1–3 (CSEL 65, pp. 48–78; trans. Wickham, 20–41); statement of faith in Hahn §158.

[69]The Westerners' letter is preserved in Hilary, *Coll. Ant.* ser. B, 2.1 (CSEL 103–126; trans. Wickham, 41–47); Cod. Ver. LX (58), edited in *EOMIA* 1.4, pp.645–53; Athanasius *Def. Ar.* 42–50; and Theodoret, *EH* 2.8.

[70]Cod. Ver. LX and Theodoret; for a critical text, see M. Tetz, "Ante omnia de sancta fide et de integritate veritatis: Glaubensfragen auf der Synode von Serdica," *ZNTW* 76 (1985): 243–69, at 252–54.

apostolic tradition is "that there is one *hypostasis*, which the heretics call *ousia*, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," so that if anyone asks "what is the *hypostasis* of the Son" the answer would have to be "the same as the sole *hypostasis* of the Father." The point is further repeated: those who are sons of God by regeneration are not "one *hypostasis* with the Father, as is the Son," a "oneness of *hypostasis*," it says later on, which allows the Son to say, "I and the Father are one." Following Marcellus' practice, which was adopted by Athanasius, the statement also distinguishes the way in which various titles apply to Christ, who is confessed as Only-begotten and First-born: Only-begotten Word, as he is eternal and in the Father, and First-born by his humanity.[71] In this way, they affirm, "we confess one God, we confess one divinity of Father and Son." This trenchant statement was clearly inflammatory, designed to state their theological convictions in the strongest possible terms, rather than in any reconciliatory manner. It seems, however, as Barnes persuasively argues, that this statement of faith, though drafted as part of the synodal letter, was omitted from the final version which was officially adopted and endorsed, so that Athanasius was not speaking in bad faith when he claimed, nineteen years later, that "the council made no such decision."[72] Yet the very need for Athanasius to affirm this indicates that that even as a draft it caused him problems.

Further attempts at reconciliation were undertaken in the following years. A council met at Antioch in the summer of 344 and drew up the "Macrostich Creed" (the "long-liner"), which was then taken to a council in Milan in 345. This creed is again essentially the "fourth creed" of Antioch, 341, with the additions made by the Eastern bishops at Serdica, followed by eight further paragraphs designed to explain more clearly and carefully their position.[73] Particularly noteworthy in this creed is the way in which it avoids contentious phrases, focusing instead on what is being said. Thus the terms *ousia* and its cognates are avoided, and the term *hypostasis* is only used in the claim, duly anathematised, that the Son is from "another *hypostasis*" than the Father. It uses, instead, the terms "objects" (πράγματα) and "persons" (πρόσωπα) for Father, Son, and Spirit, insisting that this does not lead them

[71]Ὁμολογοῦμεν καὶ μονογενῆ καὶ πρωτότοκον, ἀλλὰ μονογενῆ τὸν λόγον, ὅτι πάντοτε ἦν καὶ ἔστιν ἐν τῷ πατρί, τὸ πρωτότοκος δὲ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ διαφέρει καὶ τῇ καινῇ κτίσει.

[72]Barnes, *Athanasius*, 77; Athanasius *Tome* 5.1.

[73]Athanasius *Councils* 26; Hahn §159.

into tritheism. Although the creed is clear that one must not imagine a "temporal interval" (χρονικόν διάστημα) before the Son, yet it maintains there must be some sense in which the Father precedes the Son, for "no one can be properly called Father or Son of one who is co-unbegun and co-unoriginate." Regarding the relationship between Father and Son, the creed is also emphatic, further on, that the begetting of the Son must be thought of as being "by choice or will," so that God is not bounded to a "necessity which excludes choice and purpose." Marcellus and his disciple Photinus, newly elected bishop of Sirmium, are singled out for harsh criticism (Photinus' name is changed to "Scotinus"—the dark, rather than light, one): in particular, the idea that the Word first existed as a "mere word," not truly existing but having his being in another, and that only four hundred years ago, when he took flesh, did he become Christ and the Son of God, so that as Christ's kingdom began in time, it will also come to an end. In other words, Marcellus' partitive exegesis (taking the Scriptures to be speaking, in a twofold fashion, of Christ, some things being said of him as divine, others as human) is taken by his opponents to imply that Christ has only recently come into being, and that before this he existed "in foreknowledge only." For the framers of the creed, on the other hand, the words of Scripture apply in an undifferentiated manner to the Son. For them, Proverbs 8.22, "The Lord created me at the beginning of his ways," does not refer to the created flesh of Christ, as for Marcellus, but was said by the Son "about himself," though they insist that this does not make him a creature like the other creatures. Accordingly, while Marcellus had taken Scripture as speaking of the same Christ throughout, prophetically then directly, the framers of the creed envision a temporal sequence, in which the Son was "seen in his own person (αὐτοπροσώπως) by the patriarchs, gave the law, spoke by the prophets, and at last became man and manifested the Father to all men." The creed also picks up on the other aspect of Eusebius' polemic against Marcellus, that is, that he seems to treat Christ as a human being adopted as Son of God; thus it maintains that to say that the Father of Jesus Christ is the "one only God, the unoriginate," does not deny that Christ is also "God before the ages," as do the disciples of Paul of Samosata who hold that "after the incarnation he was by advance made God." Finally, the creed concludes by emphasizing again the unity in divinity: the Father and Son are both God, yet this does not imply two Gods but "one dignity of divinity," with the Father over all

things, including the Son, and the Son, subordinate to the Father, but over everything else.

This overture was followed, in September 344, by an order of Constantius that the Alexandrian clergy exiled in Armenia should be released and that those loyal to Athanasius should no longer be persecuted.[74] The Council of Milan, which met early in 345, also seems to have tried to be reconciliatory, by condemning Photinus. Just as Athanasius had broken communion, at least temporarily, with Marcellus because of his association with Photinus, so now the Western bishops too ceased to support Marcellus, though they did not condemn him; Marcellus, for his part, voluntarily desisted from trying to take part in the council.[75] Ursacius and Valens, whose sees were in Pannonia, in the eastern parts of the territory ruled by Constans, switched allegiance and were reconciled with the Western church. However, when the council insisted on repeating the condemnation of Arius and his followers, the four Eastern bishops, who had brought the synodal letter of the Council of Antioch, departed in protest.[76] Gregory, who had replaced Athanasius as bishop of Alexandria, died on June 26, 345, whereupon Constantius granted permission to Athanasius to return to Alexandria. Athanasius did not arrive back in Alexandria for over a year. Before returning, Athanasius visited both Constans and Constantius. Then, while travelling through Antioch, he celebrated with the continuing supporters of Eustathius, in their private houses, deliberately avoiding celebrating with the current bishop of Antioch, Leontius.[77] And, in Laodicea, Athanasius spent time with Apollinarius, who consequently suffered at the hands of his bishop, George, who had placed a ban on anyone communicating with the Alexandrian bishop.[78] Finally, with great honor and glory, Athanasius was escorted back into Alexandria on October 21, 346.

351–361: Conquer and Divide

After Magnentius, who had usurped Constans in the West, committed suicide on August 10, 353, and Gallus, Caesar of the East, was executed for

[74]Athanasius *Hist. Ar.* 21.

[75]Hilary in *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, ser. B, 2.9.3 (CSEL 65, p. 147; trans. Wickham, 58); Cf. J. T. Lienhard, "Did Athanasius Reject Marcellus?" in M. R. Barnes and D. H. Williams, eds., *Arianism after Arius*, 65–80.

[76]Barnes, *Athanasius*, 88–9.

[77]Sozomen *EH* 3.20.4.

[78]Sozomen *EH* 6.25.7–8.

treason, Constantius took control of the whole empire. In the following years, Constantius became increasingly concerned to ensure ecclesial unity, by having the position of the Eastern bishops, and the condemnation of Athanasius, accepted throughout the empire. During the same period, and paralleling Constantius' quest for a single creed, Athanasius also began to turn more specifically to the Council of Nicaea and its creed as the true expression of the faith and the only secure rallying point.[79] Following an examination of Photinus by Basil of Ancyra, in the presence of Constantius' officials, a council was called in Sirmium in 351. This council condemned and deposed Photinus, Marcellus, and Athanasius and issued a creed, which was again based on the "fourth creed" of Antioch 341, but shortened its anathema and replaced the lengthy explanations of the Macrostich Creed with a further twenty-six short anathemas.[80] The first two anathemas repeat, in simplified form, the anathema appended to the "fourth creed" of Antioch, 341, and since expanded, condemning positions anathematized by Nicaea. The majority of the anathemas are directed, without mentioning their names, against Photinus and Marcellus. The new material in these anathemas suggest that the bishops had tried to understand their opponents and the implications of their theology: a number of anathemas cite passages from Scripture (the "Old Testament") indicating a plurality of divine beings (e.g., 14 [Gen 1.26]; 17 [Gen 19.24]; 18 [Ps 109.1 LXX]; cf. 11), so that they can affirm that Abraham saw the Son, not the unbegotten God or part of him (15; cf. 16), not one who is in the same order as the Father, but one who is subordinate to him (18); and, on the other hand, given the unity of the Son's being (and therefore the univocal manner in which things are said of him), they assert that it is not permissible to say that the Son from Mary is man only (9), for he is God and man (10), though not, of course, the unbegotten God. Several of the anathemas also indicate wariness about using the term *ousia*: they condemn those who say that the *ousia* of God is extended or contracted (6) or that the *ousia* of God is extended in the Son (7). It is possible that this is an oblique reference to Nicaea, perhaps as appealed to by Photinus prior to the council.

Athanasius, as he had done in a similar earlier situation, convened his own council in Alexandria (with more bishops than had attended Sirmium),

[79]Athanasius' work *On the Council of Nicaea* is usually placed around 352, though it is possible that it was a few years later.

[80]Athanasius *Councils* 27; Hahn §160.

and then sent a letter to Rome, which was read and approved by a council convened by the newly appointed Liberius of Rome to review the case of Athanasius. Constantius was in Arles in the winter of 353–54, and while he was there a small council of bishops met. The council was presented with a document, probably the synodal letter of Sirmium, 351, and those who refused to sign it, and agree to the deposition of not only Photinus and Marcellus, but Athanasius as well, were sent into exile; all the bishops present, except Paulinus of Tyre, and one of the two papal legates, signed the document.[81] After an exchange of letters with Liberius, another council was convened in Milan, in 355, again with the emperor nearby. This time thirty bishops added their names to the document, beginning with Caecilianus, and then Ursacius and Valens. Lucifer of Cagliari, who had brought Liberius' letter to the emperor, Eusebius of Vercellae, and Dionysius of Milan refused to sign and were accordingly exiled.[82] Constantius also seems to have adopted his father's practice of sending the document to the bishops unable to attend these councils, so that they too could have the opportunity, under pressure, to add their names to the document, and as a result, Hilary of Poitiers was exiled to Phrygia. Liberius was brought to Milan during the autumn of 355 and eventually sent to Beroea in Thrace, until he such time as he would also subscribe to the synodal letter of Sirmium.[83] He was replaced by Felix, who was probably consecrated in Milan, where Acacius of Caesarea happened to be, and although the clergy of Rome swore allegiance to Liberius, they eventually accepted Felix as their bishop. While the council of Milan was still meeting, Constantius also initiated plans to have Athanasius expelled from Alexandria. After his court officials failed to remove him by diplomatic means, a large body of troops was sent, in January 356, to seize him. Athanasius' church was taken by surprise on the night of February 8–9, though Athanasius managed to escape. This time he did not leave Egypt but hid for a time in the city of Alexandria and spent the rest of the time wandering among the monastic settlements of Lower and Upper Egypt. Most Christians in Alexandria remained loyal to Athanasius, and it was only by June that the other churches in the city were taken. Finally, in February of the following year, George, Athanasius' replacement, was able to enter the city, though

[81]Barnes, *Athanasius*, 115.

[82]Socrates *EH* 2.36.

[83]Athanasius *Hist. Ar.* 40–41; Sozomen *EH* 4.11.

he did not have an easy time there and, after being almost lynched at the end of August 358, he left Alexandria on October 2, 358.

By the spring of 357, Liberius was ready to compromise, and in August, he returned to Rome, having accepted the deposition of Athanasius and also the creed issued by the Council of Sirmium in 351.[84] Felix, who had gained a reputation for having remained steadfast in his adherence to Nicaea, yet had also antagonized many by holding communion with those who had betrayed this faith, stepped aside for Liberius, though was not deprived of his episcopacy.[85] Constantius' last opponent, Ossius, refused to accept the condemnation of Athanasius, and after a number of letters, threatening and entreating, from Constantius, the emperor detained him in Sirmium for a whole year.[86] There, in the summer of 357, Potamius of Lisbon, Valens, and Ursacius, in the presence of other bishops (though it was not a formal council), drew up a theological statement which Ossius was finally persuaded to sign.[87] There are no anathemas attached to the text, but it is the first statement which takes a deliberate and overt stand against Nicaea, and hence, it was frequently referred to thereafter as the "Blasphemy of Sirmium." This was done by proscribing the use of certain terms and restricting the scope of theological reflection:

> Since some or many have been disturbed by what is called in Latin *substantia*, and in Greek *usia*, that is, to make it understood more exactly, the *homoousion* or the *homoiousion*,[88] there ought to be no mention of it at all, nor exposition of them in the Church, for this reason and for this consideration, that nothing is written about them in the divine Scriptures, and they are above human knowledge and human understanding, because no one can declare the generation of the Son, as it is written, "Who shall declare his generation" [Is 53.8].

Rather than rejecting such terms outright, which would have required extensive argumentation, the document simply stipulates that any controversial phrases be avoided. As such, it also stands against the position represented

[84]Barnes, *Athanasius*, 138.

[85]Cf. Theodoret EH 2.17; Sozomen *EH* 4.11.11.

[86]Athanasius *Hist. Ar.* 44–46.

[87]Athanasius *Councils* 28; Hahn §161.

[88]Barnes (*Athanasius*, 281 n. 26; 282 n. 32) argues, plausibly but unnecessarily, that the words "or the *homoiousion*" were added after the Council of Ancyra in 358, in the documents of which the term does not appear, as a catch phrase for their position.

by the Dedication Creed of 341, which affirmed that the Son was the image of the Father's *ousia*. However, as it was not drawn up by a formal council of bishops, nor couched as a profession of faith, it was probably not intended to be circulated to other bishops for their acceptance but was used to test the waters, as it were, to begin formulating a position which could command universal adherence, and with Ossius' name behind the document, it would have presented a forceful case.

During these same years, another factor entered upon the scene, causing the dynamics of the theological controversies to change dramatically. Aetius and Eunomius, perhaps in response to Athanasius' work *On the Council of Nicaea*, began to articulate their more radical theology asserting the essential unlikeness of Father and Son, prompting the "loose and uneasy coalition" to fracture into different elements with redefined alignments.[89] Aetius had arrived in Alexandria as part of the retinue of George (in 357), presumably to help ensure acceptance of the theological position promoted by the emperor. It was also in Alexandria, a dozen years earlier, that Eunomius encountered Aetius and became his secretary and disciple. Leontius of Antioch, who had ordained Aetius to the diaconate, died later that same year, and Eudoxius was appointed to Antioch primarily, it was claimed, through connections at court, without consultation with prominent neighboring bishops.[90] Eudoxius was also a student of Lucian of Antioch and was known to have followed Asterius in holding that the Son was "like in substance" (κατ' οὐσίαν ὅμοιον) to the Father.[91] Aetius and Eunomius left Alexandria for Antioch to present themselves to the new bishop and to persuade him of their position. Eudoxius soon called a council, which gave its support to the "Blasphemy of Sirmium."[92] Another important figure present at this council was Acacius, who had replaced Eusebius as bishop of Caesarea in 339 and had attended both the Council of Antioch in 341 and the Council of Serdica (with the Eastern bishops) in 343. Further information about developments in Antioch are provided by George of Laodicea, a bishop of an important nearby see, who had not, however, been consulted about Eudoxius' appointment. He composed a letter on behalf of those who had been excommunicated by Eudoxius,

[89]For Aetius' *Syntagmation* as a response to Athanasius' *Nicaea*, see T. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism* (Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), 116–28.

[90]Socrates *EH* 2.37.9; Sozomen *EH* 4.12.4.

[91]Philostorgius *EH* 4.4.

[92]Sozomen *EH* 4.12.5–7.

which they were to give to the bishops invited by Basil to celebrate the dedication of a new church in Ancyra.[93] In this letter, George claimed that Antioch was suffering from "the shipwreck of Aetius," especially by his teaching that "the Son is dissimilar (ἀνόμοιος) to the Father." Although called "Anomoians" by their opponents, they did in fact teach that the Son was like the Father in many important ways but balked at describing the Son as like the Father *according to essence.*

It is possible that Basil of Ancyra had been observing Aetius with increasing concern for some time.[94] But it is in the statement of faith issued by the bishops who had assembled in Ancyra to consecrate a new church there, that we can see the first carefully thought out statement of the theological issues at stake. Basil convened the bishops as a council shortly before Easter 358, and the statement they produced was signed by the twelve bishops, beginning with Basil and Eustathius of Sebaste.[95] The letter begins with the bishops aligning themselves with the Council of Constantinople 336, and the statements of faith issued by the Councils of Antioch 341,[96] Serdica, and Sirmium 351. The main point of the letter is to establish "an orthodox understanding of the concepts related to the names (τὰς ἐκ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐννοίας)" in which Christians are baptized, that is, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[97] The concepts involved in the relationship between Creator and created, they argue, is fundamentally different to the relationship between Father and Son, for the most important characteristic feature of this relationship is the similarity in *ousia* between Father and Son: if one were to remove all corporeal aspects of this relationship, all that would be left is "the generation of a living being similar in essence, since every father is conceived of as father of an essence like him."[98] If one were to remove even the term "essence," then, they suggest, the relationship would be reduced to that of Creator and creature; but this is not

[93]Sozomen *EH* 4.13.

[94]Philostorgius (*EH* 3.16 and 3.27) reports that Basil of Ancyra and Eustathius of Sebaste had been defeated in a public debate with Aetius and that they had subsequently denounced Aetius to Gallus, who would have had his legs broken had not Aetius' patron, Leontius, intervened. It is unclear whether this event should be placed around 351 (as Vaggione, *Eunomius*, 159–60), or whether this report is an anachronistic doublet of the later debate between Aetius and Basil in Constantinople (as Kopecek, *History*, 106–12).

[95]The letter is preserved in Epiphanius *Panarion* 73.2.1–11.11.

[96]Referring to the Dedication Creed, rather than the "fourth creed," which had been used repeatedly since 341. Cf. Hanson, *Search*, 351–52.

[97]Letter of Basil (Epiphanius *Panarion* 73.3.2).

[98]Ibid., (73.4.2).

sufficient, for the Father is the Father not of an activity, but of an essence, like himself, which subsists in relation to that activity.[99] Thus, to say that the Word is "unlike in essence" to the Father denies that he is truly Son.[100] Yet, on the other hand, they also argue that the term "like" is preferable to "same," as it also preserves the distinction between the two; it is a safeguard against any attempt to collapse the Father and Son into one being, for "what is like can never be the same as that which it is like."[101] The letter concludes with nineteen anathemas, alternating between condemning any attempt to describe the Son as "unlike in essence" and condemning those who deny the existence of the Son by claiming that he is identical to the Father or merely an activity. It is specifically on these grounds, as implying an identity of being, that the term *homoousios* is condemned in the last anathema, directed against those who say that "the Son is co-essential (ὁμοούσιον) or identical-in-essence (ταὐτοούσιον) with the Father."[102] Although the *homoousion* continued to be condemned, the bishops gathered in Ancyra are clearly more concerned with the new teachings emerging amongst other opponents of Nicaea, so opening a way for a possible reconciliation with the supporters of Nicaea.

When Basil of Ancyra, Eustathius of Sebaste, Eleusius of Cyzicus, and Leontius, an imperial chamberlain, presented the report from the council of Ancyra to the emperor in Sirmium, it must have appeared to him as a viable middle position between the positions of Athanasius on the one hand and Aetius and Eunomius on the other. Thus, when the delegation from Ancyra arrived, Constantius stopped Asphalius, a presbyter of Antioch, who was just on the point of returning to Antioch with a letter from the emperor, presumably favorable to Eudoxius and Aetius. Instead, the emperor had a new letter written, in which he asserts, in no uncertain terms, that Eudoxius had arrived in Antioch without imperial permission, though he deceitfully claimed it, and that Arius' teaching was outright heresy.[103] Eudoxius, Aetius, and Eunomius were all, accordingly, sent into exile, seemingly at the instigation of Basil.[104] In fact, such was Basil's influence over Constantius at this time

[99]Ibid., (73.4.3–4): ὅτι γὰρ οὐκ ἐνεργείας λέγεται πατὴρ ὁ πατὴρ, ἀλλ' ὁμοίας ἑαυτῷ οὐσίας, τῆς κατὰ τὴν τοιάνδε ἐνέργειαν ὑποστάσης.

[100]Ibid., (73.10.5).

[101]Ibid., (73.8.8).

[102]Ibid., (73.11.10).

[103]Sozomen *EH* 4.13.4–14.

[104]Philostorgius *EH* 4.8.

that the emperor also agreed to Basil's suggestion that another council be called. There seems to have been a council held in Sirmium, in 358, at which Liberius of Rome was recalled, and a dossier of documents was compiled, in which there seems to have been a statement to the effect that the Son was "like the Father in *ousia* and in all things."[105] More importantly, it was eventually decided to hold two simultaneous councils, at Ariminum and Seleucia. Rather than letting each council formulate yet more statements of faith, Constantius had a new statement drawn up by Marcus of Arethusa, which was then endorsed by a small number of important bishops, including Ursacius, Valens, Basil of Ancyra, and George of Alexandria,[106] and finally, it was officially promulgated in the presence of the emperor during the vigil of Pentecost, May 22, 359 (hence it is known as the Dated Creed).[107] This creed presents a fairly straightforward confession of belief in one God, the Father, and the Son, who is said to be "like the Father in all things," or like "according to the Scriptures," and so is usually described as "homoian," perhaps following a position first advocated by Acacius of Caesarea.[108] The creed continues by affirming that the Son "before all ages and before all origin, and before all conceivable time and before all comprehensible essence was begotten impassibly of the Father," and that as "God from God," the Son is "like to the Father who begot him, according to the Scriptures." For the first time in any creed, it includes a mention of Christ's descent into hell. Then. finally, after a statement on the Holy Spirit, it concludes:

> Since the term *ousia* was adopted by the fathers [i.e., at Nicaea] in simplicity, and, not being known by the people, gives offence because the Scriptures do not contain it, it has seemed good that it should be removed and that henceforth there should be no mention of *ousia* in regard to God, for the divine scriptures nowhere mention *ousia* [when speaking] about Father and Son. But we say that the Son is like the Father in all things, as the holy Scriptures indeed say and teach.

[105]Cf. Sozomen *EH* 4.15; according to Sozomen the dossier included the decrees against Paul of Samosata (presumably from the Council of Antioch), those against Photinus (probably the Sirmium Creed of 351), and the Dedication Creed.

[106]For the names, see Epiphanius *Panarion* 73.22.5–7.

[107]Athanasius *Councils* 8; Hahn §163.

[108]Socrates (*EH* 2.40.33) reports that at the Council of Seleucia, Acacius, maintaining that the Son was like the Father in will, but not *ousia*, was refuted from his own works in which he had written that the Son is like the Father "in all things"; however, no fragments of Acacius have been preserved in which this formula is used.

It was clearly hoped that this creed would be acceptable to bishops such as Acacius of Caesarea, as well as those who, along with Basil of Ancyra, reacted against the new theology of Aetius and Eunomius. However, Basil's position, as outlined in the letter of the council of Ancyra, clearly indicates that he would find this creed significantly lacking. And, indeed, when Basil signed the creed, he added an important qualification: "Thus I believe and agree with what is written above, acknowledging that the Son is like the Father in all respects. In all respects, not only according to will, but according to *hypostasis* and according to existence (ὕπαρξις) and according to being (τὸ εἶναι)," that is, like according to *ousia*, but without actually using that term.[109] That not all the bishops were eager to sign is indicated by a telling note added to his signature by Valens, who affirmed "like the Father," only adding "in all things" when compelled by the emperor: "How we subscribed previously on the night before Pentecost those present know, as does the pious emperor, before whom I testified orally and in writing."[110] That a consensus was difficult to achieve, even in this small gathering, did not bode well for the outcome of the two major councils that were expected to endorse its creed.

The period between this council in Sirmium in May and the double council in the autumn is the most likely context for a letter which Epiphanius places after the letter of Basil and the Council of Ancyra and which he attributes to George of Laodicea.[111] Lest anyone think that Basil has conceded his earlier position by signing the Dated Creed, George reiterates the point that it is necessary to affirm that the Son is like the Father in *ousia*.[112] The letter also argues that the names "Father" and "Son" are more appropriate than the terms "unoriginate" and "originated," advocated by his opponents, presumably Aetius and Eumonius.[113] Most importantly, George also addresses himself to those who find problematic the use of the term *hypostasis* by the Eastern bishops and, in so doing, provides what is probably the first analysis of how to speak of the real, distinct subsistence of the persons of the Trinity. The Eastern bishops, he says, use the term *hypostasis* to indicate "the subsistent, existent properties of the persons," which does not lead to tritheism, for "they acknowledge that there is one divinity containing all things through the

[109]Epiphanius *Panarion* 73.22.7.
[110]Ibid., 73.22.5–6.
[111]Ibid., 73.12–22.7; on the attribution see ibid. 73.1.8.
[112]Ibid., 73.15.
[113]Ibid., 73.14.

Son in the Holy Spirit."[114] By attempting to clarify how the term *hypostasis* was being used, George further contributed to a possible rapprochement with the supporters of Nicaea.

The Western council in Ariminum opened first, on May 22, 359, and soon split into two camps. Of the four hundred or so bishops that assembled, the majority insisted that there was no need for a new creed to replace that of Nicaea, at which point Valens and Ursacius, together with almost eighty other bishops, left the church in which they had gathered and took counsel in a nearby building. The majority group reaffirmed the Creed of Nicaea, stipulating that nothing should be added to it or removed from it, and condemned Arius and his heresy.[115] In addition, they also condemned Valens and Ursacius, and two other Illyrian bishops, for disturbing the peace of the Church. A delegation was dispatched from the majority group, to present their report to the emperor, at the end of July. The emperor, however, granted an audience to the delegation from the meeting led by Valens and Ursacius and refused to receive the delegation from the majority group, keeping them waiting at Adrianople and informing them, by letter, that he was rather too busy to attend to them for the moment.[116] Eventually Constantius had these delegates moved to a small town called Nike, in Thrace, where they were pressured into renouncing the decisions they had taken at Ariminum and to subscribe, instead, to the creed brought by the other delegation, which was a slightly revised version of the Dated Creed, dropping "in all things" after "like the Father," and prohibiting not only the term *ousia*, but also the description of the person (προσώπου) of the Father, and of Son, and of Spirit, as "one *hypostasis*."[117] It was alleged that Nike was deliberately chosen as the location for this enforced agreement so that the creed subscribed there could be promoted as the "Nicene" formula.[118] The delegates were allowed to return to Italy, where they were at first received with hostility, but through the continual pressure exerted by Valens and Ursacius, and the imperial officers, resistance collapsed, and the bishops were persuaded to sign the new creed.

[114]Ibid., 73.16.1–3.

[115]Creed and condemnation edited in Y. M. Duval, "Une traduction latine inédite du symbole de Nicée et une condemnation d'Arius à Rimini: Nouveau fragment historique d'Hilaire ou pièces des actes du concile?" *RB* 82 (1972): 7–25, at 10–12.

[116]Cf. Athanasius *Councils* 55.2–3.

[117]Theodoret *EH* 2.21; Athanasius *Councils* 30, a slightly different version of the Latin original; Hahn §164.

[118]Socrates *EH* 2.37.96; Sozomen *EH* 4.19.8.

The meeting in Seleucia opened on September 27, 359, with 160 bishops present, though Basil of Ancyra and Macedonius of Constantinople only arrived on the September 29.[119] At the opening meeting, the bishops divided into two groups, with the smaller group, headed by Acacius of Caesarea, George of Alexandria, and Eudoxius of Antioch wanting to consider disciplinary matters regarding particular bishops, especially Cyril of Jerusalem and Eustathius of Sebaste, before turning to doctrinal issues, while the larger group, headed by George of Laodicea and Eleusis of Cyzicus, insisted that doctrinal matters be considered first. When discussion turned to doctrinal questions, some seemed to have suggested reaffirming the Creed of Nicaea, with the simple omission of the term *homoousios*, while the majority advocated the Dedication Creed of Antioch. At this point, Acacius of Caesarea and his supporters withdrew. On the following day, the majority of bishops formally subscribed to a reaffirmation of the Dedication Creed. Acacius protested that they had done this in secret and drew up his own creed.[120] During the discussion in the following days, it became clear that the majority of bishops disagreed with Acacius that the Son could be said to be like the Father in will alone and not also in essence. Finally, they turned to consider the case of deposed bishops, such as Cyril of Jerusalem, and when Acacius (who had presided at the deposition of Cyril) refused to attend, the majority of bishops deposed Acacius himself, as well as George of Alexandria, Eudoxius of Antioch, and six other bishops. As with the council at Ariminum, each party at this council sent their own delegation to the emperor, with Acacius' party reaching him first.

The debates, not surprisingly, continued in Constantinople. Honoratus, who became Prefect of Constantinople on December 11, was charged with bringing the majority party of Seleucia into line.[121] It is possible that the whole assembly was initially going to be called, but at the urging of Acacius, only a delegation of ten were summoned, including Eustathius of Sebaste and Basil of Ancyra.[122] Aetius and Eunomius had probably attended the Council of Seleucia, as deacons accompanying their bishop (either Eudoxius or George of Alexandria), but their role there remains obscure.[123] Now, however,

[119]Socrates *EH* 2.39–40.

[120]Athanasius *Councils* 29; a slightly fuller version in Epiphanius *Panarion* 73.25, with minor variations; Hahn §165.

[121]Cf. Sozomen *EH* 4.23.3–4.

[122]Cf. Theodoret *EH* 2.27.

[123]Sozomen (*EH* 4.16.1; 4.22.12) suggests that the bishops who eventually gathered in Seleucia might have had an investigation of the teachings of Aetius on their agenda.

a public debate was proposed between Aetius, and a young, well-educated ascetic, called Basil, who would later become bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, but who now seems to have arrived in Constantinople in the entourage of Eustathius of Sebaste and Basil of Ancyra.[124] According to Philostorgius, although Basil was initially willing to take on Aetius, when he saw that the supporters of the "likeness in essence" were outnumbered, he declined and returned to his homeland.[125] It is probable that Basil of Ancyra, after first protesting the impropriety of a bishop contending the faith with a deacon, entered into the debate with Aetius and was most likely worsted.[126] When the emperor himself intervened, Basil of Ancyra, relying on his former confidence with the emperor, tried to bring a charge against Eudoxius but was immediately rebuked.[127] However, Eustathius was able to produce a letter of Eudoxius, which asserted that the Son was "unlike" the Father. When the emperor turned upon Eudoxius, he claimed that Aetius was its real author. Aetius was summoned, and some feared that he might persuade the emperor.[128] Aetius, however, unaware of what had transpired, not only claimed authorship of the letter, but asserted that rather than teaching the "unlikeness," he held the Son to be "unalterably like" (ἀπαραλλάκτως ὅμοιον) the Father, at which point, an exasperated emperor banished him from the palace.[129] Although Constantius was due to be proclaimed as consul on the following day, January 1, 360, he spent most of that day and the following night trying to persuade the delegates from Seleucia to accept the formula finally accepted by those who had meet at Ariminum.[130]

Eventually, further bishops from the neighboring area of Bithynia, to a number of about fifty, were called to attend a council, meeting in Constantinople under the presidency of Acacius of Caesarea. Using the Creed of Nike as its basis, the council issued a creed which defined the "homoian" position, and which became the official creed of the church, at least for a short period.[131] After a fairly bland statement of faith, the creed concludes by prohibiting the use of the terms *ousia* and *hypostasis*, as they are not used in Scripture and

[124]Vaggione (*Eunomius*, 222 n.136) places this debate in Seleucia rather than Constantinople.
[125]Philostorgius *EH* 4.12.
[126]Cf. Kopocek, *History*, 301–2.
[127]Theodoret *EH* 2.27.4–7.
[128]Cf. Sozomen *EH* 4.34.4.
[129]Cf. Theodoret *EH* 2.27.10–12; Philostorgius *EH* 4.12.
[130]Sozomen *EH* 4.23.8.
[131]Athanasius *Councils* 30; Hahn §167.

have caused disturbance. It affirmed that the Son is "like the Father according to the Scriptures" (not "in all things"), and condemned all heresies, both past and future, which are contrary to this document. The council then carried out a thorough purge of a number of bishops, on charges pertaining to conduct rather than doctrine: Basil of Ancyra, Macedonius of Constantinople, Eustathius of Sebaste, Eleusis of Cyzicus, Cyril of Jerusalem, and many others fell victim; George of Laodicea, who was known to be dying at that time, was left in peace. Despite having deposed some of these bishops on the grounds of having been transferred from one see to another, the same council then appointed various bishops to these vacant sees. Eudoxius of Antioch was sent to Constantinople. Meletius, who had earlier been appointed to Sebaste but faced strong opposition there, was elected to Antioch, but soon after his installation, he declared himself to be a supporter of the Nicene position and, not surprisingly, was deposed, being replaced by Euzoius, the former associate of Arius.[132] Eunomius, most plausibly at this juncture, delivered a public account of himself (which was later edited and issued as his *Apology*), which demonstrated that he could be tactful when expedient, and as a result was appointed, though without much success, to Cyzicus.[133] After this flurry of activity, deposing bishops whose allegiances were known to be otherwise and exiling others whose teachings have precipitated further divisions, the scene was set for a peace based on the "homoian" creed of 360.

361–369: An Overture to Reconciliation

Already during the autumn of 359, Athanasius was at work on his *On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia.* He had realized that there were a sizeable number of Eastern bishops who felt increasingly alienated from recent developments and could perhaps be persuaded to join forces with him. Those who were prepared to affirm the anathemas appended to the Creed of Nicaea, but still hesitated about the *homoousios*, Athanasius wrote, "must not be treated as enemies. We must not attack them as Ariomaniacs, nor as opponents of the fathers, but we [must] discuss the matter with them as brothers with brothers, who mean what we mean but dispute only about the word."[134]

[132] Cf. Epiphanius *Panarion* 73.28.4–33.5; K. McCarthy Spoerl, "The Schism at Antioch since Cavallera," in M. R. Barnes and D. H. Williams, eds., *Arianism after Arius*, 101–26.

[133] Cf. Vaggione, *Eunomius*, 226–31.

[134] Athanasius *Councils* 41.1.

Athanasius specifically mentions Basil of Ancyra and the letter from his council, despite the fact that the authors of this very letter trace their theological ancestry back through a string of councils that had repeatedly condemned Athanasius. Overlooking past polemics, Athanasius argued that the theological point, rather than word, maintained in their letter, concerning the necessity for affirming "likeness according to essence," was the very same point that the fathers of Nicaea sought to preserve with the term *homoousios*.

In the early 360s, the course of events changed unexpectedly and dramatically. Constantius appointed his younger cousin Julian as Caesar on November 6, 355 and sent him to Gaul. In the following years, Julian became increasing popular, so that when Constantius requested military reinforcements from his cousin for his Persian campaign, Julian's soldiers resisted and, instead, in February 360, proclaimed him as Augustus. In the following years, Julian seems to have courted the support of the Christians opposed to the policies of Constantius.[135] He allowed a meeting of Gallic bishops to assemble in Paris in 360, at which Hilary of Poitiers was present, having returned to the West without the permission of Constantius. Before the rivalry could escalate into full civil war, however, Constantius fell ill and died on November 3, 361, designating Julian as his successor. After the death of Constantius, Julian initiated his pagan reforms, canceling all benefits bestowed upon Christians under his predecessors. It is possible, as Barnes argues, that the edict allowing all bishops exiled under Constantius to return to their sees was first issued during 360; news of it reached Alexandria, however, only on February 8, 362.[136] George had already tried to return to Alexandria, on November 26, 361, only to be imprisoned, and then lynched on 24 December. Athanasius, who had been hiding either in Alexandria itself or amongst the monks of the Thebaid since 356, entered Alexandria on February 21, 362.

Within a few weeks, Athanasius, with the help of Eusebius of Vercellae, held a small but important council in Alexandria in the spring of 362. Two documents survive that are connected to this council. The first, the *Catholic Epistle*, of which only a part survives, seems to have been prepared by Eusebius of Vercellae and revised by Athanasius.[137] The letter takes a generally positive and

[135]Cf. H. C. Brennecke, *Hilarius von Poitiers und die Bischofsopposition gegen Konstantius II: Untersuchungen zur dritten Phase des arianischen Streites (337–361)*, PTS 26 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), 360–67.

[136]Barnes, *Athanasius*, 154.

[137]M. Tetz, "Ein enzyklisches Schreiben der Synode von Alexandrien (362)," *ZNTW* 79, no. 3–4

conciliatory tone, acknowledging that many Christians had been constrained or misled in recent years to subscribe to positions they did not genuinely hold, yet suggesting that a reestablishment of communion is possible, based upon a few basic affirmations. These are then set out in the most straightforward fashion: that "as God, the Son of God cannot be a creature, nor can the Holy Spirit be reckoned among the creatures," since it is only by the appearance of God, and not by the presence of a creature or a slave on earth, that "we receive grace of the divine Spirit, are ourselves deified and made temples of God." For this to be true, the following need to be confessed:

> The symbol of our faith [is this: that] the Trinity [is] of one essence, [that] true God became man of Mary (ὁμοούσιος ἡ τριάς, θεὸς ἀληθινὸς ἐκ Μαρίας γενόμενος ἄνθρωπος). Whoever does not agree is anathematized. For this is what is intended by the letter of the great Council of Nicaea: that the Son is of one essence with the Father and the Spirit is co-glorified with the Father and the Son; that, true God, the Son of God became flesh, suffered, rose again, ascended into heaven, and will come as judge of the living and the dead, to whom be glory unto the ages, Amen!

The opening of the letter addresses itself to all orthodox bishops in Egypt, Syria, Cilicia, Phoenice, and Arabia. In addition, Eusebius was asked to take a similar letter to the West, a mission he fulfilled after visiting Antioch.

The second document connected with this council is the *Tome to the Antiochenes*, composed by Athanasius, in his own name and some twenty other bishops, shortly after the council in an attempt to settle the problems in Antioch. In addition to the various bishops present, the *Tome* is also signed by two deacons representing Paulinus and noted the presence of "some monks of Apollinarius the bishop, sent by him for the purpose" (*Tome* 9). Although Pelagius had replaced George as bishop of Laodicea, and despite being ostracized by George, since 345, for his association with Athanasius,[138] Apollinarius had by this time begun exercising some kind of episcopal function in Laodicea, on the basis, no doubt, of his reputation as a firm supporter of Nicaea, ministering to those in the city who were not satisfied with Pelagius. The factionalism which had affected Antioch for many decades, and which

(1988): 262–81, text on pp. 271–73; on the un-Athanasian vocabulary, and the possibility of joint authorship, see pp. 265–70.

[138]Cf. Sozomen *EH* 6.25.7–8, mentioned at p. 83 n. 78 above.

was the primary purpose of the *Tome*, seems thus to have spread to Laodicea. It was to Antioch that Eusebius of Vercellae, together with Asterius, bishop of Petra, took the *Tome* after duly signing it himself.[139]

The main purpose of the *Tome* is to reconcile the continuing supporters of the deceased Eustathius, who were currently led by Paulinus, with the larger group gathered around Meletius, who had recently shown himself to be more of a Nicene than anyone would have expected, and who had just taken possession of the "old church" in Antioch, upon his return from exile (*Tome* 3–4). Athanasius urged them to be reconciled on the basis of the Creed of Nicaea, which he represents as the sole touchstone for the true faith, asking only in addition that they anathematize the Arian heresy and those who say that the Holy Spirit is a creature and separate in essence from Christ (*Tome* 3). This latter teaching, advocated by those whom Athanasius elsewhere called the *tropici*, is one that seems to have emerged in the late 350s and prompted Athanasius into writing several letters to Serapion of Thmuis on the subject. More immediately, as the Meletians were accustomed to speaking of three *hypostases*, while the others preferred to speak of one *hypostasis*, Athanasius claimed that an examination of their position has demonstrated that they in fact hold the same faith but were using the words differently and for different purposes (*Tome* 5–6).

The *Tome* also addresses questions pertaining to the economy in the flesh of the Savior, another point of contention between the two parties. Upon examination, however, both agreed to the same position, that in contrast to how the Word came to the prophets, the Word did not "dwell in a holy man" at the end of the ages, but "was himself made flesh." Moreover, they also affirmed that "the Savior did not have a body without a soul or without sense or intelligence," so that the salvation he effects is a salvation of both body and soul (*Tome* 7). The point of concern here is not so much to affirm the presence of a human soul in Jesus Christ (which it does not explicitly do) against Apollinarius; indeed his disciples were able to sign the *Tome* without any apparent hesitation. Rather, as the context makes clear, it is the supposedly adoptionist position of Marcellus and Photinus that is condemned.[140] Thus, the *Tome* continues by countering any suggestion that a ("dyoprosopic") distinction should

[139]Hence Eusebius and Asterius appear as both writers and recipients of the *Tome*. Cf. Barnes, *Athanasius*, 157.

[140]A point made by Spoerl, "Apollinarian Christology," 567 n. 73.

be made between "two sons": "Wherefore neither was there one Son of God before Abraham, and another after Abraham; nor was there one that raised up Lazarus, and another that asked concerning him; but the same it was that said, as man, 'Where does Lazarus lie?' and, as God, raised him up. . . . For which reasons, thus understanding all that is said in the Gospel, they assured us that they held the same truth about the Word's incarnation and becoming human" (*Tome* 7). The basic principle of partitive exegesis, that one and the same subject is spoken of in Scripture in two ways, without that undermining his unchanging identity, was thus affirmed. However, that some understood this in terms of a distinct entity, the "Word," who at a certain point began to animate a human body in place of a soul, had not as yet become clear.[141] Nevertheless, the *Tome* lays the foundation for the theological rapprochement that was to be accomplished in the following decades.

During the time that the council was taking place, however, the situation in Antioch had become even more complicated. Lucifer of Cagliari, who had also been exiled to Egypt along with Eusebius of Vercellae, did not stay for the Council of Alexandria but traveled straight to Antioch. Although Meletius and his supporters had already taken possession of the "old church," when Lucifer arrived in Antioch he rather rashly consecrated Paulinus as the bishop for the continuing supporters of Eustathius, so that there were now two Nicene factions in addition to that gathered around Euzoius. When Eusebius of Vercellae arrived with the *Tome*, he was unable to reconcile the two groups and departed for the West in frustration, where he joined forces with Liberius of Rome and Hilary of Poitiers, and where councils were held, in Spain and Gaul, probably also in 362, so helping to resolve the situation created by the capitulation of the Western bishops at Ariminum.[142] Lucifer, annoyed that Eusebius had not simply recognized Paulinus as the sole rightful bishop and

[141]Gregory of Nazianzus (*ep* 102.7), in a letter written in the early 380s, claimed that Apollinarius had been teaching his particular doctrine for thirty years, that is, since the early 350s. But given that even in the 370s, as we shall see, Damasus (as also Gregory himself) initially accepted the statement of faith offered by Vitalis, indicates that their teaching was not so clear, even at that date, as it would be with the benefit of hindsight. Apollinarius gradually appropriated Eusebius' anti-Marcellan argument, and his development of that position led him into open conflict with other pro-Nicenes, notably Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa, examined below, but also Diodore of Tarsus, treatment of whom must wait for the next volume.

[142]Athanasius mentions these councils in *Ep* 55. For Eusebius' activity on his return, see D. H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 62–68.

that the two deacons he had sent in his stead to the council had subscribed to the *Tome* in his name, also left the city, returning to Sardinia. Athanasius, who had a long-standing relationship with the Eustathians, gave his support to Paulinus, despite the fact that Meletius was clearly supported by the majority of Nicene Christians in Antioch and recognized by other bishops in the area.

Julian changed his policy when he saw that allowing the exiled bishops to return was not having the desired effect of weakening the Christian Church but enabled them instead to regroup in new and stronger alignments. On October 24, 362, an edict from the emperor arrived in Alexandria, ordering Athanasius to leave the city, on the grounds that, although the exiled bishops had been permitted (only) to return to their cities, Athanasius had additionally, and unlawfully, reoccupied his episcopal throne.[143] When Athanasius refused to leave, and a local senate requested permission for him to remain, Julian replied by banishing him from Egypt.[144] Athanasius, assuming, rightly as it turned out, that the affair would soon pass, remained nearby, spending most of his time in the Thebaid.[145] News of Julian's death, on June 26, 363, reached Alexandria in August, and at the beginning of September, Athanasius left Egypt to seek an audience with the new emperor. Athanasius was received by Jovian, in Hierapolis, and given a letter, commending him and instructing him to return to his episcopal duties. When Jovian arrived in Antioch, a council was held under Meletius, which reiterated Jovian's own desire for peace and concord. The council affirmed its adherence to the creed of Nicaea, explaining that the term *homoousios*, which troubled some because of its novelty, had been used to denote that "the Son was begotten from the essence of the Father and that he is like in essence (ὅμοιος κατ' οὐσίαν) to the Father," and that the term "essence" was not used in the normal sense, but was employed strictly to counter Arius, whose heresy the "Anomoians" were now propounding. Twenty-seven bishops altogether signed the statement, including Meletius of Antioch, Eusebius of Samosata, and Pelagius of Laodicea.[146] It is possible that Athanasius made an overture toward Meletius

[143] *Index* (to Athanasius' *Festal Letters*) 35; *Historia Acephala* 3.4; Julian *Ep.* 46, ed. W. C. Wright, LCL, *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, 3 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), vol. 3, 140–42.

[144] Julian *Ep.* 47, ed. Wright, vol. 3, pp. 142–50.

[145] *Index* 35.

[146] Socrates *EH* 3.25.10–18; the Acacius who signed is probably not "of Caesarea," as reported, but an otherwise unknown Acacius; cf. Brennecke, *Homöer*, 175–76.

at this stage, but nothing came of it.[147] He then presented to the emperor a statement of his faith, emphasizing that the Creed of Nicaea itself needs to be reaffirmed, rather than reinterpreted as some were doing, hoping to avoid the term *homoousios* and also, Athanasius claimed, to reduce the Spirit to the level of a created being.[148]

Athanasius returned to Alexandria on February 14, 364, and two days later, while on his way to Constantinople, Jovian died of accidental suffocation during the night. Within days, the army proclaimed Valentinian as emperor, and, on March 28, he appointed his younger brother, Valens, as joint Augustus. They divided the empire between themselves, as Constans and Constantius had done earlier, with Valentinian taking the West and Valens the East. Valentinian tried to take an even-handed approach to ecclesiastical disputes, and, when approached by Eastern Christians who opposed his brother's policies, he, unlike Constans before him, offered them no support. Valens, on the other hand, is remembered as an "Arian" emperor, though, as with Constantius, his policies were largely pragmatic. He adopted the creed of the Council of Constantinople in 360, as the official creed of his empire, though he did not require all bishops to subscribe to it, as Constantius had done, but only that they not attack it.

When Valentinian was in Milan, from November 364 until the autumn of 365, Hilary appealed to him to depose Auxentius who had been found to be heretical by a council of bishops meeting in Milan. Valentinian had the case investigated independently and, as a result of Auxentius' statement, had the case dismissed and ordered Hilary to return to Gaul.[149] During 365, a number of councils were assembled around Asia Minor in support of Nicaea, and they concluded their efforts by sending Eustathius of Sebaste, Silvanus of Tarsus, and Theophilus of Castabala to Italy to seek support from Valentinian and Liberius of Rome.[150] Valentinian was by then engaged in war in Gaul, but Liberius received them into communion and commended them for their faith. Liberius also gave them a letter, stating, for the benefit of all those in the East, that, although the Western bishops had been coerced into subscribing to the Creed of Ariminum, they have since anathematized that

[147]Cf. Basil *Ep* 89.2.

[148]Athanasius *Ep* 56, Letter to the Emperor Jovian, quoted by Theodoret *EH* 4.3.

[149]Cf. Hilary *Against Auxentius*; cf. Hanson, *Search*, 466–67.

[150]For this letter, and accounts of what follows, see Socrates *EH* 4.12; Sozomen 6.10–12.

exposition of faith and now subscribe to "the Catholic and Apostolic Creed promulgated at Nicaea." The envoys returned via Sicily, where a local council was convened, professing adherence to the Nicene Creed and also providing letters to be taken to the East. On their return, a council was held in Tyana, which welcomed the Western letters and reaffirmed the council held in Antioch during the reign of Jovian, and then invited the other bishops of the East to consider these documents and assemble together at the end of spring at Tarsus in Cilicia. These plans, however, were thwarted. Thirty-four bishops assembled in Caria and affirmed their adherence to the creed of the "Dedication Council" of 341 and that of Seleucia in 359, so maintaining, as they put it, the tradition of Lucian the Martyr. Valens also, once news of their activities reached him, prohibited the planned meeting at Tarsus and ordered that all bishops who had been deposed under Constantius and allowed to return under Julian should once again be expelled from their churches. After many demonstrations in his support, Athanasius went into hiding on October 5, 365; though once again it was only for a short period. When Procopius claimed Valens' throne in Constantinople (from September 365 to May 366), Valens could not risk Egypt supporting his rival, and so on February 1, 366, he invited Athanasius back into Alexandria.

Eunomius and Aetius had also suffered various exiles during this period. Early in 360, Eunomius had been made bishop of Cyzicus by Eudoxius of Constantinople.[151] Although the reports of what happened to Eunomius next are rather confused, it seems that he was accused, perhaps by his own clergy, of teaching heresy, specifically the "unlikeness" of Father and Son.[152] According to Philostorgius, Eunomius won a resounding success in Constantinople, claiming never to have taught such a doctrine, but that he held that the Son was like the Father "according to the Scriptures" and avoided saying "like in substance" as this would impute passion to God. Sozomen concurs that Eudoxius found no fault with Eunomius and encouraged him to return to Cyzicus but says that Eunomius chose not to return to those who did not trust him, adding that this was motivated by resentment caused by the continuing refusal to readmit Aetius to communion. According to Theodoret, however, it was Constantius himself who had ordered Eudoxius to look into the case, on pain of exile, though when the duly convened synod found

[151]Philostorgius *EH* 5.3.
[152]Philostorgius *EH* 6.1; Sozomen *EH* 6.26.5–7.

against him, Eunomius ignored their decision and began to ordain bishops and presbyters for himself.[153] Aetius, who had been a former friend of Gallus, was recalled by Julian in 362[154] and was, probably at this point, ordained to the episcopate, though for which see is not known. Aetius joined Eunomius in appointing their own bishops; Philostorgius reports that they had bishops in Constantinople, Lydia and Ionia, Palestine, Lesbos, Galatia and Cappadocia, Cilicia, Antioch, and Libya.[155]

It is probable that Eunomius had good relations with the usurper Procopius, who held Constantinople from September 365 to May 366. He was later accused of concealing Procopius on his estate outside Chalcedon, when he was planning his revolt.[156] And, when some of the relatives of the citizens of Cyzicus were imprisoned by Procopius, Eunomius was asked to intercede with him on their behalf.[157] About the same time, Aetius, who had retired to the estate on Lesbos that he had been given by Gallus, was accused to the Procopian governer of Lesbos on the improbable charge of having favored Valens' cause. Condemned with Aetius were two of his students, who had as a relative "one of the most influential persons in the court of Procopius," who immediately came to rescind the sentence and reprimand the governer.[158] Following these events, while Procopius still held Constantinople, Aetius and Eunomius seem to have returned to the city. After the revolt, the other clergy in Constantinople voted to ban Aetius from the city. Aetius then went to Chalcedon, presumably to Eunomius' estate, where he wrote for assistance to Eudoxius, who was at that time staying with Valens at Marcianopolis (his base from 367 to 369).[159] Aetius was only with Eunomius for a short period of time before he died.[160] Eunomius was initially exiled to Mauritania but, on the way, met the bishop of Mursa, Valens, who successfully interceded with the emperor Valens

[153]Theodoret *EH* 2.29.

[154]Julian *Ep.* 15, ed. Wright, vol. 3, pp. 34–36.

[155]Philostorgius *EH* 8.3

[156]Cf. Philostorgius *EH* 9.5; Philostorgius claims that Eunomius was absent at the time, but it is possible that he is trying to defend Eunomius' reputation. Cf. Kopecek, *History*, 426–27.

[157]Philostorgius *EH* 9.4.

[158]Ibid., 9.6.

[159]Ibid., 9.7; cf. Kopecek, *History* 428–29.

[160]Philostorgius *EH* 9.6. Philostorgius places the death in Constantinople, which would seem to imply that he died before the defeat of Procopius (as Simonetti, *Crisi*, 391 n. 35; Vaggione, *Eunomius*, 296); but that Aetius wrote to Eudoxius while the bishop was staying with Valens in Marcianopolis (i.e., 367–69), necessitates placing his death in 367, prior to the exile, later that year, of Eunomius. Cf. Kopecek, *History*, 429 n. 1; Hanson, *Search*, 603.

on his behalf.[161] However, Eunomius was prevented from gaining an audience with the emperor by Eudoxius of Constantinople. His successor, Demophilus (from 366–67), and also Dorotheus, the successor of Euzoius at Antioch, also disliked Eunomius and his theology, which they described as "Anomoian," just as did the pro-Nicenes.[162] Eunomius was eventually banished to the island of Naxos, where he probably remained until the death of Valens in 378, when he returned to Constantinople, only to be exiled again after the Council of Constantinople. He lived until the latter years of the fourth century, though his followers remained active for some time thereafter.[163]

370–377: Dialogue between East and West

After his debate with Aetius in Constantinople in 359, Basil, who had turned up in the entourage of Basil of Ancyra and Eustathius of Sebaste (whom he had just followed around the ascetic settlements of the East[164]), returned to Caesarea in Cappadocia, where he was ordained as a reader by its bishop, Dianius.[165] However, when Dianius consented to subscribe to the creed of Constantinople, Basil withdrew to his family estate at Annesa in Pontus. He returned to Caesarea in 362 to be reconciled with Dianius on his deathbed and was soon after ordained as a presbyter by the new bishop, Eusebius. During these years, perhaps beginning when he was in Constantinople, Basil approached Apollinarius (if the letters are accepted as genuine), inquiring of him about the propriety of the term *homoousios*, resulting in a correspondence that would haunt him later on.[166] Basil's first major theological work, his three books *Against Eunomius*, appeared soon after in 364. After an initial

[161]Philostorgius *EH* 9.8.

[162]Ibid., 9.13–14.

[163]Cf. Vaggione, *Eunomius*, 312–63.

[164]Cf. Basil of Caesarea *Ep.* 1.

[165]For the dating of Basil's life and writings, see P. J. Fedwick, *The Church and the Charisma of Leadership in Basil of Caesarea* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1979), 133–51, and idem, "A Chronology of the Life and Works of Basil of Caesarea," in P. J. Fedwick, ed., *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic: A Sixteen-Hundredth Anniversary Symposium* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1981), 3–21, in addition to the older work of Y. Courtonne, *Un Témoin du IV^e Siècle oriental: Saint Basile et son temps d'après sa correspondance* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1973), and the more recent suggestions of P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

[166]Basil *Epp.* 261–64. An early date is suggested by G. L. Prestige, *St Basil the Great and Apollinaris of Laodicea*, ed. H. Chadwick (London: S.P.C.K., 1956). Cf. H. De Riedmatten, "La Correspondance entre Basile de Césarée et Apollinarie de Laodicée," *JTS* n.s. 7 (1956): 199–201; n.s. 8 (1957): 53–70; Fedwick ("Chronology," 6–7 n. 23) remains unconvinced about their authenticity.

rift with Eusebius, Basil aided him until his death in June 370 and then succeeded him as bishop of Caesarea, with the help of his friend Gregory and his elderly father, Gregory, the bishop of Nazianzus.[167] Early in 372, Basil was summoned to appear before the Prefect Modestus who had arrived in Caesarea in anticipation of the arrival of the emperor Valens who was on his way to Syria.[168] If Modestus had been expected to remove from office those who held the Nicene faith, he found in Basil an uncompromising adherent. After hearing a report from Modestus, Valens himself came to Caesarea, where he was impressed by Basil's celebration of the feast of Epiphany and by the private discussions he had with the bishop, so much so that he assisted Basil's charitable work[169] and soon thereafter entrusted him with a diplomatic mission to Armenia. Indeed, Gregory of Nazianzus describes the "kindly feelings towards us" on behalf of Valens, engendered by his encounter with Basil, as being "the beginning of our restoration."[170]

However, the position of the bishop of Caesarea as the metropolitan of Cappadocia was seriously undermined when the plans for the division of Cappadocia into two provinces, already prepared for administrative rather than ecclesiastical purposes, were brought into effect some time in early 372. Anthimus, the bishop of Tyana, the center for the western Cappdocia Secunda, quickly moved to have his see declared the metropolitan see, perhaps counting on the support of other local bishops who would be pleased to see Basil's increasing influence curtailed.[171] Basil, in turn, tried to bolster his claim for the metropolitan status of Caesarea, the center of the eastern Cappadocia Prima, by having candidates favorable to his cause appointed to sees, often newly created for the purpose. Amongst those called upon by Basil were his friend Gregory, who, with the complicity of his father, was appointed to Sasima, and his own brother, Gregory, who became bishop of Nyssa, despite the fact that he had recently forged letters to Basil, purporting to come from their uncle, with the intent of reconciling

[167]Cf. J. McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2001), 169–76.

[168]Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus *Or.* 43.48–53. On the accounts of Basil's encounters with Valens, see Rousseau, *Basil*, 351–53.

[169]Cf. Theodoret *EH* 4.19.13.

[170]Gregory of Nazianzus *Or* 43.53.

[171]McGuckin (*Gregory*, 187 n. 73) suggests that it was Basil's letter (*ep.* 74) protesting Pondandus as chosen center of Cappadocia Secunda, whose bishop had no known theological difference with Basil, that led to Tyana being selected instead.

them.[172] In the following year, 373, Amphilochius, a cousin of Gregory of Nazianzus, was appointed to Iconium. It is probable that the new bishop of Sasima never in fact visited what he describes as "that utterly dreadful, pokey little hole," but chose instead to remain with his aged father, helping him in his episcopal duties in Nazianzus, until the death of his parents in 374, after which he fled to Seleucia, taking refuge at the convent of St Thecla.[173] His brother, the new bishop of Nyssa, proved to be a positive vexation to Basil: shortly after his consecration, he appears to have attempted some kind of rapprochement with some Christians in Ancyra, probably disciples of Marcellus, much to the chagrin of Basil.[174] In 375, in another attempt to purge the area of those who supported Nicaea, Gregory of Nyssa was accused of mismanaging church funds and irregularity in his ordination and was sent into exile.[175]

From the beginning of his episcopate, Basil began a concerted effort to bring about a theological consensus and ecclesial unity amongst the Eastern churches and between East and West. Basil regarded the problems dividing the Church in Antioch as being the symbolic of the problems besetting the East: there were two pro-Nicene bishops, each claiming the throne for themselves. Basil supported the claim of Meletius to be the proper bishop of Antioch and was distinctly suspicious about the rival claimant, Paulinus, though it was not until the last stages of his correspondence with the West that he stated explicitly why. Probably soon after Basil became bishop, and his plans became known, the remaining supporters of Marcellus began to align themselves with Paulinus of Antioch, the leader of the community which had supported Eustathius of Antioch. It is most likely in this period, soon after 371 (though suggested dates vary from 362 to 373), that the deacon Eugenius, in the name of "the clergy and others gathered in Ancyra of Galatia with our father Marcellus," sent an *Exposition of the Faith* to Athanasius, which was accepted by a synod of Egyptian bishops meeting under Athanasius.[176]

[172]Provoking Basil's witheringly indignant comments to his brother Gregory in *Ep* 58.

[173]Gregory of Nazianzus *On His Own Life*, 442; Cf. McGuckin, *Gregory*, 197–233.

[174]Basil concludes his letter (*Ep.* 100) to Eusebius of Samosata, written in 372, with the comment: "I am compassed with anxieties which demand your help and sympathy, both in the matter of the appointment of bishops and in the consideration of the trouble caused me by the simplicity of Gregory of Nyssa, who is summoning a synod in Ancyra and leaving nothing undone to counteract me." See also Basil's later comments (in 375) about the suitability of Gregory for a mission to the West.

[175]Cf. Basil *Epp.* 225, 237.

[176]Cf. M. Tetz, "Markellianer und Athanasios von Alexandrien. Die markellianishce *Expositio fidei*

In this statement of faith, they stress the real and eternal existence of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a Trinity existing "in subsistence," but avoid any assertion of a plurality of *hypostases*, or any other suggestion of plurality, in God.[177] They are also careful to distance themselves from Photinus, whom they consider to hold, as had Paul of Samosata, that the Word of God is not "living and acting," but is like a human word, and so not the very Son of God himself, but only becoming Son at the time of his birth from Mary.

The focus of Basil's attention in the West was Damasus of Rome, who had succeeded Liberius (who died on September 24, 366), though not without much bloody rioting between the supporters of Liberius and his rival claimant to the see of Rome, Felix, whose deacon Damasus had previously been and who had died nearly a year earlier (December 22, 265). Basil began by approaching Athanasius, hoping that he would mediate on his behalf with Rome.[178] In 371, Basil commissioned Dorotheus, a deacon of Meletius of Antioch (who was then in exile in Armenia), to take a letter to Meletius (*ep.* 68), outlining his plan to Meletius, and another to Athanasius (*ep.* 66), asking him, as one who is "concerned for all the churches," for his help in two specific matters: first, "as nothing is more honorable throughout the West than your gray hairs," Athanasius would be able to facilitate a show of support from the West for the churches in the East, for, as Basil saw it, there is only "one way of assistance for the churches of our area, accord with the bishops of the West"; and second, to help sort out affairs in Antioch—"only let Antioch be restored to harmony, and nothing will stand in the way of her supplying, as a healthy head, soundness to all the body." Before these plans could be carried out, however, a messenger from Alexandria, Peter, arrived on the scene, prompting Basil to write a longer letter (*ep.* 69) to Athanasius, which was again to be sent by the hand of Dorotheus, and also a letter, to be carried by Dorotheus, from Basil to Damasus (probably *ep.* 70, the only letter

ad Athanasium des Diakons Eugenios von Ankyra," *ZNTW* 64 (1973): 75–121; Lienhard, *Marcellus*, 156–60.

[177]Cf. "For we confess the eternal Father of the eternal Son, who exists and subsists (ὄντος καὶ ὑφεστῶτος), and the Holy Spirit eternally existing and subsisting. For we do not say that the Trinity is non-subsistent (ἀνυπόστατον), but we acknowledge it in subsistence (ἐν ὑποστάσει)."

[178]For the details of Basil's correspondence with Athanasius and Damasus, see, in addition to Courtonne, *Témoin*, and Rousseau, *Basil*, E. Amand de Mendieta "Basile de Césarée et Damase de Rome: Les causes de l'échec de leurs négociations," in J. N. Birdsall and R. W. Thomson, eds., *Biblical and Patristic Studies in Memory of Robert Pierce Casey* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1963), 122–66; and J. Taylor, "St Basil the Great and Pope St Damasus," *Downside Review* 91 (1973): 186–203, 262–74.

that Basil wrote directly to the bishop of Rome himself). Perhaps in response to pressure from Dorotheus, Basil wrote yet another letter to Athanasius (*ep.* 67) making it clear that, with regard to the problems in Antioch, he supported Meletius (whom he had not yet mentioned by name) as the rightful head of the church there, without whom all others are merely "disjointed members." In addition to his attempts to gain the support of the West for the supporters of Nicaea in the East, and the help of Athanasius in sorting out the troubles at Antioch, Basil had a third objective, which was to elicit from the West a condemnation of Marcellus. He pointed out to Athanasius that though the West had continually anathematized Arius, "they attach no blame to Marcellus, who propounded a heresy diametrically opposite to that of Arius, and attacked the very existence of the divinity of the Only-begotten" (*ep.* 69.2). Nothing came of this appeal to Alexandria, however, perhaps because Athanasius was still more sympathetic to Marcellus than Basil suspected, and also because Athanasius' loyalities remained with Paulinus of Antioch rather than Meletius; if Athanasius had endorsed the embassy of Basil undertaken through a deacon of Meletius, it might be taken as a tacit approval of Meletius himself.

Damasus held a council in Rome, which some date as early as 368 and others as late as 372; the latter date, at any rate, was the point at which news of it reached Basil, prompting him into further action.[179] The purpose of the Roman Council was to proclaim Nicaea as the basis for the true faith, to annul all the decrees issued at Ariminum contrary to that faith, and to depose all those who think otherwise, in particular Auxentius of Milan, even though they were powerless to enforce such depositions. Damasus drew up a letter (the *Confidimus quidem*) in the name of the council, addressed to all the bishops of the East, inviting them to have the honor of being in communion with Rome and stating their faith in "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, of one divinity (*unius deitatis*), of one power, of one manner of existence (*unius figurae*), of one substance."[180] This letter was sent by the hand of Sabinus, a deacon from Milan, who took it first to Athanasius, who then had it sent on

[179]For accounts of the Council see Sozomen *EH* 6.23; Theodoret *EH* 2.22; for the advocates of the different dates, see Hanson, *Search*, 796.

[180]Damasus *Confidemus quidem* (PL 13.347–9). The letters of Damasus have been newly edited, with a translation and historical study, by L. L. Field, *On the Communion of Damasus and Meletius: Fourth-Century Synodal Formulae in the* Codex Veronensis LX (Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies, 2004), which unfortunately appeared too late to be considered here.

to Basil. Upon its receipt, Basil once again dispatched Dorotheus with letters to Athanasius (*ep.* 82) and Meletius (*ep.* 89), asking them to send him letters addressed to the bishops of the West. Basil himself also wrote another letter (*ep.* 90) addressed to the bishops of the West, rather than Damasus himself, approving the letter he had received and stating his own faith in "the sound doctrine in which the Son is confessed to be consubstantial with the Father, and the Holy Spirit is ranked and worshipped as of equal honor," and lamenting the pitiable state of the churches in the East. Dorotheus accompanied Sabinus on the return journey to Rome carrying the various letters assembled by Basil, most important of which was the one (*ep.* 92) probably originally drafted by Meletius but signed in addition by Eusebius of Samosata, Basil himself, Pelagius of Laodicea, Narses, and twenty-seven other bishops, requesting that the West send a large number of delegates to attend a council in the East so that the Creed of Nicaea could be officially restored.[181]

It was only in the following year that Basil received a reply. At Easter 373, Evagrius (a former Eustathian from Antioch, the translator of the *Life of Antony*, and a friend of Jerome) arrived in Caesarea, returning Basil's letters as "not having satisfied the more exacting people (τοῖς ἀκριβεστέροις) there" and bringing a message demanding that Basil write a letter "couched in the precise terms dictated by the Westerners" (i.e., the *Confidimus quidem*) and then send "an embassy of importance" to Rome, the implication being that the status of Rome merited it being approached by more than a deacon (*ep.* 138). Not surprisingly, Basil declined, offering as an excuse, in a letter to Evagrius (not Damasus), the inclement weather (*ep.* 156). When Athanasius died, on May 2, 373, he was succeeded by Peter. As there was already a non-Nicene bishop, Lucius, claiming the throne of Alexandria, Peter was soon driven out of the city and headed for Rome, where he, maintaining Athanasius' support of Paulinus, no doubt confirmed Damasus' hesitation about Meletius of Antioch and, by extension, Basil.

In the summer of 373, Basil set out to Armenia, on behalf of the emperor, to appoint new bishops there.[182] Basil was unable, however, to bring these plans into effect, because "of the alienation of the bishop who had been appointed to cooperate with me." This was Theodotus of Nicopolis, who was

[181] Whether this letter is by Basil or Meletius is disputed. Cf. Rousseau, *Basil*, 299 n. 122.

[182] Basil *Ep.* 99, his report to the Count Terentius, provides most of the information about this mission and the troubles that he ran into while trying to fulfill it. For the situation in Armenia, and Basil's role there, see Rousseau, *Basil*, 278–87.

suspicious of Basil's association with Eustathius of Sebaste, with whom Basil was still on good terms. Basil seems first to have traveled to Getasa, where Meletius was in exile, for it is from there that Theodotus summoned Basil to appear before him. Basil went via Sebaste, in order to meet with Eustathius and question him about his faith. It seems, however, that Basil himself was equally under investigation, for he mentions that a presbyter of Sebaste, Poemenius, vehemently pressed the argument against him.[183] These debates certainly focused on the status of the Holy Spirit and the role of the Spirit in ascetic theology. After much discussion, Eustathius was persuaded to sign a written statement of faith.[184] Basil's account of what happened next is not clear at all.[185] Theodotus, hearing of his contact with Eustathius, refused to meet with Basil. For his part, Basil began to accept the report that Eustathius had not acted straightforwardly and had been dishonest in his earlier statement of faith. Basil demanded a more "concise statement" of faith (cf. *ep.* 128.2), which Eustathius refused to give. By 375, their relationship degenerated into mutual recrimination. Basil began to associate Eustathius' treatment of the Spirit with the name of Arius, identifying Eustathius and his supporters as "Pneumatomachians"—"contenders against the Spirit"—later also known as the "Macedonians."[186] Eustathius, in his turn, began to accuse Basil as a "Sabellian," alleging his earlier correspondence with Apollinarius as evidence.[187] While Basil was concerned that Eustathius reduced the Spirit to the level of a creature, imitating Arius, Eustathius suspected Basil's use of the term *homoousios*, the legitimacy of which Basil had inquired from Apollinarius, as confusing the real distinctions of the persons, an error which had become synonymous with the name of Sabellius.

[183]This is perhaps connected, as Rousseau suggests (*Basil*, 240) with the accusations made by two clerics of Eustathius, Basil and Sophronius, against Basil of Caesarea (*ep.* 119).

[184]Preserved in Basil *Ep.* 125.

[185]Cf. Rousseau, *Basil*, 241–42.

[186]Cf. Basil *epp.* 130, 251, 263. The term "Macedonian" is misleading. Macedonius, the bishop of Constantinople, had died soon after the Council of Constantinople in 360, at which he was deposed, along with Basil of Ancyra. His name is first associated with the "Pneumatomachians" in the *Tome of Damasus* (cf. *EOMIA* 1.2.1, p.285). The term "Pneumatomachians" first occurs in Athanasius' letters to Serapion, though there is no reason to assume a connection between his "*tropici*" and the followers of Eustathius.

[187]The controversy between Eustathius and Basil is reported in a number of Basil's letters (*epp.* 129, 223, 224, 131, 226, 244, following the order of Fedwick, *Basil*, 16–17). On the stages of this accusation, and the production of a Eustathian document attributed to Basil, see Prestige, *St Basil and Apollinaris*, 26–34 and Rousseau, *Basil*, 249–54.

By this time, Apollinarius had become intimately involved in the affairs at Antioch. Vitalis, one of Meletius' presbyters, began to come under the influence of Apollinarius.[188] And, perhaps because of Basil's letter to Meletius (*ep.* 129), Vitalis began to be regarded with suspicion. Tensions were further raised when Flavian, another presbyter of Meletius and his eventual successor, prevented Vitalis from having his customary meeting with the bishop.[189] In 376, Vitalis traveled to Rome, where he presented a statement of faith to Damasus, trying to gain recognition as the bishop of Antioch.[190] If this is the confession of faith preserved by Cyril of Alexandria, it is very much concerned to maintain that, although one must speak of Christ in two ways (as divine and as human), there is only one Christ, not two sons, thus continuing the polemic against the supposedly divisive teaching of Marcellus: "If someone divides and parts our Lord and Savior, and says that God the Son and Word is one [thing] and the assumed man another, and does not confess [him as] one and the same, he is anathema."[191] However, it also seems that this emphasis on the absolute unity of the one Christ had led to the criticism that they had in fact confused what should be held distinct in a proper partitive exegesis; but that rather than concluding (as Arius had done) that the Son was some kind of intermediary being, they seemed to dissolve the humanity into the divinity, ending up with a "heavenly man."[192] Thus, Vitalis' statement of faith asserts: "If someone says that Christ has his body from heaven or is consubstantial with God according to the flesh, he is anathema." It also affirms that Christ, besides being perfect (τέλειος) God and consubstantial with the Father, is "a perfect (τέλειος, or "complete") human being, according to his birth from the virgin, and consubstantial with human beings according to the flesh," and echoes the *Tome to the Antiochenes* by anathematizing those who say that the Savior "is without soul (ἄψυχον) or feeling or reason (ἄλογον) or mind (ἀνόητον)." Vitalis initially found favor with Damasus, who then wrote to Paulinus

[188]Sozomen *EH* 6.25.1.

[189]Ibid., 6.25.3

[190]Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus *Ep* 102.2; Gregory says that he had also previously accepted Vitalis' statement, though now rejects it.

[191]Text in H. Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodicea und seine Schule* (Tübingen, 1904), 273; for a full translation and further comment, see Chapter Seven, pp. 383–85.

[192]Cf. R. A. Greer, "The Man from Heaven: Paul's Last Adam and Apollinaris' Christ," in W. S. Babcock, *Paul and the Legacies of Paul* (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990), 165–82, 358–60 (endnotes), esp. 170–71; B. E. Daley, "'Heavenly Man' and 'Eternal Christ': Apollinarius and Gregory of Nyssa on the Personal Identity of the Savior," *JECS* 10.4 (2002): 469–88, esp. 477.

leaving whether or not to accept Vitalis to Paulinus' own will and judgment.[193] In this way, Damasus finally came down decisively on the side of Paulinus, rather than Meletius, as the rightful bishop of Antioch. Besides being influenced by Peter of Alexandria, Damasus was no doubt also swayed by Jerome's very flattering request to Rome for guidance about with whom he should communicate, for though he doubted each, he was least favorable to Meletius.[194] Jerome's friend Evagrius, who had recently been in Rome, would also have been able to explain the situation in Antioch more fully to Damasus. On his return to Antioch, however, Vitalis did not join Paulinus' church but was rather himself consecrated as bishop of the city by Apollinarius (in addition, that is, to Paulinus and Meletius, both pro-Nicene, and the non-Nicene Euzoius).

Soon after writing to Paulinus, however, Damasus became suspicious of the orthodoxy of Vitalis and sent another message to Paulinus, this time through the presbyter Petronius, and then a third letter emphasizing the Nicene Creed as the standard of faith, and also the further need to affirm both the unity of the one Jesus Christ, that is, that the one from before all ages is not other than the one born from the virgin (points standard by this time), but now also insisting that Christ had assumed the completeness of human nature—body, soul, and mind.[195] Epiphanius seems to have visited Antioch just after Vitalis had returned from Rome, for he provides an account of a dispute there between Paulinus and Vitalis (both of whom he speaks of as bishops), which seems most naturally to belong to this juncture.[196] According to his report, Vitalis had accused Paulinus of Sabellianism (the same charge that had recently been raised against Basil of Caesarea). When Epiphanius arrived, he questioned Paulinus about the orthodoxy of his faith. Paulinus produced the subscription that he had made to the *Tome to the Antiochenes*, which Epiphanius found to be satisfactory (and which he reproduces). Epiphanius then turned to interrogate Vitalis, who stood charged with not accepting that Christ had become "a complete human being." Vitalis initially answered all the questions satisfactorily: yes, Christ took a human body; yes, he assumed a human soul. However, when asked specifically whether or not Christ took a human mind, Vitalis immediately denied that Christ had a

[193]Damasus *Per filium meum* (PL 13.356–7).

[194]Cf. Jerome *ep.* 15.2: "I know nothing of Vitalis; I reject Meletius; I have nothing to do with Paulinus. He that gathers not with you scatters; he that is not of Christ is of Antichrist."

[195]*Per filium meum*, which is itself the third letter.

[196]Epiphanius *Panarion* 77.20–24.

human mind. Epiphanius consequently supported Paulinus' claim to be the proper bishop of Antioch, while Vitalis, if he was not already a follower of Apollinarius, certainly joined forces with him thereafter.[197] It is at this point that the concern with Apollinarius' teaching comes to be focused on his assertion that the Word of God takes the place of the mind in Christ.

Two of Basil's allies, Eusebius of Samosata and Gregory of Nyssa, had been exiled in 374, and now that Damasus had unequivocally given his support to Paulinus of Antioch, Basil's position and hopes appeared even more precarious. He wrote in 376 to Count Terentius (*ep.* 214), explaining that Rome had acted in this manner because they had been supplied false information about Meletius, and that it was the inadequacy of their language that had prevented the Western brethren from understanding the distinction that Meletius and Basil were trying to make between the terms *ousia* and *hypostasis*.[198] Basil's troubles at this time were further complicated by the fact that eleven Egyptian bishops, who had been exiled to Diocaesarea in Palestine, in 375, had established contact with the group in Ancyra that had remained loyal to Marcellus. These Ancyrans had sent a letter to the Egyptian bishops, after meeting with them, recounting how they had satisfied the bishops with their adherence to the Creed of Nicaea and their condemnation of doctrines caricaturing Marcellus' position.[199] The first of these was a condemnation of those who do not say that "the Holy Trinity is three persons (τρία πρόσωπα) who are uncircumscribed and real (ἐνυπόστατα) and consubstantial and coeternal and perfect in themselves (αὐτοτελῆ)."[200] They also condemned speaking of the Son as an "expansion" or "contraction" and insisted that "God the Word is God's Son, pre-eternal and coeternal with the Father and real (ἐνυπόστατον) and perfect in himself, the Son of God."[201] Despite affirming three real *prosopa*, they nevertheless avoided affirming three *hypostases*, which, from Basil's perspective, was essential. Finally, the Ancyrans also added, in view of the increasing debate about Apollinarius, that "we acknowledge that the Son of God became a human being as well without sin in the

[197]Though it is noteworthy that Sozomen (*EH* 6.25.2) claims that his followers in Antioch were still called "Vitalians."

[198]See also Jerome's comments (*ep.* 15) about the meaning of these terms and their translation into Latin.

[199]The letter is preserved by Epiphanius *Panarion* 72.11–12.

[200]Ibid., 72.11.5.

[201]Ibid., 72.11.6.

assumption of the entire human nature—that is, of a rational and intellectual soul and of human flesh."[202] Apollinarius also wrote, twice, to these exiled Egyptian bishops, but by this time, they were already in communion with Paulinus of Antioch, whose orthodoxy Apollinarius refused to accept.[203] Basil was disturbed by the precipitous action of the Egyptian bishops and wrote to them warning them that "the followers of Marcellus" have departed from the Church on account of their teachings and therefore should not be received into communion, pointing out the scandal that their action had caused, but nevertheless affirming the identity of his faith with theirs and with the Westerners.[204]

Another mission to the West followed, probably proposed by Dorotheus, who suggested taking with him Gregory of Nyssa, though Basil tried to persuade him of the difficulties of such an undertaking (*ep.* 215). Basil was also in no mood to deal with Damasus, whom he described as being "stuck-up and haughty, and therefore quite unable to hear those who preach the truth to him from the ground" (*ep.* 215). Eusebius also suggested to Basil, probably in 375, that it was finally time to respond properly to the message brought from Rome by Evagrius in 373. Basil was unsure what to do about this and wrote to Eusebius discussing Dorotheus' proposal, mentioning again the haughtiness of the West (*ep.* 239), and to Meletius (*ep.* 120), asking him to draft a letter "as seems best to you." Sanctissimus, a priest from Antioch loyal to Meletius, was entrusted with taking this letter to Meletius, and probably with visiting various others, gathering new material for an embassy to the West (cf. *ep.* 239.2). It is unclear what documents Sanctissimus and Dorotheus took with them when they finally set out for the West in 376. Two letters in the Basilian corpus are placed at this point. The first (*ep.* 242) seems to be a draft of a letter (*ep.* 92) already sent to the West and so was unlikely to have been sent again. The other (*ep.* 243) is probably a personal letter from Basil, complementing whatever other documents Sanctissimus was able to gather. In this letter, Basil again laments the pitiable state of the churches in the East and asks that the Western bishops make this known to their emperor, or at least come to the East to comfort their brethren. With regard to the theological challenges confronting him in the East, Basil now also has firmly in mind

[202]Ibid., 72.12.2.

[203]The text of the second letter of Apollinarius is in Lietzmann, *Apollinaris*, 255–56.

[204]Basil *Ep.* 265. The Egyptian bishops then complained of Basil's actions to Peter of Alexandria, which Peter presumably forwarded to Basil, for he then wrote a mild apology to Peter (*ep.* 266).

not only those who deny the divinity of the Son, but those who "set at naught the Holy Spirit," so that "polytheism," three different "gods," has prevailed (*ep.* 243.4).

The embassy of Dorotheus and Sanctissimus to the West was not a success. When Sanctissimus and Dorotheus returned, sometime in 377, they brought with them a letter from Damasus (the *Ea gratia*), offering little response to Basil's specific request, but condemning Arius in rather general terms and also denouncing the errors of Marcellus and Apollinarius, though not mentioning them by name.[205] This was not much use to Basil, and he replied (*ep.* 263) with his most frank statement of how he saw the situation of the Eastern church, and what he specifically would like the bishops of the West to do. After briefly mentioning his own afflictions and the blows that the church in the East has suffered, Basil treats at length the theological problems he faces, no longer obliquely for he is "constrained to mention them by name." Although "Arianism" still heads the list, Basil notes that it "does not do us much harm because its impiety is notorious to all" (*ep.* 263.2). More troublesome are the "men clad in sheep's clothing." The first of these is Eustathius of Sebaste. Basil presents him as an unreformed "Arian," cloaking his impious opinions under a verbal orthodoxy, who has now begun to associate with those who anathematize the *homoousios* and who leads the "Pneumatomachians" (*ep.* 263.3). Next comes Apollinarius, whom Basil accuses of having based his theology upon human premises. Basil presents Apollinarius as teaching some rather garbled version of millenarianism, and also of having "caused confusion among the brethren about the Incarnation" (*ep.* 263.4). Finally Basil turns to Antioch and his suspicions concerning Paulinus. With a slight dig at the West, Basil leaves it to them to judge whether there is "anything objectionable about the ordination" of Paulinus but makes it very clear that, for his part, he is distressed by the fact that Paulinus should "show an inclination for the teaching of Marcellus and without discernment admit his followers to communion" (*ep.* 263.5). Moreover, Basil also spells out the particular error of Marcellus, which was that he did not "confess the Son in his proper *hypostasis*" (υἱὸν ἐν ἰδίᾳ ὑποστάσει), nor does his teaching admit that "the Paraclete subsists particularly" (τὸν παράκλητον ἰδίως ὑφεστηκέναι).

[205] PL 13.550–1; edited by E. Schwartz, "Über die Sammlung des Codex Veronensis LX," *ZNTW* 35 (1936), 1–23, at pp. 20–21. Following Fedwick (*Charisma*, 110) and Rousseau (*Basil*, 313 n. 181) in taking *Ea gratia* as Damasus' response at this time.

This is the first time that Basil used such language in his correspondence with the West, and the first time that he had actually named Paulinus as the problem in Antioch. Basil concluded by acknowledging that it would have been proper to convene together, to judge such matters in common deliberation, but that time and circumstances do not allow it (ibid.).

This final mission to the West was only a partial success. Damasus seems to have held a council in Rome, at which Peter of Alexandria was present, together with Basil's own envoys. The discussion seems to have become fairly heated, with Peter of Alexandria accusing Eusebius of Samosata and Meletius of being "reckoned amongst the Ariomaniacs," and Dorotheus in return acting in such a manner that Basil had to write to Peter apologizing for his behavior (*ep.* 266). In Damasus' reply to Basil, he again says that it was not possible to bring relief to the East (and indeed the whole of Thrace was by now overrun by Goths and Huns), but invited the Eastern bishops to take comfort in knowing that those in the West adhered to the true faith and were concerned for their Eastern brethren.[206] In stating their faith, they affirmed their belief in a "Trinity of one essence," in the full divinity of the Holy Spirit, the distinct subsistence of the Word of God and the complete humanity of the Savior. In other words, they rejected all the errors mentioned by Basil, but without mentioning the names of either Marcellus, who had, after all, been declared orthodox by Julius of Rome several decades earlier, or Paulinus, who had been recognized by Damasus as the legitimate bishop of Antioch. Apollinarius, however, and also his disciple Timothy, bishop of Berytus, who had gone to Rome to plead their case, were expressly condemned.[207] Also originating from this council, though undergoing some revision a few years later in 382, is the *Tome of Damasus*.[208] This presents a very full catalogue of theological errors, beginning with the idea that the Holy Spirit is made through the Son, and then condemning Sabellius; Arius and Eunomius; the "Macedonians," who spring from the root of Arius; and Photinus; and, without mentioning any names, those who maintain that there are "two sons" (i.e., that the one before the ages is other than the one born in the flesh of

[206]Probably *Non nobis quidquam* and *Illud sane miramur*; following Fedwick (*Charisma*, 112 n. 43) and Rousseau (*Basil*, 315). Text in PL 13.552–4; ed. by Schwartz, "Sammlung," 21–3.

[207]Cf. Theodoret *EH* 5.10.

[208]For the text, including the Greek version preserved by Theodoret (*EH* 5.11), see *EOMIA*, 1.2.1, pp. 283–94; for discussion concerning the date of the text, and its redaction, see Dossetti, *Il Simbolo*, 102–11.

Mary); those who maintain that the Word of God moved in human flesh instead of a rational soul; and finally, those who speak of the Word of God as being an extension of God, such that he has no essential being in himself and is destined to come to an end. There follows a couple of prescriptions against the transfer of bishops from one see to another (possibly having in mind Meletius, who had been transferred from Sebaste to Antioch in 360). The *Tome* then continues with a series of propositions: "If anyone says . . . they are to be condemned." Though negatively phrased, the *Tome* affirms that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are "three true persons, equal (*tres personas veras . . . aequales*), eternally living," each fully divine, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. It also affirms that in the Passion of the Cross, the Son of God endured the pain not in his divinity, but in the flesh together with the soul which he assumed in the form of a servant. Finally, the *Tome* insists that believing in this way, not dividing the divinity of the Father from that of the Son or that of the Spirit, one should not call them "Gods," but simply "God, on account of the one divinity." The *Tome* concludes by asserting that "this is the salvation of Christians, that believing in the Trinity, that is, in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and being baptized into the same, truly one divinity and power, majesty and substance, in him we believe."

Though not using the language that Basil had been pressing for, the *Tome* would certainly have persuaded the pro-Nicene bishops in the East that the West was basically doctrinally sound and in accord with their own mind. Thus, in 377, when writing to the Egyptian bishops exiled in Diocaesarea, Basil emphasized his and their unity of faith with the West (*ep.* 265.3), and in his subsequent letter to Peter of Alexandria, he pointed out that "we all have need one of another in the communion of our members, especially now, when the churches of the East look to us, and will take our harmony as a start towards firmness and consolidation" (*ep.* 266.2). In this mood, Basil was even prepared to consider the possibility of the followers of Marcellus again being accepted as "limbs of the body of the Church of Christ" (*ep.* 266.1).

378–382: The Consolidation of Nicene Orthodoxy

The situation changed dramatically in the following year, after the Roman army was defeated by the Goths at the battle of Adrianople on August 9, 378. Emperor Valens fell during this battle, and the Western emperor, Gratian

(who had succeeded Valentinian in 375), proclaimed Theodosius as Augustus on January 19, 379, with authority over the East. Basil of Caesarea died on January 1, 379, and so did not live to see the eventual reconciliation that followed this momentous change.[209] After the death of Valens, Gratian had issued an edict allowing all exiled bishops to return home, with the exception of the Manichaeans and the followers of Eunomius and Photinus.[210] Another edict was issued, on August 3, 379, in the names of Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius, stating that "all heresies, prohibited by both divine and imperial laws, should cease forever."[211] In the autumn of 379, Meletius convened a council in Antioch, which is mentioned by Gregory of Nyssa, who after the council visited his sister Macrina on her deathbed.[212] The council seems to have accepted the teaching contained in the letters of Damasus sent to the East during the previous years and issued a statement of its own; we know nothing about the contents of this statement, except that it was undoubtedly pro-Nicene.[213] A list of signatories appended to another document, which as it stands cannot have come from the council, has the names of Meletius of Antioch, Eusebius of Samosata, Pelagius of Laodicea, Zeno of Tyre, Eulogius "de Mallu," and Diodore of Tarsus, with a note that 146 other Eastern bishops also signed.[214] This council, and its tome, were almost certainly intended to indicate to Theodosius the unity that existed amongst a sizable portion of the Eastern bishops. It is also possible that it was this council that requested Gregory of Nazianzus, who had been in retreat in Seleucia since 374, to go to Constantinople to consolidate and strengthen the supporters of Nicaea in the capital.[215] It was here that Gregory delivered his *Theological Orations* to the community that he gathered together in a church in a villa on his cousin's property, which he dedicated

[209]On questions concerning the traditional date of Basil's death, see Rousseau, *Basil*, 360–63.

[210]No longer extant, but implied by *CT* 16.5.5; cf. Socrates *EH* 5.2; Sozomen *EH* 7.1.

[211]*CT* 16.5.5.

[212]Cf. Gregory of Nyssa *On the Life of St Macrina* (GNO 8.1, 386).

[213] The Council of Constantinople in 382 referred to "the tome produced in Antioch by the council that meet there and that put out recently, in Constantinople, by the ecumenical synod" (Theodoret *EH* 5.9.13).

[214]The Verona Codex LX, ed. Schwartz, "Sammlung," 23; for problems regarding the text, see Hanson, *Search*, 803 n. 63.

[215]Cf. McGuckin, *Gregory*, 236–37, pointing to the passages in his writings where Gregory indicates that he had been invited to the capital by synodal decree (e.g., *On His Own Life*, 596). For Gregory's activities in Constantinople, see McGuckin, *Gregory*, 229–371.

symbolically as "Anastasia," announcing the resurrection of faith in the city where it had lain dead for several decades.[216]

After becoming emperor, Theodosius' attention was immediately taken up with the struggle against the Goths. On February 28, 380, while residing in Thessalonica, Theodosius issued a decree (the *Cunctos populos*), declaring that all those whom they rule should hold to the faith as it as been preserved by Damasus of Rome and Peter of Alexandria, that is, "that according to apostolic discipline and evangelic doctrine, we should believe the sole divinity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, within an equal majesty and an orthodox (*pia*) Trinity," while those who do not hold to this faith are to be punished.[217] Theodosius entered Constantinople on November 24, 380. When he presented Demophilus, the Arian bishop of the city, with the choice of either accepting the Nicene faith or being exiled, Demophilus chose the latter. On November 27, Gregory was installed in the Church of the Holy Apostles. About the same time, Lucius was driven out of Alexandria.[218] Meletius arrived in Constantinople in January 381, and on January 10, Theodosius issued another edict (*Nullis haereticis*), in the name of himself, Gratian, and Valentinian II, stipulating that no church building was to be occupied for worship by heretics, nor were they permitted to gather for worship within the walls of any town.[219] Singled out for specific mention were the Arians, Eunomians, and the Photinians; there was no mention of the "Macedonians" or the "Pneumatomachians," or of "Apollinarians." This edict also gave a statement of the true Nicene faith held by those who "confess Almighty God and Christ, the Son of God, in one name, God of God, light from light; who does not violate by denial the Holy Spirit, whom we hope for and accept from the highest Author of things, from whom, in the perception of an undefiled faith, flourishes the undivided substance (which is called by those who believe rightly by the use of the Greek word *ousia*) of the incorruptible Trinity." It is perhaps not accidental that this edict does not explicitly affirm the divinity of the Spirit, for, according to Socrates, Theodosius was still hoping to win over the "Macedonians."[220]

[216]Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus *On His Own Life* 583–86, describing the city as "dying a pitiable death as a result of the poor condition of its faith."

[217]*CT* 16.1.2.

[218]Cf. Socrates *EH* 5.7; Sozomen *EH* 7.5.

[219]*CT* 16.5.6.

[220]Cf. Socrates *EH* 5.8.

Theodosius then called a council to meet in Constantinople. According to the ecclesiastical historians, 150 bishops attended the council that opened in Constantinople in May 381.[221] Although no acts of the council remain, we know quite a bit about what happened there, even if the order of events has to be conjectured. Most of those who did come were known to be sympathetic to Meletius of Antioch, who presided over the council. There were no representatives from the West, and, initially at least, there were none from Egypt. None of those proscribed as heretics by the emperors' edicts were invited to the council. Thirty-six "Macedonians" attended, however, led by Eleusis of Cyzicus and Marcian of Lampsacus, the rest being mainly from the cities of the Hellespont. Although Theodosius himself did his best to conciliate them, they soon departed.[222] Timothy of Berytus, an Apollinarian, was also present, though Laodicea was represented by Pelagius, and the group in Antioch led by Paulinus was not represented. Later, a large contingent of Egyptian bishops turned up, led by Timothy (who succeeded Peter on February 14 that year and needed time to consolidate his position), and accompanied by Ascholius of Thessalonica and a few others, who might at least be thought to represent the West.[223] At some point in the proceedings, Meletius died suddenly. Gregory, now bishop of Constantinople, was chosen to take his place. When the question arose about the succession at Antioch, Gregory pressed the case for Paulinus, but the council preferred to elect Flavian, who was consecrated after the close of the council. Gregory was then further vexed by the attacks made by the Egyptians against him for having been transferred to the see of Constantinople. Exasperated by these actions, and the conduct of the council more generally, Gregory resigned from his position as the president of the council and as bishop of Constantinople, delivered one of his most magnificent orations, and retired to his country home, swearing never to attend a council of bishops again.[224] An imperial civil servant, at that time an unbaptized catechumen, Nectarius, was chosen in his place and consecrated as bishop of Constantinople, largely through the prompting of

[221]Socrates *EH* 5.8; Sozomen 7.7; Theodoret *EH* 5.7.

[222]Cf. Socrates *EH* 5.8.

[223]Damasus of Rome (*ep.* 5; PL 13.365ff) had in fact written to Ascholius mentioning the Council of Constantinople and urging him to resist any contravention of the canons against transferring a bishop from one see to another, while making sure that a suitable candidate is chosen as bishop. Cf. N. Q. King, *The Emperor Theodosius and the Establishment of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1961), 38.

[224]Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus *Or.* 42; *Ep.* 130.

Diodore of Tarsus.[225] Nectarius then presided over the council until it concluded in July. The council issued four canons.[226] The first reaffirms the Creed of Nicaea and anathematizes the errors which had since arisen, naming the Eunomians or Anomoians, the Arians or Eudoxians, the Semi-Arians or Pneumatomachians, the Sabellians, the Marcellians, the Photinians and the Apollinarians. The second canon concerns the boundaries of episcopal activity, restricting their concern to their own sees. The third canon, no doubt to reduce the claims of the bishop of Alexandria, and to specify the position of the capital, asserted that "as for the bishop of Constantinople, let him have the prerogatives of honor after the bishop of Rome, seeing that this city is the new Rome." The final canon ruled that Maximus the Cynic, the pretender to the see of Constantinople, who had deceived Gregory of Nazianzus prior to the council, should be considered as never having been a bishop and that all ordinations performed by him are void. Finally, the council produced the Creed of Constantinople, the text of which does not appear in any work until the Council of Chalcedon (451), and issued a tome, which does not survive.[227]

Immediately after the council ended, on July 30, 381, Theodosius issued an edict (*Episcopis tradis*) confirming its position.[228] It ordered that all churches should be surrendered to bishops who "confess that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are of a single majesty, of the same glory, of one splendor, who establish no difference by profane division, but the order of the Trinity by recognizing the persons and uniting the divinity." The edict continued by naming those who were to be regarded as episcopal norms of orthodoxy: Nectarius of Constantinople, Timothy of Alexandria, Pelagius of Laodicea, Diodore of Tarsus, Amphilochius of Iconium, Optimus of Antioch in Pisidia, Helladius of Caesarea in Cappadocia, Otreius of Melitene, Gregory of Nyssa, Terennius of Scythia, and Marmarius of Marcianopolis. This edict is the imperial stamp on the pro-Nicene position settled upon at the Council of Constantinople, making it the official religion of the Roman Empire. Following the council, further councils were held in the West: at Aquileia in 381, at

[225]Cf. Sozomen *EH* 7.8.

[226]Canons 5 and 6, ascribed to Constantinople 381 belong to the council which meet in Constantinople in 381, and Canon 7 is of an even later date. For translation and discussion, see P. L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils: The Disciplinary Work of the First Four Ecumenical Councils* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 101–42.

[227]For fuller discussion, see Chapter Seven, pp. 372–79.

[228]*CT* 16.1.3.

which Palladius of Ratiaria and Secundianus of Singidunum were deposed; and at Rome in 382.[229] Both of these councils challenged the Council of Constantinople, on the grounds that the Eastern bishops had declined to attend a council in the West, and protested against Paulinus not having been chosen as the bishop of Antioch, against Maximus not having been recognized as the bishop of Constantinople, and that Gregory had been installed there, followed by Nectarius, without the Roman church being consulted. Damasus of Rome also reaffirmed the priority of Rome, not on the basis of the prestige of Rome as a city, but on the basis of Christ's words to Peter (Mt 16.18–20), and insisted that following Rome should be Alexandria (as founded by Mark, the disciple of Peter), and then Antioch, where Peter had resided before going to Rome.[230] In 382, a council met in Constantinople, largely to reply to these complaints from the West, none of which they conceded. This council also reaffirmed the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and condemned the teaching of Apollinarius. All the bishops challenged by the West remained in their sees, and although the priority of sees remained (and remains) an issue, and even though seeds of future theological debate lay within the consensus reached, there nevertheless was a consensus that Christ is to be proclaimed as truly God, one of the Holy Trinity.

[229]On subsequent events in the West see Williams, *Ambrose*, 154–232.
[230]Cf. Damasus *Ep.* 10 (PL 13.374–76).

4

Alexander, Arius, and the Council of Nicaea

Elements of the theological debates underway at the turn of the fourth century, explored in Chapter Two in the figures of Methodius of Olympus, Lucian of Antioch, and Pamphilus of Caesarea, came to be focused in a particularly acute manner early in the third decade of that century in the conflict between Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, and Arius, one of his presbyters. Although this conflict ignited a controversy that was to consume the fourth century, only a small proportion of the material written by the two antagonists themselves survive: of all the letters written by Alexander, only the letter written to Alexander of Byzantium remains[1]; from Arius, we have three complete letters and fragments of a fourth[2] and also two passages of his work the *Thalia*, preserved by Athanasius.[3] As Arius presents his theology, in his letters, by way of comparison to that of Alexander, and as the letter of Alexander seems to predate Arius' *Thalia*, this chapter will begin by examining Alexander. This will be followed by an analysis of Arius' own works and the creed promulgated by the Council of Nicaea. Although intended to be a definitive answer to this initial controversy, the creed was open to varying interpretations, as is shown by the letter of Eusebius of Caesarea to his flock, written soon after the council to explain how, although he had supported Arius and was himself condemned by the Council of Antioch a few months earlier, he was nevertheless able to subscribe to the Creed of Nicaea.[4] Thus

[1]Letter of Alexander of Alexandria to Alexander of Byzantium (ἡ φίλαρχος, Urk. 14); on the authorship (almost certainly by Athanasius) and date of the circular letter (the ἐνὸς σώματος, Urk. 4b) see p. 63 n. 7.

[2]Letter of Arius to Alexander (Urk. 6); Letter of Arius to Eusebius of Nicomedia (Urk. 1); Letter of Arius and Euzoius to Constantine (Urk. 30); Constantine cites passages of a fourth letter from Arius (in Urk. 34). There are also eight letters (complete or fragmentary) in support of Arius, see p. 64 n. 13.

[3]Athanasius *Arians* 1.5–6; *Councils* 15.

[4]Eusebius of Caesarea, *Letter to his Church concerning the Council of Nicaea* (Urk. 22).

this chapter concludes with his presentation of the creed, so enabling the work of later exponents of Nicene theology to be seen more clearly.

Alexander of Alexandria

Alexander had succeeded Achillas as bishop of Alexandria in 313. Theodoret and Philostorgius both point to this election as the scene of the first encounter between Alexander and Arius: according to Theodoret, Arius had also considered himself a contender for the office, and it was his resentment at being passed over that motivated his attack on Alexander,[5] while Philostorgius depicts Arius as the nobler character, who, when he saw that Alexander was more popular, had his votes transferred to his rival, so making his election possible.[6] As neither version is recorded in any earlier source, it is likely that this is a legendary account of the beginnings of their conflict. As bishop of Alexandria, Alexander faced a variety of problems.[7] Besides the continuing problem with the Melitian schism, he also had to contend with some rather dubious spiritual teachers. One example mentioned by Epiphanius is Hieracas of Leontopolis, a popular teacher who wrote extensively in Greek and Coptic.[8] He is said to have advocated an extreme asceticism, prohibiting marriage and claiming that children who died before reaching the age of reason, even if baptized, would not be saved, for they would not have consciously struggled in the ascetic life. He also used texts such as the *Ascension of Isaiah* and held some distinctly unusual theological positions, such as identifying the Holy Spirit with Melchizedek.[9] Although the bishop of Alexandria also governed the Thebaid, Libya, and the Pentapolis, in addition to Egypt proper (an authority upheld by canon 6 of the Council of Nicaea), within Alexandria, as noted in Chapter Three, he stood alongside independent presbyters, each leading their own community. It was probably as part of an attempt to consolidate his role as bishop of the city that Alexander tried to ensure unity of teaching by, as Constantine relates, requiring each of the presbyters to explain how they would deal with "a certain passage of

[5]Theodoret *EH* 1.2.8–10.

[6]Philostorgius *EH* 1.3

[7]For some of these already discussed, see Chapter Three.

[8]Cf. Epiphanius *Panarion* 67.

[9]Arius also mentions Hieracas as holding unorthodox Trinitarian views (Letter to Alexander [Urk 6.3]).

the things written in the Law."[10] The controversy with Arius dominated the last decade of Alexander's life. After holding various councils in Alexandria, including one in the presence of Ossius of Corduba, Alexander attended the Council of Nicaea with his young deacon, Athanasius, and died shortly afterwards, on April 17, 328.

That Alexander regarded the dispute as being basically exegetical is made unequivocally clear in his letter to Alexander of Byzantium. After opening the letter with a brief description of some of the sectarian behavior in which Arius and his followers were engaged, Alexander claims:

> Denouncing every pious apostolic doctrine, organizing in a Judaizing manner a workshop contending against Christ, denying the divinity of our Savior and proclaiming him equal to all, singling out every expression of his salvific economy and humiliation for our sakes, they attempt from them to compose the proclamation of their own impiety, and from the beginning they turn away from expressions of his divinity and from words of his indescribable glory with the Father. (Urk. 14.4)

That is, Arius, according to Alexander, focused on those passages of Scripture that describe Christ in human terms, according to the economy undertaken for the work of salvation, while disregarding those passages that speak of his divinity with the Father. The same point is repeated towards the end of the letter, when Alexander complains that they use "the statements about the Savior's Passion, the humiliation and emptying, and the so-called poverty, which additions the Savior accepted on our account (ὧν ἐπικτήτους ὁ σωτὴρ δι' ἡμᾶς ἀνεδέξατο)," to impugn "his highest and original (ἀρχῆθεν) divinity, forgetting the words indicating his natural glory, nobility and dwelling with the Father" (Urk. 14.37). While Alexander would differentiate in the scriptural account of Christ what belongs to him by nature, originally, and what he has accepted in the economy of salvation, Arius seemed to him to conflate the two aspects of the account, appealing to what is said of the humanity of Christ to undermine his divinity.

Stated baldly like this, it might seem that the account in question is a chronological narrative, describing what additions the Word has assumed during his earthly sojourn described in the Gospels. However, it is particularly striking that although Alexander refers to Arius' treatment of Christ's

[10] Letter of Constantine to Alexander and Arius (Urk. 17.6).

Passion and abasement, the scriptural passages he reports Arius as using are from the Old Testament: principally Is 1.2, "I have begotten and raised up sons," and Ps 46.8 (LXX), "You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows."[11] Both of these texts are taken as speaking of Christ and his special place among the others sons of God. Against these texts, Alexander pits others, taken especially from the Gospel of John and the Letter to the Hebrews, to establish the divinity of Christ. In other words, at least for Alexander, Scripture is taken as speaking throughout of Christ and is to be analyzed in terms of how it speaks of him, whether as John, in terms of his true divinity, or as some verses from the Psalms, and elsewhere, as human like his fellows. The reflection is not chronological, looking (in the Old Testament) for his divinity "prior" to his becoming human (in the New Testament), but is analytical, noting that he is spoken of as both God and human so that his divinity is manifest in one who is also described as human.

Alexander sees the divinity of Christ expressed most clearly in the special nature of his sonship: "The sonship of the Savior has nothing in common with the sonship of the others" (Urk. 14.28). Certainly Scripture speaks of God begetting sons, as the text (Is 1.2) utilized by Arius illustrates, though, as Alexander points out, the verse continues by qualifying their sonship: "But they have rejected me" (Urk. 14.12). Rather than beginning with such verses and then postulating, as Alexander claims Arius did, that Christ did not differ from other sons, but was "chosen" by God, in foreknowledge and prevision, knowing that he would remain diligent in his conduct (Urk. 14.12–14, citing Ps 44.8 LXX), Alexander looks to the way in which Scripture speaks of the sonship of Christ as being of a different order. For example, Alexander points to Paul who "made known his legitimate, distinctive, essential and special sonship" by stating that God "did not spare his own (ἰδίου [or "proper"]) Son, but delivered him for us" (Rom 8.32; Urk. 14.32). This verse, and others (citing Mt 3.17; Ps 2.7; Ps 109.3 LXX), indicate "the essential sonship of the paternal birth (τῆς πατρικῆς μαιώσεως φυσικὴν . . . υἱότητα), which results not from attention to conduct nor a discipline of

[11]Urk. 14.11, 14. Alexander does not allude to Prov 8.22 (nor does the ἐνὸς σώματος), though he himself appeals to Prov 8.30 (Urk. 14.27). Prov 8.22 is cited in the Letter of Eusebius of Nicomedia to Paulinus of Tyre (Urk. 8.4). It must be also noted that Athanasius does deal with the "Arian" use of the Gospel texts describing the Passion of Christ in *Orations against the Arians* 3.

progress, but by the characteristic property of nature (φύσεως ἰδιώματι)" (Urk. 14.34). The rather awkward choice of words here, such as "birth" and the use of the language of "nature" (as elsewhere in this letter), might be taken, as Arius did, to imply some kind of materialistic parturition and division. It seems that rather than drawing upon an established tradition, Alexander is exploring the use of such language, which thereafter, with Athanasius, becomes more precise and abstract. In distinction to Christ's "essential and special sonship," those who have received the Spirit of adoption become, according to Alexander, "sons by adoption being benefited by the Son by nature."[12] Christ is the Word and the Wisdom of God and, as such, does not improve or advance in this status, but "possesses an immutable nature, being perfect and lacking nothing" (Urk. 13.29–30). Moreover, according to Alexander, Christ, as the Son of God, is "the exact and identical image of the Father," lacking only his "unbegotten [character]" (Urk. 14.47), for "the 'unbegotten' property alone belongs to the Father," so that Christ can properly say, "My Father is greater than I."[13] Thus, Alexander not only treats what is said of Christ as divine and as human as conceptually distinct (rather than merging them together), but reflecting on *how* Christ is spoken of as divine and as human leads him to affirm that the divine, essential sonship is proper (ἴδιος) to him, his by nature, while what he has undergone, the humiliation of his passion, is what he has accepted for our sake (cf. Urk. 14.37, cited above). The "essential" and the "additional," as suggested earlier, arise from analytic reflection on the one Christ and his salvific work. That Christ is Son by nature, rather than advancing to this status by virtue of his works, is clearly an important point for Alexander, though a full explanation of its significance must wait for Athanasius.

If the Son is divine by nature, and the proper Son of the Father, then the Son is also proper to God, that which makes him the Father. Moreover, if there is no "prior" moment at which one can contemplate Christ as only human, for as Son of God by nature he must always be contemplated as such, then, neither is there any moment at which the Father could be contemplated only as God, prior to being Father. Thus, Alexander is led to follow Origen in asserting very emphatically the coeternity and correlativity of Father and Son. Alexander, as we have seen, uses the term "unbegotten" to describe the

[12]Urk. 14.31: διὰ τοῦ φύσει υἱοῦ εὐεργετούμενοι γίγνονται αὐτοὶ θέσει υἱοί.

[13]Jn 14.28; Urk. 14.52: τὸ δὲ ἀγέννητον τῷ πατρὶ μόνον ἴδίωμα παρεῖναι.

particular characteristic of the Father, rather than, as Origen had suggested, seeing the term "Father" as the particular name of God,[14] perhaps because he was concerned to maintain the Father's status as the only "unbegotten." Nevertheless, the identity of God as the Father of Christ is made abundantly clear by the way in which Alexander opens the creedal part of his letter, affirming belief in "one unbegotten Father" (Urk. 14.46). That God is Father by virtue of his relationship to the Son, rather than by a more general paternal relationship with creation, is also made explicit:

> It is necessary that the Father is always the Father. But he is Father of the eternally present Son, on account of whom he is called Father; and with the Son eternally present, the Father is eternally perfect, lacking nothing in goodness, having begotten the only-begotten Son not temporally nor after an interval nor from non-existence.[15]

Alexander goes on to extend the application of correlativity to the Son's existence as the Wisdom of God, the Word, the Power, the Brightness of the archetypal light, and also, rather unusually, to the Son's being the Image of God, for "if the Image of God was not always, it is clear that he whose image he is, is not always" (Urk. 14.27). Unlike created beings, the Son is "that which is" (τὸ ὄν), and so stands with the Father in complete distinction from all things created from nothing, so that there is no "interval" (διάστημα) between Father and Son (Urk. 14.18). That John describes the Son as being "in the bosom of the Father" (Jn 1.18) is taken by Alexander to indicate that Father and Son are "two inseparable entities" (ἀχώριστα πράγματα δύο, Urk. 14.15). Alexander is clearly committed to the real, concrete, and distinct subsistence of the Son alongside the Father from all eternity.

Alexander also tries to deal with the challenge introduced to theological reflection by Methodius in a different context, but now sharply posed by Arius in this context, that affirming the coeternity and correlativity of both Father and Son undermines the unique character of the Father as the only unbegotten. His response to the dilemma that one must either say that the Son is "from nothing" or that there are "two unbegotten beings," is to point out the great distance between the unbegotten Father and created nature,

[14]Cf. Behr, *Way to Nicaea*, 170–71.

[15]Urk. 14.26: . . . ἀνάγκη τὸν πατέρα ἀεὶ εἶναι πατέρα· ἔστι δὲ πατὴρ ἀεὶ παρόντος τοῦ υἱοῦ, δι' ὃν χρηματίζει πατήρ· ἀεὶ δὲ παρόντος αὐτῷ τοῦ υἱοῦ, ἀεί ἐστιν ὁ πατὴρ τέλειος, ἀνελλιπὴς τυγχάνων ἐν τῷ καλῷ, οὐ χρονικῶς οὐδὲ ἐκ διαστήματος οὐδὲ ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων γεννήσας τὸν μονογενῆ υἱόν.

both rational and irrational, and yet that the mediating, only-begotten nature (μεσιτεύουσα φύσις μονογενής), by which the Father of the Word created all things, was begotten from the true Father himself (Urk. 14.44–5). Alexander does not clarify what he means by describing the Word as a "mediating nature."[16] It would seem, however, that the "mediation" is functional, in terms of being the means by which the Father created all things, rather than ontological, placing the Word at a mid-point in a chain of being, for he is clear that the Word is not included amongst created things, which have come into being by him and which stand at a great distance from the Father, but is instead begotten by the Father himself. Alexander also insists that although he affirms that "the Son is always from the Father" (τὸ ἀεὶ εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς), "no one should take the 'always' as implying 'unbegotten'" (Urk. 14.48). It is clear, Alexander claims, that terms such as "'he was,' or 'always' or 'before the ages,' whatever they might be, are not the same as the 'unbegotten,' for they fall short of the desired intent" (Urk. 14.48–51). While being coeternal with the Father, the Son is not unoriginate, for he has a "beginningless birth" (τὴν ἄναρχον γέννησιν) from the Father, of whom alone one can say that "no one is the cause of his being" (Urk. 14.52). This is as close as Alexander gets to giving a positive description of what is meant by "unbegotten" and "begotten." Otherwise, Alexander resorts to an apophatic reserve regarding "the distinctive *hypostasis* of the Word" (Urk. 14.16). Thus, Alexander claims that John did not describe the Word in terms of created beings, not so that we might think that the Son is unbegotten, but because "the indescribable hypostasis of the only-begotten God is beyond the sharpened apprehension of the evangelist, and perhaps of the angels" (Urk. 14.19). If the Father is unknown, then the Son, as the eternally begotten and natural Son of the Father, must also be unknown. Yet it is not simply that both Father and Son are unknowable, except to each other (Mt 11.27, cited Urk. 14.21), for the Son, after all, has revealed the Father. Rather, for Alexander the mystery of God is more specifically the relationship between Father and Son, in which all Christians are nevertheless called to participate, becoming adopted sons in the natural Son.[17]

[16]Alexander can use the word φύσις to refer to particular beings; cf. Urk. 14.38: by saying "I and the Father are one," Alexander claims, Christ did not assert himself to be the Father, nor imply that "the beings, two in hypostasis, are one" (οὐδὲ τὰς τῇ ὑποστάσει δύο φύσεις μίαν εἶναι).

[17]Williams (*Arius*, 155) comments: "Alexander here follows through the logic of Origen's insistence of eternal correlativity: if the begetting of the Son is an eternal and 'necessary' aspect of the divine life,

Arius

Many of the events in Arius' life have already been described in Chapter Three, but there are a few other details known about him which should be mentioned. According to Epiphanius, Arius was born in Libya and was already an "old man" by the time he came into conflict with his bishop.[18] That his two most faithful episcopal supporters, Secundus and Theonas, were bishops in Libya, in the city of Ptolemais and the area of Marmarica, respectively, supports Epiphanius' claim regarding Arius' homeland, as also his age is supported by a letter of Constantine written in 333, in which he described Arius' withered body and "wholly half-dead" appearance.[19] Arius' appeal to Eusebius of Nicomedia as a "co-Lucianist" has provoked a great deal of speculation as to whether Arius was a disciple of Lucian at a School of Antioch, though it is more likely that this was simply his way of claiming a common tradition in his request for support.[20] Sozomen, in the fifth century, implicates Arius in the schism lead by Melitius in 306, but as this episode is not mentioned at all by Alexander, it seems most likely that this story results from a mistaken identification with an otherwise unknown Arius.[21] Sozomen more plausibly relates that Arius was ordained as a deacon by Bishop Peter (died 311), and then as presbyter by Bishop Achillas (311–13).[22] Arius' work as a presbyter in Alexandria continued under Alexander, who "held him in high repute" and "entrusted him with the exegesis of the Scriptures."[23] For most of the following decade, he continued his work at the church of "Baucalis," as a respected elder presbyter, with a large number of women living an ascetic life under his direction.[24] Arius left Alexandria for Palestine early in the 320s, shortly after the conflict with Alexander erupted and probably after being expelled from the church there. Despite managing to enlist several

part of the proper account of 'what it is to be God,' the Father cannot be more unknowable than the Son; what is incomprehensible is not the person of the Father, but the pattern of divine *nature*—another significant 'Origenian' anticipation of full post-Nicene orthodoxy."

[18]Epiphanius *Panarion* 69.2.1, 3.1.

[19]Letter of Constantine to Arius and Companions (Urk 34.35).

[20]Cf. Letter of Arius to Eusebius of Nicomedia (Urk. 1.5) and the discussion about the application of categories to the fourth-century debates in Chapter One.

[21]Sozomen *EH* 1.15.2. It is possible that this report derives from Sabinus of Heraclea, who was writing in the 370s, but about whose credibility Socrates is scathing (e.g., *EH* 1.8.24–25; 2.15.8–11, 17.10–11; 4.22). On the Melitian Schism, and the report of Arius' role in it, see Williams, *Arius*, 32–40.

[22]Sozomen *EH* 1.15.2; cf. Theodoret *EH* 1.2.9.

[23]Sozomen *EH* 1.15.3; Theodoret *EH* 1.2.9.

[24]Cf. Epiphanius *Panarion* 69.1–3. On the churches in Alexandria, see Williams, *Arius*, 42–43.

important episcopal supporters, Arius was condemned at the Council of Nicaea in 325 and was exiled along with the deacon Euzoius and the bishops Secundus and Theonas. However, largely through the work of Eusebius of Caesarea, deposing Eustathius of Antioch and other important supporters of Nicaea, the tide changed dramatically, so that Constantine wrote to Arius in November 327 inviting him to court, suggesting that he might be allowed to return to his home country.[25] Arius, together with Euzoius, presented a non-controversial statement of faith to Constantine,[26] who was satisfied with it, enough to present it to a local council in Nicomedia and also to write to Alexander requesting Arius' restoration.[27] Alexander and his successor Athanasius adamantly refused to receive Arius back. It is possible that Arius spent a few of the following years in Libya. Around 332–3, Arius, feeling forgotten, wrote directly to Constantine, asking what he was to do if no one would receive him and offering another statement of faith.[28] Constantine took Arius' claim that the whole of Libya stood behind him as a veiled threat of schism and immediately sent a ferocious letter to Arius and his supporters, warning them of the consequences of such action.[29] Constantine also issued an edict, comparing Arius with the pagan Porphyry and ordering his works to be burnt.[30] Despite the aggressive tone of the letter, Constantine concluded it with an invitation to appear in court. Soon after this, Arius was formally received back into the Church when the bishops, who had assembled in Tyre in 335, arrived in Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication of the newly built Church of the Anastasis. At this point, Arius returned to Alexandria, where he was refused communion. After rioting broke out, Arius was summoned to appear again before the emperor in Constantinople.[31] Arius assured Constantine that he was prepared to accept the Creed of Nicaea, though according to Athanasius, Arius had hidden on his person a fuller statement of his own faith which enabled him to swear that he had "never spoken or thought otherwise than what he had now written."[32] A council held in Constantinople in 336,

[25]Letter of Constantine to Arius (Urk. 29).

[26]Letter of Arius and Euzoius to Constantine (Urk. 30).

[27]Letter of Constantine to Alexander (Urk. 32).

[28]Cited in Letter of Constantine to Arius and his Companions (Urk. 34.11, 13–14).

[29]Letter of Constantine to Arius and Companions (Urk. 34; see sec. 20f for Arius' claim and Constantine's threat).

[30]Edict of Constantine (Urk. 33).

[31]Socrates *EH* 1.37.1–2; Sozomen *EH* 2.29.1.

[32]Athanasius *Ep. Egyp.* 18; Socrates *EH* 1.38.

though pointedly not under the auspices of the bishop of Constantinople, Alexander, demanded that Alexander receive Arius to communion. However, before the conflict came to a head, Arius died unexpectedly. Athanasius' account of his end has clearly made the story more dramatic, perhaps patterning the manner of his death, by some kind of internal hemorrhage, after that of Judas (cf. Acts 1.18). According to Athanasius, Alexander, faced with an ultimatum to receive Arius to communion, withdrew to the Church of the Holy Wisdom and spent the whole night praying that either he or Arius might die before the morning, after which Arius, "when the necessities of nature compelled him to that place, fell down and was forthwith deprived of communion with the church and of his life together."[33]

Given the significance of Arius, as the catalyst for the fourth-century debates, and the way in which the Christian tradition uniformly thereafter, at least until very recently, identified itself as solidly Nicene, it is not surprising that he came to be regarded as the archetypal heretic. What is perhaps surprising, as Williams notes, in a survey of scholarship on Arius from the time of Newman's *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (1833) to his own work, is how consistently studies of Arius have accepted "the image of this heresy as the radically 'Other,' projecting on to it whatever theological or ecclesiological tenets currently represent the opposition to a Christian mainstream in which the scholar and interpreter claims to stand."[34] This has resulted in a variety of descriptions of Arius and "Arianism." Newman and Harnack held Arius to be a child of Antioch, which they considered to be a center of "Aristotelian Rationalism" that, combined with a strong Jewish influence, inspired a literalistic reading of Scripture and a corresponding emphasis on the human Jesus at the expense of his divinity.[35] Gwatkin, however, pointed out that later Antiochene theology, which is emphatically Nicene, cannot be traced back to Arius, and that the Jewish influence was as strong in Alexandria as in Antioch. Instead, Gwatkin argued that "Arianism" should be understood primarily in terms of philosophical cosmology, postulating an intermediary

[33]Athanasius *Ep. Egyp.* 19; *Ep.* 54. Epiphanius (*Panarion* 69.10.3) draws out the moral of this story: "Thus he was discovered to have reached his end in that malodorous place in the same way as he had disgorged his impure, evil doctrine."

[34]Williams, *Arius*, 2. The survey can be found on pp. 2–25. Cf. Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism through the Centuries.*

[35]J. H. Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (1833; 3rd ed. 1871), with introduction and notes by R. Williams (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 1–38, 403–16. A. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. 4, 2–8, 38–49.

demiurge between the totally transcendent God and creation in the manner of Middle Platonism.[36] The Jewish background was again picked up by Lorenz, who suggested a background for Arius' position in terms of the angelic, high-priestly mediator of Jewish-Christian theology.[37] More recent scholarship, following a lead suggested by Wiles, has tended to focus on the soteriological dimension of "Arianism."[38] The most sustained attempt to present "Arianism" in this perspective is the work of Gregg and Groh.[39] In their presentation, "Arianism" offers an exemplarist soteriology, in which Christ is a fellow creature, "one of many brothers," whose path and attainments can be achieved by all those who follow in his footsteps. But, as Hanson and others have pointed out, the "Arian Son" cannot really be considered as a fellow being, for he pre-exists his time in the body, in which he probably takes the place of the soul, and is specifically called "a creature but not as one of the creatures."[40] Hanson himself also looks to soteriology to find "the rationale of Arianism," finding this in the desire of the "Arians" to give full weight to the suffering of the Son, which they achieve, in his presentation, by asserting that the Word took the place of the soul in the body of Jesus, so that the suffering is attributed directly to the Word.[41] However, this also means, as he points out, that the value of this suffering is undermined, for it is held, as a consequence, that the Son is not as divine as the Father himself.[42] Both of these attempts to explain "Arianism" in terms of soteriology falter, moreover, inasmuch as they are not evidenced by any of the actual texts of Arius himself. Both thus resort to drawing from texts of later non-Nicene writers, presuming that they all belonged to a coherent "Arian" position, of which

[36]H. M. Gwatkin, *Studies of Arianism Chiefly Referring to the Character and Chronology of the Reaction which Followed the Council of Nicaea*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Deighton Bell and Co., 1900 [1882]), 17–28. On Gwatkin, Williams (*Arius*, 11) comments, "if the problem of Harnack's Arius is that he has not digested Ritschl, Gwatkin's Arius suffers from not having studied in late nineteenth-century Cambridge." To which Wiles (*Archetypal Heresy*, 178) adds, on Williams's work, that "the problem with his own Arius . . . is that he has not read Karl Barth."

[37]R. Lorenz, *Arius Judaizans? Untersuchungen zur dogmengeschichtlichen Einordnung des Arius* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980).

[38]Cf. M. Wiles, "In Defence of Arius," *JTS* n.s. 13 (1962): 339–47.

[39]R. C. Gregg and D. E. Groh, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1981).

[40]Hanson, *Search*, 97–98.

[41]In the case of Athanasius, on Hanson's interpretation, a similar description of the Word in the body is described as the Word wearing a "space-suit" of human flesh to protect him from suffering (cf. *Search*, 448).

[42]Hanson, *Search*, 99–128.

they then claim to present the essence or the rationale. The difficulties of such an approach have been discussed extensively in Chapter One: there was no single theological agenda shared by all those opposed to Nicaea, and their attitudes toward Arius himself varied considerably. The most recent full study of Arius is that of Williams, who having explored the historical context of Arius and the theological background for his position, then turns (in the third and, implicitly, most important section of the work) to his philosophical context, suggesting that Arius' position can best be seen in terms of his indebtedness to various trends in Neoplatonism.[43] That he has probably overstated the case for a Neoplatonic context for Arius has been convincingly argued.[44] However, the great merit of Williams's work is that it examines the profile of Arius himself, rather than attempting to discern the essence of "Arianism."[45]

Although of the many letters that Arius wrote, once conflict erupted between himself and Alexander, only three are extant, it is nevertheless possible to see from these, especially the letter to Alexander and that to Eusebius of Nicomedia, what Arius himself considered to be at issue. It must, of course, be borne in mind that these letters have their own context: he is not giving a full and frank exposition of his theology in the manner of his choice, but presenting a carefully framed account of his position to his own bishop, in self-defense, and to Eusebius, in a bid for support. The third letter, that to Constantine, is less useful, for it presents a fairly bland creedal statement, written to gain readmission into the Church. Despite such problems, these letters are at least Arius' own words. In addition to these letters, we also have two passages purporting to be from Arius' *Thalia*, preserved by his bitter opponent, Athanasius, which, if reliable, present a verse exposition expounding his theology rather than an attempt to placate others.[46] Given the metrical form of the passage reproduced in *On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia* 15, it is generally accepted that these are indeed Arius' words, while the extracts quoted in the *Orations against the Arians* 1.5–6, apart from the opening metrical

[43]An argument already developed in his article "The Logic of Arianism," *JTS* n.s. 34, no. 1 (1983): 56–81.

[44]See esp. G. C. Stead, "Was Arius a Neoplatonist?" *SP* 32 (Leuven: Peeters, 1997): 39–52.

[45]Though, as Williams notes in the second edition of the work (*Arius*, 247–48), he had still used the term "Arian" in ways he would later find difficult.

[46]Though it is possible that even here he was trying to present himself favorably to the "Lucianists," clarifying the points on which they disagreed. Cf. R. Williams, "The Quest of the Historical *Thalia*," in R. C. Gregg, ed., *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments* (Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1985), 1–35, at 21–22.

lines, are more of a mixture of quotation and provocative restatement, echoing conclusions drawn about Arius' teaching in the circular letter (the ἑνὸς σώματος) probably drafted by Athanasius himself.[47]

Arius wrote his letter to Alexander in an attempt to clarify his position. After an opening line of greeting, Arius immediately turns to give a statement of faith, which he claims to have learnt from Alexander himself:

> Our faith which comes from our ancestors and which we learned from you, blessed Pope, is as follows: We recognize one God, alone unbegotten, alone eternal, alone without beginning, alone true, alone possessing immortality, alone wise, alone good, alone Master; he alone judges, administers, and manages all things; unchangeable and unalterable, just and good, God of the Law and the Prophets and the New Testament. (Urk. 6.2)

Arius thus begins by emphasizing very strongly the unique character of the one God, to whom alone applies a whole string of divine epithets. Strikingly absent from these characteristics is any reference to the one God as Father. Arius does not even refer to the "fatherhood" of God when he continues his statement of faith by mentioning the begetting of the Son. It is only after he discusses mistaken teachings about this begetting that Arius then refers to God as Father, and thereafter, he alternates between using the terms "God" and "Father."[48] It is as if Arius only turns to speaking of God as Father as a result of discussing erroneous teachings. In his letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, Arius again does not refer to God as "Father" apart from when presenting Alexander's teaching.[49] The designation "Father" does occur in the statement of faith presented to Constantine,[50] though that statement is clearly designed to be as bland and noncontroversial as possible. He also uses the term "Father" in the *Thalia*, where he states that even "when the Son does

[47]Cf. esp. G. C. Stead, "The *Thalia* of Arius and the Testimony of Athanasius," *JTS* n.s. 29, no. 1 (1978), 20–52; M. L. West, "The Metre of Arius' *Thalia*," *JTS* n.s. 33 (1982), 98–105. C. Kannengiesser (*Holy Scripture and Hellenistic Hermeneutics in Alexandrian Christology: The Arian Crisis* [Berkeley, CA: 1982], 14–20) argues, on the other hand, that the extracts in *Arians* 1.5–6 are authentic, while the passage in *Councils* 15 has been rewritten, though his arguments have not found many supporters. Cf. Williams, "The Quest of the Historical *Thalia*."

[48]Cf. P. Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 138–39.

[49]Letter of Arius to Eusebius of Nicomedia (Urk. 1.2, 4–5).

[50]Letter of Arius and Euzoius to Constantine (Urk. 30.2).

not exist, the Father is God."[51] The term "Father" thus describes God's relationship to the Son (and other sons), but it does not indicate anything particular to God himself, as it does for Alexander.

Not surprisingly, in what follows of his statement of faith to Alexander, Arius does not present the relationship to God *as Father* as being the determining aspect of the Son's relationship to God, but rather implies that the characterization of this relationship as "begetting" is only one amongst various equally important others:

> He begot an only begotten Son before aeonian times (γεννήσαντα υἱὸν μονογενῆ πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων), through whom he also made the aeons and everything, begetting him not just in appearance but in truth, giving him existence by his own will, unchangeable and unalterable, a perfect creature of God (ὑποστήσαντα ἰδίῳ θελήματι, ἄτρεπτον καὶ ἀναλλοίωτον, κτίσμα τοῦ θεοῦ τέλειον), but not as one of the creatures, an offspring (γέννημα), but not as one of the offsprings; nor is the Father's offspring an emanation (προβολήν), as Valentinus taught; nor is the offspring a consubstantial part (μέρος ὁμοούσιον) of the Father, as Mani presented him; nor as Sabellius said, dividing the monad, a "son-father" (υἱοπατόρα); nor as did Hieracas, who spoke of a lamp from a lamp or as it were a torch divided in two; nor do we hold that the one who was previously was later begotten or created as Son (οὐδὲ τὸν ὄντα πρότερον, ὕστερον γεννηθέντα ἢ ἐπικτισθέντα εἰς υἱόν), even as you, blessed Pope, used often in the midst of the church and council to reject those who introduced these ideas. Rather, as we said, he was created by the will of God before times and before ages, and received life and being from the Father, and the glories, since he gave him existence alongside himself (συνυποστήσαντος αὐτῷ τοῦ πατρός). For the Father, having given him the inheritance of all things, did not deprive himself of that which he possesses unoriginatedly (ἀγεννήτως) in himself; for he is the source of all things. Thus there are three *hypostases*. God, the cause of all things, is supremely alone without beginning (ἄναρχος μονώτατος), while the Son, having been begotten timelessly (ἀχρόνως γεννηθεὶς) by the Father, and created and established before the aeons, was not before he was begotten (οὐκ ἦν πρὸ τοῦ γεννηθῆναι), but, begotten timelessly before all else, was alone given existence by the Father

[51] Arius *Thalia* (Athanasius *Councils* 1.15): αὐτίκα γοῦν υἱοῦ μὴ ὄντος ὁ πατὴρ θεός ἐστιν.

> (μόνος ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπέστη). For he is not eternal or coeternal or co-unbegotten with the Father, nor does he have being together with the Father, as some people speak of things being in relationship, thus introducing two ingenerate principles. Rather, as the monad and principle of all things, God is thus before all things. He is also therefore before the Son, as we learned from you when you were preaching in church. As therefore it is from God that he has being, glories and life, and all things have been handed over to him, in this way God is his cause (ἀρχή). For he, as his God and being before him, rules (ἄρχει) him. And if the words "from him," [Rom 11.36] and "from the womb" [Ps 109.3 LXX] and "I have come forth from the Father and am here" [Jn 16.28] are taken by some to mean that he is a consubstantial part of him, and as an emanation, then the Father will be composite, divisible, and changeable, and will, according to them, experience having a body and, insofar as they can arrange it, what is consequent to having a body, he who is God incorporeal. (Urk. 6.2–5)

Arius is very keen to make clear what he is not teaching. According to him, the Son's relationship to the Father must not be thought of in a materialistic fashion, whether as an emanation, as he claims Valentinus taught, or as a "consubstantial part" of the Father, a part of the Father himself, as it were, split off from his being, as if the incorporeal God possessed a divisible body. The Manichaeans most certainly did not think of "the Light" in materialistic terms (for it is the opposite principle from matter), but their claim that parts of "the Light" took concrete form in particular figures provided Arius with a suitable foil against the usage of such materialistic-sounding terms as *homoousios*. Origen had earlier avoided the term, due to its similar usage, so it seemed to him, by the Valentinians. In the middle of the third century, Dionysius of Alexandria had also avoided the term and was criticized for this by Dionysius of Rome. That the term was then rejected by those who had condemned Paul of Samosata at the Council of Antioch in 268, did not make the term a likely candidate for a future theological usage.[52] However, Arius' claims here seem to imply that Alexander was using such terms as "consubstantial" in reference to various scriptural passages which speak of the Son's origination from the Father. Arius also takes care to exclude any possibility that the Son might be

[52] For Origen, see Behr, *Way to Nicaea*, 187–88; for Dionysius of Alexandria and Dionysius of Rome, ibid., 202–6; for the Council of Antioch, ibid., 218–20.

considered as having become son subsequent to having been brought into existence: the one who was previously was not thereafter begotten or created as a son; clearly Arius cannot be considered an adoptionist.

In his positive assertions, particularly striking is the variety of ways in which Arius describes the relationship of the Son to the Father, using images which go back to Wisdom's description of her origins in Prov 8.22–25: "The Lord created (ἔκτισεν) me at the beginning of his work . . . I was established (ἐθεμελίωσεν) . . . before the hills he begets (γεννᾷ) me." Such descriptions are taken, by Arius, to apply univocally to the Son himself (rather than *as* divine or *as* human), though in a manner incomparable with others. Thus, Arius is clear that the Son can be spoken of as a creature, a "perfect creature of God," yet "not as one of the creatures," for the Son alone was given existence by God, while all other things were brought into existence through the Son. Similarly the Son can be called an "offspring," but again, "not as one of the [other] offsprings" mentioned in Scripture (cf. Is 1.2 LXX, cited by Alexander, see above).

Moreover, the Son is given existence, created or begotten by *the will* of God, that is, as a result of God's purposive action. This is consequent upon Arius' insistence on the uniqueness of the one true God, the "monad and principle of all things." The Son alone was brought into existence directly by the Father, and it is through the Son that the Father creates the "aeons and everything else," so that the Son was created and established "before the ages," or "begotten timelessly." However, rather than reflecting on the present tense of the verb to beget in Prov 8:25, as Origen had done, to conclude that the Son is eternally, or rather timelessly, begotten by the Father, Arius seems to envision the Son's coming into existence as a specific act in some kind of "quasi-time."[53] Thus, Arius insists, in various ways, that God is "prior" to the Son, who "was not before he was begotten." As such, although the Father "gave him existence alongside himself" (συνυποστήσαντος αὐτῷ), he did so without depriving himself of that which he possesses "unoriginatedly in himself," so that the Son is not to be considered as "eternal, or co-eternal, or co-unbegotten with the Father," nor does he "have being together with the Father," for such claims would imply, for Arius, two unoriginate principles.

[53]G. C. Stead ("The Platonism of Arius," *JTS* n.s. 15, no. 1 [1964]: 16–31, at 26) points out that Arius' frequent use of the aorist ὑπῆρξεν demonstrates that "he clearly conceives of the generation as in some sense a momentary event."

Arius implies, then, that God not only can but should be considered as God, in himself, prior to the coming into being of the Son and the revelation of God as Father.[54]

In the letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, Arius begins by reporting Alexander's teaching on the correlativity of Father and Son.[55] After mentioning that Alexander has condemned all the bishops of the East who say that "God exists before the Son underivatively" (προϋπάρχει ὁ θεὸς τοῦ υἱοῦ ἀνάρχως), Arius presents Eusebius with a statement of his faith:

> But we for our part, what do we say and think; what have we taught and what do we teach? That the Son is not unbegotten (ἀγέννητος) or a part (μέρος) of the Unbegotten in any way, nor derived from some [other] substrate (ἐξ ὑποκειμένου τινός), but that he exists by will and counsel before times and before ages (ὅτι θελήματι καὶ βουλῇ ὑπέστη πρὸ χρόνων καὶ πρὸ αἰώνων), full of grace and truth, God, the Only-begotten, unaltering (ἀναλλοίωτος). And before he was begotten or created or defined or established, he was not. For he was not unbegotten. But we are persecuted because we say, "The Son has a beginning, but God is without beginning" (ἀρχὴν ἔχει ὁ υἱός, ὁ θεός ἄναρχός ἐστι). We are persecuted because we say, "he is from that which is not" (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ἐστίν). We speak in this way because he is neither a part of God nor from some substrate. And this is why we are persecuted. (Urk. 1.4–5)

Arius makes many of the same points here as he did in his letter to Alexander, though stated somewhat more radically. The terms "begotten," "created," "defined," and "established" are again taken as applying directly to the Son himself, who before coming into existence therefore was not. As the Son

[54]Arius' rejection of the simultaneity of Father and Son, in preference for seeing this relationship as a (quasi-) temporal event, is similar to the qualifications that third-century philosophers, such as Alexander of Aphrodisias, Plotinus, and Porphyry, made regarding the application of the category of "relation," which Aristotle had argued seemed to be simultaneous by nature (*Categories* 7b15: δοκεῖ δὲ τὰ πρός τι ἅμα τῇ φύσει εἶναι), to the father-son relationship (cf. *Metaphysics* 5.15). Cf. Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, 131.

[55]Letter of Arius to Eusebius of Nicomedia (Urk. 1.2): "He drives us out of the city like godless men because we do not agree with him when he says publicly: 'Always God, always Son' (ἀεὶ θεὸς ἀεὶ υἱός); 'At the same time Father, at the same time Son' (ἅμα πατὴρ ἅμα υἱός); 'The Son coexists with God ingenerately' (συνυπάρχει ὁ υἱὸς ἀγεννήτως τῷ θεῷ); 'Ever-begotten (ἀειγεννής), unbegotten-born (ἀγεννητογενής), neither in thought nor in some moment of time does God proceed (προάγει) the Son'; 'Always God, always Son'; 'The Son is from God himself.' "

exists by the will of God, rather than deriving from the substance of God, or from some other substrate, Arius asserts that the Son was created "from nothing."[56] This rather startling assertion was later condemned by the Council of Nicaea and does not recur in any later non-Nicene writer.

The final text generally recognized as being by Arius himself is the passage from his *Thalia* preserved by Athanasius in his work *On the Councils* (it is rather lengthy, but for the sake of completeness is presented in full):

> God himself then, as he is, is inexpressible to all.
> He alone has none equal or like himself, none one-in-glory.
> We call him unbegotten, because of him who is begotten by nature.
> We praise him as without beginning because of him who has a beginning.
> And adore him as everlasting, because of him who in time has come to be.
> The one without beginning established the Son as a beginning of things created
> and having engendered him bore him as his own son.
> He has nothing proper to God, as a real property.[57]
> For he is not equal to, nor yet one-in-essence with, him.
> Wise is God, for he is the teacher of Wisdom.
> [This is a] sufficient demonstration that God is invisible to all:
> he is invisible both to what is [created] through the Son and to the Son himself;
> I will say clearly, how the Invisible is seen by the Son—
> by that power by which God sees, and in his own measure,
> the Son endures to see the Father, as is lawful.
> Again there is a trinity (τριάς), not in equal glories, for their *hypostases* are not mixed with each other.
> In their glories, one is more glorious than the other in infinite measure (ἐπ' ἄπειρον).
> The Father is alien to the Son in essence, for he is without beginning.

[56]On these three alternatives (from God, from something else, from nothing), and their background in contemporary cosmology, see Stead, "The Platonism of Arius," 25–26; idem, "The Word 'From Nothing,'" *JTS* n.s. 49, no. 2 (1998): 671–84.

[57]Lines 7–8 are difficult to translate: καὶ ἤνεγκεν εἰς υἱὸν ἑαυτῷ τόνδε τεκνοποιήσας / ἴδιον οὐδὲν ἔχει τοῦ θεοῦ καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἰδιότητος. On the term τεκνοποιέω, see Williams, *Arius* (2nd ed.), 259.

Understand that the Monad [always] was, but the Dyad was not before it came to be.
It immediately follows that the Father is God, [even] when the Son does not exist.
Hence the Son, not being (οὐκ ὢν) (for he came to be by the paternal will),
is the only-begotten God, and this one is other than both.
Wisdom came to exist through Wisdom by the will of the wise God.
Thus he is conceived (ἐπινοεῖται) in numberless conceptions (ἐπινοίαις): Spirit, Power, Wisdom,
God's Glory, Truth, Image, and Word.
Understand that he is conceived to be Radiance and Light.
The higher One (κρείττονα) is able to beget one equal to the Son;
but one more excellent, or superior, or greater, he is not able.
At God's will the Son is such as he is and as great as he is.
From when and since when, from then he has subsisted from God.[58]
Being a strong God, he yet praises the Superior only partially.
To speak in brief, God is inexpressible to the Son.
For he is what he is to [in/for] himself, that is, unspeakable.
So that no words expressing comprehension does the Son know to speak,[59]
for it is impossible for him to search out the Father, who exists in himself.
For the Son does not know his own essence,
since, being Son, he came into real existence (ὑπῆρξεν ἀληθῷ) by the will of the Father.
What argument (λόγος) then allows, that he who is from the Father
should know by comprehension (γνῶναι ἐν καταλήψει), the one who begot him?
For it is clear that one who has a beginning is not such as could conceive or
lay hold of the one without beginning, as he is [in himself].

[58] ἐξ ὅτε καὶ ἀφ' οὗ καὶ ἀπὸ τότε ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπέστη.
[59] ὥστε οὐδὲν τῶν λεγομένων κατά τε κατάληψιν συνίει ἐξειπεῖν ὁ υἱός.

Many of the points already noted are repeated here: the Son is brought into being by the will of the Father, so that he has a beginning and also is the beginning of other things (line 6). In his letters, Arius had spoken of the Son as coming into being "before times and ages" (as in Urk. 1.4) and seemed to envision this as a discrete act in a quasi-temporality; here he speaks very directly of the Son as coming into being "in time" (ἐν χρόνοις, line 5) and again insists that this means that he was not before (lines 19–20). Arius had already spoken of there being three *hypostases* (Urk. 6.4), but here he specifies that in this trinity the three *hypostases* are incommensurable with each other, so that the Father, being without beginning, is actually "alien in essence" (ξένος κατ' οὐσίαν) to the Son, who has a beginning (lines 16–18). Arius similarly asserts that the Son is not to be considered as *homoousios* with the Father, for he does not possess anything "proper to God" (ἴδιον τοῦ θεοῦ, line 8).

The greatest part of this passage, however, is given over to Arius' demonstration that the Father remains invisible, unknowable, and inexpressible even to the Son, something not indicated in either of his letters. According to Philostorgius, Arius' position on the Son's ignorance of the Father was disputed by the Lucianists and also by Arius' Libyan episcopal supporters in Secundus and Theonas.[60] Alexander had also used the Stoic term "comprehension" (κατάληψις) to indicate our limited ability to know the Son, whose *hypostasis* is "not naturally comprehensible," for "who the Son is" is known only to the Father.[61] For Arius, this is simply a consequence of the Son's status as a creature. As he has a beginning, the Son cannot even know himself, in his own essence, as his Creator knows him (line 36). If the Son cannot know himself fully, then it is clearly impossible for him to know, see, or express in words the one who brought him into being (lines 40–41). However, while the Son, of himself, is ignorant of the Father, nevertheless by God's own power, and in the degree appropriate to the Son, he is granted to glimpse God or, more exactly, "to endure" the vision of the Father (lines 14–15). Thus, this assertion of Arius is not meant as a gratuitous degradation of the Son, but as an attempt to explain how it is by God's grace alone that the Son performs the function for which he is created or begotten: "At God's will the Son is such as he is and as great as he is" (line 29). In a similar manner, Arius seems

[60]Philostorgius *EH* 2.3.

[61]Letter of Alexander to Alexander of Byzantium (Urk. 14.21); cf. Stead, "Was Arius a Neoplatonist?" 46–47.

to state here that the Son is not himself the very "Wisdom" of God, but is only called the "Wisdom" of God as having come into existence by means of the Wisdom of the wise God (line 23), and that he is likewise understood through the other "aspects" (ἐπίνοιαι) of God, as Spirit, Power, Truth, Image and Word. In this way a distinction is made between the way in which God is wise and the way in which any creature may be so, learning from the teacher of wisdom (line 10). Despite the fact, then, that no one, not even the Son, can comprehend God, for Arius this does not imply that God cannot reveal himself, give what he can and does give, but rather underscores the unconditional freedom of the "God of the Law, the Prophets and the New Testament" (Urk. 6.2) to act as he wills.

The two other sources for Arius' teaching, the mixture of quotation, paraphrase and provocative restatement which Athanasius presents (in *Orations against the Arians* 1.5–6) as Arius' own words in the *Thalia*, together with the related report of Arius' teaching in the circular letter (the ἑνὸς σώματος, Urk. 4b), contain a number of elements similar to what has already been seen from texts generally accepted to be by Arius, but they also draw out what Athanasius considers to be the implications of his words. In both *Arians* 1.6.3–5 and the circular letter (Urk. 4b.8), Arius is presented as teaching that the Father is ineffable to the Son, who does not see or know the Father as he is, but only in his own measure. The essence of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit are again said to be separate and alien in nature, unconnected from, and without any participation in, each other, so that they are unlike each other in essence and glory "unto infinity." All these points can be found, sometimes in the very same words, in the passage from the *Thalia* reproduced in *On the Councils* (cited above). Arius' point that the Son was not before he was begotten is now presented, however, in terms of God becoming Father, something not actually in the texts of Arius examined so far. Thus, Athanasius claims that Arius uttered words "such as these" (perhaps indicating that what follows is not a verbatim quotation): "God was not always a Father, but once God was alone and not yet a Father, but afterwards he became a Father" (*Arians* 1.5.2; cf. Urk. 4b.7). Similarly, Arius is presented not only as denying the existence of the Son before he was begotten, but as asserting more directly that "the Son is not eternal . . . there was once when he was not" (ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν, *Arians* 1.5.3; Urk. 4b.7). The Son is therefore "other than and unlike (ἀλλότριος καὶ ἀνόμοιος), in every respect,

the essence and propriety (τῆς οὐσίας καὶ ἰδιότητος) of the Father" (*Arians* 1.6.2; Urk. 4b.8), and as such the Son does not belong intrinsically to the life of God himself. And then, as a logical conclusion, Athanasius has Arius asserting that it was only when God "wished to form us" that "he made a certain one, and named him Word and Wisdom, that he might form us by means of him" (*Arians* 1.5.4; Urk. 4b.9).

In these passages, Athanasius does not present Arius as using the terminology of "begetting" to describe the Son's mode of origination, but relentlessly uses other terms, such as "create, "make," "come to be," all of which Arius treated as equally applicable. Athanasius then draws out what he sees as the inevitable conclusion from Arius' words. Although Arius himself had specifically stated that the Son was "unchangeable and unalterable" (ἄτρεπτον καὶ ἀναλλοίωτον, Urk. 6.2; cf. Urk. 1.4), the conclusion is now drawn that if the Son is a "creature," then he is by necessity "mutable and alterable," able to change just as the devil changed (Urk. 4b.8–10). The passage purporting to be from the *Thalia* qualifies this blunt assertion, by trying both to preserve this creature's freedom and yet also to maintain that his ability to remain steadfast in the good depends upon God: "The Word himself is alterable and remains good by his own free will," though "foreknowing that he would be good, God by anticipation bestowed on him this glory which afterwards, as man, he attained from virtue."[62] Much has been made of this passage, to the effect that Arius maintained that it is only as a result of his virtuous action that Christ merits his status as Son so that the same sonship can be offered to others.[63] However, that Christ remained steadfast by virtue of God's preemptive action would seem to undermine this argument, for this (along with the Word's existence prior to becoming Christ) makes Christ's status radically different from that of other human beings.[64] Arius' Christ ends up as a third type of being, between God and creation: created, as other creatures, yet specially endowed, so as to be able to bridge the gap between the two, and so not as one of the creatures.[65] For Athanasius, the main problem with this

[62]*Arians* 1.5.8. Cf. Athanasius *Nicaea* 6.5, reporting Arius' teaching: "As he was foreknown to be destined to be of such a character, he proleptically (προλαμβάνῃ), along with his coming into existence, received both the name [i.e., Son] and the glory of the name."

[63]Cf. Gregg and Groh, *Early Arianism*, 43–76.

[64]Cf. Hanson, *Search*, 21.

[65]As Williams ("The Logic of Arianism," 79) puts it: "Between our instability, which is both moral and ontological, and God's essential stability is the crucial third term, establishing communication between Being and Becoming—a 'becoming' creature, and in that sense ontologically unstable, yet

teaching is that, even overlooking the difficulties of trying to reconcile freedom with divine foreknowledge, such a position effectively makes Christ's sonship something external to the being of God.[66] Christ is finally neither fully God nor fully human, let alone both, and so human beings, consequently, are not introduced into the life of God.

The last topic to emerge from these other reports of Arius' teaching is that the Son is not the very Word or Wisdom of God, but is only called by these titles, as already noted (*Arians* 1.5.4; Urk. 4b.9), and, more specifically, called by these titles only "loosely" (καταχρηστικῶς, Urk. 4b.7). In the *Thalia*, Arius had spoken of the Son being "conceived in numberless conceptions" (ἐπινοίαις, line 24). The background of this terminology in Origen's analysis of the different "aspects" in which Christ is contemplated does not, however, support Athanasius' contention that they are merely fictitious.[67] Consequent upon his relativizing of Christ's status as the Word and Wisdom of God, Athanasius claims that Arius taught that there are two wisdoms: first, "the attribute co-existent with God (τὴν ἰδίαν καὶ συνυπάρχουσαν τῷ θεῷ)," and second, the Son, who is called Wisdom and Word because he "was originated in this wisdom" and thus partakes of it: "For Wisdom came to exist though Wisdom by the will of the wise God" (*Arians* 1.5.5; cf. line 23 of the *Thalia* quoted above). The exegetical dimension of this discussion is brought out by Athanasius, when he presents Arius as applying the same principle to the description of Christ as the "Power of God" (cf. 1 Cor 1.24). According to Athanasius, Arius claimed that "there are many powers": one is "God's own by nature (ἰδία φύσει) and eternal," and then among the other "so-called powers" is not only Christ but the locust and the caterpillar, spoken of in Scripture as "my great power" (Joel 2.25 LXX; *Arians* 1.5.7). Clearly Athanasius' account, that Arius reduced Christ to the status of a locust, is tendentious. Arius most likely did not assert two Wisdoms, Words, or Powers, but rather tried to specify in what manner Christ is said to be such. For Arius, God is wise in and of himself, whereas insofar as Christ participates in that wisdom he can be called the Wisdom of God. This is,

perfectly in communion with the realm of Being, morally stable by the confluence of God's prior grace and his own unfaltering response."

[66]Cf. Athanasius *Nicaea* 6.5.

[67]Cf. Athanasius *Ep. Egyp.* 12; *Arians* 2.37. See also G. C. Stead, "Arius in Modern Research," *JTS* n.s. 45, no. 1 (1994): 24–36, who comments (p.28): "It is a disconcerting thought that Athanasius insists on an interpretation which will later be found in Eunomius, whereas Arius agrees with St. Basil." For Origen's use of the term ἐπινοίαι, see Behr, *Way to Nicaea*, 181–83.

however, to speak καταχρηστικῶς, "loosely," or, perhaps better, "metaphorically." But this does not imply, as Athanasius would have us believe, that Arius held that Christ is a different Word of God and is so only intermittently. Consistent with his observations about the language of Scripture, Arius can still maintain that Christ is the fullest possible manifestation of the Word and Wisdom of God, and that he is so, not intermittently, but permanently, by the grace of God.[68]

One final point regarding Arius' teaching is the suggestion that he held that, in becoming incarnate, the Word took a body without a soul, himself taking the place of the soul. No suggestion of this has been found in any of Arius' own words or the reports of his teaching. It is often claimed that the reason why there are so few witnesses to this doctrine is because it was one shared by many at the time, not only by Arius and those who followed Lucian of Antioch, but also by Athanasius himself (though this will be disputed in the next chapter).[69] The primary support for this claim about Arius' teaching is a statement of Eustathius of Antioch:

> Why do they, fabricating earth-born deceits, make much of proving that the Christ assumed a body without a soul? [It is] so that if they are able to corrupt any [to think] that these things are to be defined thus, then, by attributing changes of affection to the divine Spirit, they might easily persuade them that the mutable is not begotten of the immutable nature.[70]

This fragment is from the work of Eusthius "On the Soul and against the Arians," though who exactly his opponents were is not specified. Epiphanius, as we have seen in a previous chapter, argues in a similar manner that "Lucian and all the Lucianists deny that the Son of God took a soul, in order that they may attach human passion directly to the Word."[71] Eusebius of Caesarea also denies that Christ possessed a human soul.[72] Hanson also calls upon the references in the *Homilies on the Psalms* attributed to Asterius (whose authorship

[68]Cf. Williams, "The Logic of Arianism," 76–80.

[69]According to Hanson (*Search*, 111): "That this doctrine of the *soma apsychon* assumed by the *Logos* was a prominent point in Arian theology is abundantly evidenced." To which a footnote (n. 53) is attached, documenting what amounts to a consensus amongst modern scholars (!), the only omission being Gregg and Groh, who "curiously ignore this point."

[70]Eustathius of Antioch frag. 15 (Spanneut).

[71]Epiphanius, *Ancoratus* 33 (PG 43.77a).

[72]Eusebius of Caesarea *Demonstration of the Gospel* 7.1.24; 10.8.74; *Ecclesiastical Theology*, 1.20.40; cited and discussed, briefly, in p. 74 n. 56.

Hanson accepts) to the fact that Christ was not a "mere man" (ἄνθρωπος ψιλός), taking this to imply that he was divine as well, and that therefore the Word took the place of the soul. Finally, the only other source that Hanson can marshal is the rule of faith attributed to Eudoxius of Constantinople, though this comes from a later period and is possibly affected by the debate with Apollinarius.[73] From what we have seen of the debates at the beginning of the fourth century, with Lucian and then Pamphilus, following on from the issue as raised at the Council of Antioch in 268, it is overwhelmingly probable that Arius himself did indeed think in such terms, though no direct evidence remains.

Not all the points that arise from the report of the *Thalia* in *Arians* 1.5–6 and the account of his teaching in the circular letter (ἑνὸς σώματος) can be traced back to Arius' undisputed works. However, they certainly do make very clear what his opponents found objectionable in his position. They draw out or harden the implications of what was initially, and essentially, an exegetical debate. While one need not attribute to Arius a gratuitous desire to demote the Son, Alexander's account of Arius' exegetical practice, conflating what is said of Christ as divine and as human in the scriptural account of the Son, is certainly born out by Arius' own letters, in which he treats "create" and "beget" as being equally applicable terms to describe, univocally, the relation of Christ to the Father. Such exegetical practices lead Arius to affirm that Christ is both a creature and an offspring, which he then tried to qualify by asserting that the Son has been particularly graced from the beginning, so that he is not as the other creatures and offsprings. Against this, Alexander insists that what demarcates Christ's sonship is that he is God's "own" or "proper" Son (ἰδίου υἱοῦ, Rom 8.32; Urk. 14.32). In many ways, it is this notion of "proper" that lies behind the various issues raised in the debate. For Arius, what is most emphatically proper to God, essential to him, is that he alone is God, the unconditionally unique Lord of all. This is made clear from the beginning, with the opening of his confessional statement to

[73]Eudoxius of Constantinople (Hahn §191): "He became flesh, not man, for he did not assume a human soul, but he became flesh in order that he might be called for men 'God for us' on account of the flesh as by means of a veil; there were not two natures, because he was not a complete man, but he was God in the flesh instead of a soul: the whole was a single composite nature. He was passible on account of the economy, for if only body and soul suffered, he could not have saved the world. Let them answer then how this passible and mortal person could be consubstantial with the superior God, who is beyond passion and death." Cf. Simonetti, *Crisi*, 469–70 n. 33.

Alexander, which applies to God a whole litany of attributes preceded by the qualifier "only." This is, moreover, not intended as a capitulation to some kind of philosophical rationalism, but as a means of ensuring that he alone is "God of the Law and the Prophets and the New Testament" (Urk. 6.2). If this is what is "proper" to God, then all other scriptural expressions have to be contextualized in the light of this overarching control. If God is described as a Father possessing a Son, then this must be understood in the context God's essential otherness to created beings, among whom, according to Prov 8.22, the Son is to be counted. It certainly cannot be understood in terms of biological kinship or continuity, as Alexander's reference to the Son's "paternal birth" (μαίωσις, Urk. 14.34, commenting on Ps 109.3 LXX etc.) might be taken to imply. A similar point can be made with regard to Arius' use of the scriptural passages which seem to speak of Christ's advancement to the status of being a Son (esp. Ps 44.8 LXX). Arius' controlling principle here again seems to derive from Prov 8.22, where Wisdom is created to be the beginning of God's ways. That the Son is to be "the beginning of created things," and the exemplar of divine Wisdom for them, leads Arius to explain his apparent (to us) immutability in terms of grace provided, by foreknowledge of his steadfastness, from the beginning.[74] From such exegetical considerations, Arius concludes, unambiguously even if not as provocatively as it is put by his opponents, that the *hypostases* of the Father and Son and the Spirit "are not mixed with each other" (*Thalia* line 16, cited above). In other words, "Father" and "Son" may well be appropriate designations for these *hypostases*, expressing particular aspects of their relationship, but it does not define them as they are in themselves. They are therefore "alien in essence" or "unlike in essence," and so, as they are not part of each other's "definition," God is still who he is "prior" to the Son. The unconditional independence and freedom of the one God is both the presupposition and conclusion of Arius' theology.

For Alexander, on the other hand, scriptural expressions such as "begetting," which relate to the sonship of Christ, are allowed to stand as conceptually distinct from the scriptural terms that speak of his created status and his Passion. In this way, Christ's sonship need no longer be thought of as equivalent to the relationship described by other terms, such as the "created" of Prov 8.22, which imply contingency and express a momentary or punctilinear act of God, conceived in a rather anthropomorphic fashion, such that

[74]Cf. Williams, *Arius*, 113–14.

the Son was not before being begotten or created.[75] Rather, for Alexander, the Son is the "proper" Son of God, in such a way that the very being of God himself is now understood primarily in terms of his fatherhood. This further entails, as we have seen, an eternal correlativity between Father and Son, in which the Son is Son by nature, distinguished from the Father who alone possesses the "property of being unbegotten." It is, therefore, inconceivable to Alexander that Arius should postulate a "gap" or an "interval" (διάστημα) in which the Son was not begotten from the Father (Urk 14.24). Arius' detachment of God from a necessary relationship to a Son echoes Methodius' detachment of God from a necessary relationship to creation. And as Methodius' refutation of any hint of "eternal creation" ensures the integrity of creation as *created*, with its own time and history, so also for Arius, the rejection of an "eternal relationship" to the Son introduces God into some kind of temporal, or at least "quasi-temporal," relationship with creation (or at least with one created being, who is not as the other created beings).[76] While Arius' Christ reveals to us a God who is beyond, yet who also acts in at least a "quasi-temporal" fashion, Alexander's Christ reveals to us God himself, a God whose nature it is to give being to another, in a manner that is at once both free, for it is unconstrained and also natural, as it expresses who he is rather than a deliberate decision (as if he could have chosen otherwise). Moreover, that this relationship is eternal or, preferably, timeless (rather than an infinite duration of time), focuses our attention upon the revelation of God in Christ.[77] And this, finally, is the consequence of, and in turn demands, an exegesis which is "partitive," in the sense that it conceptually distinguishes between what is said of Christ as divine and what is said of him as human, rather than in the sense of treating God as "prior" to the Son, as an independent agent from the Son.

[75]Cf. Williams, *Arius*, 112.

[76]Cf. Stead ("The Platonism of Arius," 30): "Arius no doubt conceived himself to be reasserting traditional Christian positions which Origen and his followers had obscured: the absolute primacy of the Father, and the importance of sacred history."

[77]Williams (*Arius*, 244) comments on the denial of a temporal generation of the Son: "Rather paradoxically, the denial of a 'history' of transactions in God focuses attention on the history of God with us in the world: God has no *story* but that of Jesus of Nazareth and the covenant of which he is the seal. It is a matter of historical fact that the Nicene *verus Deus* was the stimulus to a clarification of the *verus homo* in the century and a half after the council: the Word as God is the condition of there being a human identity which is the ministering, crucified and risen saviour, Jesus Christ; but the existence of Jesus is not an episode in the biography of the Word. It remains obstinately—and crucially—a fact of our world and our world's limits."

The Creed of Nicaea and Eusebius of Caesarea

An interesting feature of the letter of Alexander and that of Arius to Alexander is that they both present a statement of faith. In itself this is not surprising, for they were, after all, attempting to clarify their respective theological positions. However, that they do this, and how they do it, as declarative statements,[78] is extremely important in the development of the form and use of creeds. From the end of the second century, many writers, such as Irenaeus and Tertullian, had appealed to doctrinal summaries, the "canon of truth" or "canon of faith" (*regula veritatis/fidei*), statements of doctrine formulated in an *ad hoc* manner during the course of theological controversy.[79] These "canons of truth" were not, strictly speaking, declarative confessions of faith, but rather working guidelines, whose wording was not fixed but flexible, varying even within the work of one author. What was important was not so much the wording involved, but the faith expressed, whose acceptable parameters the canon attempted to delineate and articulate.[80] There also exists, from the end of the second century onwards, evidence for the widespread use of baptismal interrogations, questions about the faith to be asked of catechumens before their baptism.[81] Although these inquiries evoke an affirmative response, neither the question nor the response is, in the strict sense, a declarative statement or confession of faith, a creed. It does seem, however, that, especially in Rome, from the middle of the third century, such creeds were known and even perhaps used in baptism.[82] Nevertheless, the

[78]Arius: "We recognize (οἴδαμεν) one God . . ." (Urk. 6.2); Alexander: "We believe (πιστεύομεν) in one unbegotten Father . . ." (Urk. 14.46).

[79]For the "canon of truth," see Behr, *Way to Nicaea*, 17–48.

[80]Cf. R. P. C. Hanson ("Dogma and Formula in the Fathers," *SP* 13.2 [Berlin, 1975]: 169–84, at 183): "The theologians who were most responsible for fixing these dogmas in their traditional form had an undoctrinaire and flexible attitude to formulae, were well aware of the inadequacy and limitations of language in expressing propositions about God, and were more concerned with the doctrine expressed by the language than the language itself."

[81]For Rome, see Cyprian *Ep.* 69 (70).7.1–2 (on Novatian's practice); North Africa, Tertullian *On Baptism* 6; *On the Crown* 3; Palestine, Origen *Homilies on Numbers* 5.1; for Cappadocia, Cyprian *Ep.* 74 (75).10 (from Firmilian of Caesarea); Alexandria, Eusebius, *EH* 7.9.2 (citing Dionysius of Alexandria).

[82]The existence of the Old Roman Creed (R) prior to the middle of the fourth century has recently been put in question. Cf. W. Kinzig and M. Vinzent, "Recent Research on the Origin of the Creed," *JTS* n.s. 50, no. 2 (1999): 535–59; and, together with C. Markschies, *Tauffragen und Bekenntnis: Studien zur sogennanten* Traditio Apostolica, *zu den* Interrogationes de fide *und zum Römischen Glaubensbekenntnis* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyters, 1998). They argue that the earliest testimony to R, the letter of Marcellus to Julius of Rome (Frag. 129 K-H, dated to 341), is in fact the source of later restatements of R. The arguments of Vinzent and Kinzig have been subjected to a thorough criticism by L. H. Westra,

statements of faith offered by Arius and Alexander, together with the conciliar creeds produced during the fourth century, though phrased in a declarative form, have more in common with the earlier canons of truth, as attempts to state, in a controversial context, the parameters for correct faith. During the course of the fourth century, however, largely through the championing of Athansius, the Creed of Nicaea became detached from its original context, as rule of faith in a particular controversy and, as a declarative confession, was elevated to a more universal plane. This process continued even more clearly with the Creed of Constantinople, when it became part of the baptismal and liturgical life of the church.[83] In this way, the creed lost its original *ad hoc* character and became a standard and universal point of reference, fixed even in its very wording.

It is possible to see in the creeds presented during the course of the controversy a dialectical process at work, what Kinzig and Vinzent have called a "building-block model." The workings of this model are guided by two basic principles: first, an "anti-logic" principle, in which "the author or authors of a rule of faith or of a confession, for diplomatic reasons or in an effort to reach agreement or, on the contrary, to draw a line, usually drew on creedal 'building blocks' provided by their *opponents* . . . [taking] over their opponents' themes, terms, categories and partly even formulae in order directly to correct offensive passages, to abbreviate, to supplement etc."; and, second, "the principle of tradition," according to which "further material was used for underpinning one's own hypotheses which was mostly acceptable to both sides."[84] As with a child's building blocks, this approach allows "for considerable freedom in rearranging and recombining the pieces with a view to the relevant *Vorlage* [model], to tradition and to one's own intention."[85] After

The Apostles' Creed: Origin, History, and Some Early Commentaries (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 21–72. Westra suggests that the Trinitarian pattern, found in the rules of truth and baptismal interrogations, became fused with the shorter declarative confessions regarding Christ (i.e., "Jesus is Lord") some time prior to the middle of the third century, resulting in the predecessor of R (the "proto-R"), which spread thereafter throughout the Latin Church.

[83]Cf. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (London: Longman, 1972), 344–57.

[84]Kinzig and Vinzent, "Recent Research on the Origin of the Creed," 555–56, with the important qualification: "The model suggested here is, however, not meant to have worked like a 'method' which was at that time, as it were, consciously used for composing creeds. Rather the model offers a suitable approach to modern scholars better to reconstruct the circumstances in which the creeds were composed, to determine both opposing views to which creeds react and traditions on which they fall back and, finally, to identify 'redactors', 'editors,' or 'authors'."

[85]Ibid., 556.

Alexander and Arius stated their own rules of faith, the next major step was the Council of Antioch, early in 325, which attempted to resolve the controversy by promulgating its own declarative creed.[86] This statement is both the earliest extant conciliar confession of faith and also the first creed to conclude with a number of anathemas. It echoes in part Alexander's own statement of faith, but seems to have been consciously expanded, perhaps on the basis of the baptismal formula (cf. Mt 28.19) and the baptismal interrogations, for unlike the statements produced by Alexander and Arius, the Creed of Antioch is structured around the three articles of faith. The Creed of Antioch seems, in turn, to have been the basis for the statement of faith presented by Eusebius of Caesarea to the Council of Nicaea, which subsequently promulgated a creed similar in various ways to that of Eusebius.[87]

Three reminiscences of the drafting of the Creed of Nicaea, by eyewitnesses, indicate that it was indeed drawn up in such a dialectical manner. Athanasius, writing several decades after the council, describes how the original intention was to keep as close as possible to scriptural language. But, when it became clear that Eusebius of Nicomedia and other supporters of Arius also agreed to such language, the term *homoousios*, which they found completely unacceptable, was introduced.[88] Writing only a few years after the council, Eustathius of Antioch, in a passage preserved by Theodoret, describes how the supporters of Arius tried to make the first move in having their position adopted, but were overturned:

> When the great council gathered at Nicaea . . . as the manner of the faith was examined (ὡς δὲ ἐξητεῖτο τῆς πίστεως ὁ τρόπος), the document (τὸ γράμμα) of Eusebius was brought forward as clear evidence of blasphemy. It was read before all, and immediately occasioned great grief to the audience, on account of its deviation, and delivered irremediable shame on the writer. Since the think-tank (ἐργαστήριον) of the Eusebians had been clearly convicted, and the impious document torn up in the sight of all, some [of them], intriguing under the pretence of peace, silenced all the most able

[86]Letter of the Council of Antioch (Urk. 18.8–13).

[87]Cf. Kinzig and Vinzent, "Recent Research on the Origin of the Creed," 552–55. The point made by Kelly (*Creeds*, 219), and echoed by many since, that the difference between Eusebius' creed and that of Nicaea in the most insignificant details demonstrates that they are from two different base models, presumes a concern for verbal detail that is not evident at this stage in the fourth century.

[88]Athanasius *Nicaea* 19–20.

> speakers; and the Ariomaniacs, fearing lest they should be excommunicated by so great a council, sprang forward to anathematise the condemned doctrines, signing the agreed statements (συμφώνοις γράμμασιν).[89]

There is little doubt that the Eusebius in question here is Eusebius of Nicomedia; he and his supporters are ubiquitously described by the supporters of Nicaea as "the Eusebians." Ambrose claims to preserve a line from a letter of Eusebius of Nicomedia that was read to the council, stating that "if, indeed, we say that the Son of God is uncreated (*increatum*), then we are beginning to declare that he is *homoousios* with the Father."[90] According to Ambrose, it was this argument that provoked the council, in return, to adopt the term *homoousios*. It is noteworthy that there is no mention of any intervention by Emperor Constantine in either of the recollections mentioned so far.

Even closer in time to the Council of Nicaea, and, in fact, our most important, though clearly biased, evidence for what happened there, is the letter which Eusebius of Caesarea wrote to his flock shortly after the council.[91] As he had very recently been placed under provisional condemnation by the Council of Antioch, Eusebius was naturally eager to justify himself before this larger and more important gathering. He did this, presumably at some early stage in the council, by presenting "a document concerning his faith."[92] Having been vindicated, Eusebius then needed to convince his flock that he had not betrayed his convictions. Thus, after his opening greetings, in which he implies that his flock had already heard about what had happened, he states that he will send his own document and "the second document which they issued after they added to my words" (Urk. 22.1). For his audience's benefit, Eusebius prefaced his statement by affirming the unquestionably traditional and scriptural character of his profession:

> As we have received from the bishops before us and in the first catechization, and when we received baptism, and as we have learned from the divine Scripture, and as we believed and taught in the office of presbyter and bishop itself, and thus now believing, we report to you our faith. It is this:
>
> We believe in one God Father Almighty Maker of all, seen and unseen;

[89]Theodoret *EH* 1.8.1–3.

[90]Ambrose *On the Faith* 3.15 (Urk. 21).

[91]Eusebius of Caesarea, Letter to his Church concerning the Council of Nicaea (Urk. 22).

[92]Ibid., (Urk. 22.1): τὴν ὑφ' ἡμῶν . . . περὶ πίστεως γραφήν.

> And in one Lord Jesus Christ the Word of God, God of God, Light of Light, Life of Life, only-begotten Son, firstborn of all creation, begotten from the Father before all ages, through whom all things have come into being; who was incarnate for our salvation, and spent his life (πολιτευσάμενον) among men, and suffered and rose on the third day, and ascended to the Father and will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead;
>
> And we believe in one Holy Spirit;
>
> Believing that each of these is and exists (εἶναι καὶ ὑπάρχειν), the Father truly Father and Son truly Son and Holy Spirit truly Holy Spirit, as our Lord said when he sent his disciples to preach, "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."[93]

Following what has been said regarding creedal development, it is not necessary to take Eusebius' claim that he learnt this faith in his catechism and at his baptism as referring to an official "baptismal creed" of Caesarea. If such existed, there would be no need to repeat it here in this letter to his flock. It is, more plausibly, to be taken as an affirmation that what he learnt and received is the faith itself, of which what follows is an expression, which he also learnt from the Scriptures and continues to teach in his ecclesiastical office.[94] The creed that follows is a clear statement of faith, yet devoid of any reference to the contentious issues of the day. However, in his final clause, that "each of these is and exists," Eusebius manages to affirm the continued distinct existence of the Father, Son, and Spirit, while tactfully refraining from using his characteristic formula of "three *hypostases*." Eusebius concludes his presentation of his own creed by reiterating the point that he had always thought thus (Urk. 22.6).

According to Eusebius, this creed was welcomed by the emperor as being "good and worthy," and "most orthodox" (Urk 22.2, 7). Affirming that he himself also thought thus, the emperor ordered all to subscribe to it and assent to its teachings with, however, the addition of the word *homoousios* (Urk. 22.7). Whether this was because Constantine could see that a number of important bishops desired something of the sort, as Eustathius and Athanasius

[93]Urk. 22.4–5.

[94]Although Kelly presupposes that there was a "baptismal creed of Caesarea," this point is noted (*Creeds*, 221): "The emphasis, in other words, is on the old inherited faith of the Church, taught by the bishops preceding him and ultimately deriving from the Lord Himself, much more than on the Caesarean creed considered as a document."

suggest, is not indicated. According to Eusebius, it was "on the pretext of adding 'consubstantial'" (προφάσει τῆς τοῦ ὁμοουσίου προσθήκης, Urk. 22.7), that the council drew up its own creed:

> We believe in one God Father Almighty Maker of all things, seen and unseen.
>
> And in one Lord, Jesus Christ the Son of God, begotten from the Father, Only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father, through whom all things came to be, things on heaven and things on earth; who because of us humans and our salvation came down and was incarnate and became human, suffered and arose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, is coming to judge the living and the dead:
>
> And in one Holy Spirit.
>
> And those who say that "there was once when he was not" and "before being begotten he did not exist," and that "he came into existence from nothing" or who affirm that the Son of God is of another *hypostasis* or *ousia*, or mutable or changeable, these the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes.[95]

The council clearly went further than adding the term "consubstantial," so provoking Eusebius' annoyance. Not that Eusebius expected the council merely to insert the term "consubstantial" in his otherwise untouched his creed. Kelly rightly points out that despite his earlier reference to "a second document which they issued after they added to my words," and the way in which he introduces this creed, as having been produced "on the pretext of adding 'consubstantial,'" the focus of Eusebius' concern is not on the precise wording, but on "the *doctrine* which he had professed to the satisfaction of the council, the only fresh feature being the nuance introduced by the use of the term *homoousios*."[96] However, rather than supposing a different base model (Syro-Palestinian rather than Caesarean, as Kelly would have it), it is more likely that the council used the "building-blocks" of Eusebius' creed, as well as other traditional material, to produce a document which was not only differently worded, but, especially in its anathema, of a very different theological orientation. It is this theological difference that

[95]For the most complete critical edition of the text, see G. L. Dossetti, *Il símbolo di Nicea e di Costantinopoli* (Rome: Herder, 1967), 226–41.

[96]Kelly, *Creeds*, 221.

provoked Eusebius to introduce it with a note of indignation: "They produced this document!"[97]

There are a number of key assertions in the Creed of Nicaea that strike at the heart of Arius' theology and that were clearly hard for Eusebius, who had lent his support to Arius, to swallow. First, after stating that Jesus Christ is begotten from the Father, and describing him as "only-begotten" (μονογενῆ),[98] it stipulates that this means that he is "from the substance of the Father" (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός). In other words, the begetting of the Son by the Father, which Arius was happy to speak of, must not, according to the council, be interpreted as Arius had done, in terms of the Son being brought into being by the will of the Father alone, created out of nothing and so possessing no community of being with the Father. The implication of this, which is spelled out later in the creed, is that the Son possesses the same kind of being as the Father. Following on from this, the creed not only affirms that the Son is "God of God, light of light," as Eusebius had done, but more specifically "true God of true God" (θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ). This specifically excludes any attempt to speak of the Son as being a "lesser" God than the Father, a second divinity or some kind of intermediary demiurge. Rather, in whatever way the Father is thought of as God, this is to be held also of the Son. The third point, following this, is that the Son is "begotten not made" (γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα). Rather than allowing the equivocation to which Arius resorted ("created but not as one of the creatures"), an exclusive contrast is laid down: if begotten, then not created; if these two terms are to be applied to Jesus Christ (following Prov 8.22–25), then they cannot be applied in the same respect. That the Son is begotten, not created, by the Father, and indeed from his very substance, implies that the Son is internal, as it were, to the being of God as Father, rather than a product of a deliberately undertaken action. For this not to be taken as subjecting God to a kind of necessity to beget requires the transposition of how the being, and freedom, of God is understood, from a rather anthropomorphically conceived agent, determining a course of action with freedom of choice in some kind

[97]Cf. Kelly, *Creeds*, 222, modifying a point made by H. Lietzmann ("Symbolstudien XIII," *ZNTW* 24 (1925), 193–202, at 201). The indignation of the venerable and scholarly bishop of Caesarea at the creed produced by the council is echoed, at the other end of the fourth century, by the contempt that Gregory of Nazianzus, another venerable and scholarly bishop, had for the creed produced by the Council of Constantinople. See below, p. 374.

[98]On this term, see Behr, *Way to Nicaea*, 68.

of temporal sequence, to the correlativity of being implied by Origen's teaching of the eternal generation of the Son by the Father, so that God is identified precisely as Father of his Son.

The community of being implied here is pointed to by the fourth noteworthy point made by the Creed of Nicaea, that the Son is "consubstantial with the Father" (ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρί). Brief mention of the history of the term "consubstantial" has already been made earlier in this chapter.[99] Prior to the council, the term did not carry a precise meaning, but had been used in various, more or less loose, ways. Neither does the term appear to be an integral part of anyone's theological vocabulary. Although Arius had rejected the term in a manner which suggests that Alexander might have been exploring its usage (Urk. 6.5, cited above), neither the letter of Alexander himself, nor the circular letter (the ἑνὸς σώματος), actually use the term. The story reported by Philostorgius, which has Alexander and Ossius meeting in Nicomedia prior to the council and resolving to foist the term "consubstantial" on the council,[100] is not really plausible and, indeed, is contradicted by Athanasius' report that the council only came to use such terms after it was found impossible to compose a creed solely in scriptural language. All the indications point to the term being introduced into the creed because it was known that Arius and his most ardent supporters objected to it. Moreover, that the term carried no precise meaning meant that it could be interpreted in a variety of ways and was therefore suitable for Constantine's purpose of reuniting the church. Those bishops who had hesitated in supporting Arius,[101] and even some of those who had supported him, could be persuaded to endorse the creed if the term were explained to their satisfaction. And this, according to Eusebius, is precisely what Constantine himself attempted to do by providing an interpretation of the term that removed the basis for the objections typically raised against it. That it was not part of anyone's technical vocabulary is then shown by the fact that once the immediate purpose of the council had been achieved, no one, not even Athanasius, used the term for several decades.[102]

[99]Cf. p. 137 above.

[100]Philostorgius *EH* 1.7.

[101]As noted earlier, a number of the "Lucianists" regarded Arius as having fallen into error (cf. Philostorgius *EH* 2.3), and it is possible that Arius tried to enlist these by means of his *Thalia* (cf. above n. 46).

[102]See above p. 23 n. 5.

In addition to producing a positive statement of theology radically different from that of Arius, the anathema appended to the Creed of Nicaea directly and relentlessly attacked Arius' position. As with the anathema appended to the Creed of Antioch several months earlier, two main interrelated concerns lie behind the catch words or slogans singled out for condemnation. The first concerns the origin of the Son. Any suggestion that he is "subsequent" to the Father or does not derive from the Father is excluded. The second point regards the implication, drawn out by his Arius' opponents, that if the Son is to be thought of as a creature, then he must be "mutable and changeable," or, as the Creed of Antioch had put it, "immutable by his self-determining will."[103] The most remarkable feature of Nicaea's anathema, however, has to be the condemnation of anyone who claims that the Son is "of another *hypostasis* or *ousia*" than the Father. The ambiguous phrasing of this assertion could be taken to imply that these two terms are to be treated as equivalent. There were certainly bishops at the council who were distinctly wary of asserting two or three *hypostases* and would have preferred (as in the preliminary draft of the Westerners' statement of faith at the Council of Serdica in 343) to affirm that Father and Son are one *hypostasis*.[104] Yet Alexander himself had spoken of the Father and Son as being distinct "by *hypostasis*."[105] And it is very unlikely that the majority of Eastern bishops would have accepted this clause had it been taken to imply that Father and Son were one entity. Rather, it seems much more likely that this highly elliptical assertion was intended both to preserve the Son's derivation from the Father (and not of another *hypostasis*), and also to maintain that he is not a different kind of being (or of another *ousia*). Nevertheless, it is certainly an awkward expression, and it is not surprising that when Athanasius quotes the Nicene Creed several decades later, he reduces the clause to include only the word *ousia*.[106]

As we saw earlier, Eusebius was clearly not happy with the creed. On some points, such as the affirmation that Jesus Christ is "true God of true God," it directly contradicted what he had earlier held.[107] Moreover, its general orientation was quite different from his own theological outlook. Accordingly, when

[103]The Synodal Letter of the Council of Antioch (Urk. 18.13).

[104]Cf. pp. 80–81 above.

[105]Urk. 14.38, cited at p. 129 n. 16.

[106]Athanasius *Nicaea* 20.5.

[107]Cf. Eusebius of Caesarea, Letter to Euphrantion of Balanea (Urk. 3.3).

writing to his community, who had already heard what had happened, he assures them that he did not subscribe to this creed without having subjected it to a minute examination, weighing the sense given to each of its phrases and appealing to the imperial interpretation of its clauses wherever possible. Already prior to quoting and discussing the creed, when describing how Constantine had insisted that the term "consubstantial" be introduced into it, Eusebius claims that the emperor himself gave his own interpretation of the term:

> . . . *homoousios*, was added, which he himself interpreted, saying that the Son might not be said to be *homoousios* according to the affections of bodies, and is from the Father neither according to division nor according to a cutting off, for the immaterial, intellectual, and incorporeal nature is unable to subsist in some corporeal affection, but it is befitting to think of such things in a divine and ineffable manner. (Urk 22.7)

In this way, Constantine, acknowledging the reason why Arius and others had rejected the term, explicitly rejected any materialistic understanding of God in which the Son might be understood as a "part" detached from the Father. However, he does not, wisely, give any positive indication of what the term might mean, other than that the Son is "from the Father." Eusebius, when examining the term himself, repeats the same caution but also suggests that " 'consubstantial with the Father' indicates that the Son of God bears no resemblance to originated creatures but that he is alike in every way only to the Father who has begotten" (Urk. 22.12–13). Eusebius also makes the same point regarding the phrase "from the substance of the Father," taking it to mean simply that "the Son is from the Father, not part of his substance" (Urk. 22.10). While the council did not intend, by this phrase, that the Son be thought of as "part of his substance," they certainly intended more than the much more flexible "from." Concerning the clause "begotten not made," Eusebius argues that it was introduced because the term "made" is a common designation of those creatures made through the Son, so that "he is not something made similar to things which came into existence through him, but rather he happens to be of a better substance in comparison to anything made, which the divine oracles teach to have been begotten from the Father, because the method of begetting happens to be unutterable and beyond the understanding of every originated nature" (Urk. 22.11). In other words, rather than seeing these words as applying to the Son in different ways (e.g., the Son

of God is himself begotten from the Father, his natural Son, whose human nature is nevertheless created), Eusebius distinguishes between the ways in which the term "made" is applied to the Son and to creatures made through the Son and implies that as "made" applies to the Son in an incomparable manner, beyond our comprehension, it can also be spoken of as "begetting." Both terms are still regarded by Eusebius as being more or less appropriate metaphors, which apply univocally to the Son himself.

Finally, Eusebius accepts the anathema on the grounds that it is "harmless, as it prohibits non-scriptural words, from which nearly every confusion and anarchy of the church occurred" (Urk. 22.15). Thus, as the expressions "from nothing" and "once was not" do not occur in Scripture, it is not unreasonable to prohibit their usage (ibid.). More interesting is his justification for anathematizing the assertion that "before he was begotten, he was not," which, in positive terms, amounts to an affirmation of the eternal generation of the Son. Eusebius points out that the confession of all is that "the Son of God was before the birth in the flesh" (Urk. 22.16). How this pre-existence is to be understood, however, is really the point at issue. Once again, according to Eusebius, Constantine intervened:

> Already our Emperor, the most beloved of God, affirmed in a discourse that even according to his divine generation he was before all the ages, since even before he was begotten in actuality, he was, in potentiality, in the Father ingenerately, since the Father is always the Father, both as King always and as Savior always, in potentiality being all things and being always in the same respect and in like manner.[108]

Although it sounds that Eusebius is only giving the gist of Constantine's speech, these words are likely to reflect Constantine's own, for it is improbable that Eusebius himself would have spoken of the Son as being "in potentiality in the Father ingenerately" prior to his birth "in actuality." Both sides, as Eusebius noted, were committed to the real, actual, pre-existence of the Son of God prior to his birth in the flesh, whether as a distinct being who exists prior to being born in the flesh (beginning to animate a body) or as the Lord Jesus Christ, the active subject throughout Scripture and the Son

[108]Urk. 22.16: κατὰ τὴν ἔνθεον αὐτοῦ γέννησιν τὸ πρὸ πάντων αἰώνων εἶναι αὐτόν, ἐπεὶ καὶ πρὶν ἐνεργείᾳ γεννηθῆναι δυνάμει ἦν ἐν τῷ πατρὶ ἀγεννήτως, ὄντος τοῦ πατρὸς ἀεὶ πατρὸς ὡς καὶ βασιλέως ἀεὶ καὶ σωτῆρος ἀεί, δυνάμει πάντα ὄντος, ἀεί τε κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχοντος.

eternally begotten from the Father. It seems that Constantine's words attempt to give expression to the latter position without fully understanding it. However, they also provided a refuge for those who wanted to avoid the teaching of the eternal generation of the Son yet needing, at the same time, to affirm the existence of the Son prior to his birth in the flesh, the birth "in actuality," while skirting around the issue of whether God is Father prior to the begetting of his Son.

The letter of Eusebius of Caesarea provides the earliest interpretation of the Creed of Nicaea. It offers a precious glimpse of how one of the most venerable theologians of the period, who could claim a prestigious theological lineage yet who had lent his support to Arius, found a way of interpreting a creed that he clearly thought objectionable in such a way that it could appear as tolerable, and laying claim to the emperor's backing no less![109] While the Creed of Nicaea clearly did lay out some very important structural elements, more theological reflection was needed to give flesh to its bones.

[109]Cf. Hanson (*Search*, 166): "Eusebius however enables us to see how somebody who was by no means an opponent of Arius' views could have persuaded himself to accept N [the Creed of Nicaea]. What was needed was a good deal of disingenuousness without the necessity of direct mendacity."

5

Athanasius

Although the fourth century became known as the period of the "Arian Controversy," the dominating figure was not Arius but Athanasius. Arius had died an inglorious death and was largely ignored thereafter both by those labeled "Arian" and also by their opponents, for whom he was, in Wiles's memorable phrase, "not even a whipping boy but the whip."[1] Athanasius, on the other hand, had become a legendary figure, even within his own lifetime. Most of the main events of Athanasius' lengthy and tumultuous career have already been narrated in Chapter Three; that they are recounted there is testimony to his significance in determining the course of the fourth century. He was probably born in the latter half of 299, for soon after he was consecrated as bishop of Alexandria, on June 8, 328, succeeding Alexander, whom he had accompanied as a young deacon to the Council of Nicaea, his election was contested on various grounds, amongst which was that he was too young.[2] By the time of his death, on May 2, 373, Athanasius had been bishop of Alexandria for forty-six years, during which he was exiled five times for a total of some seventeen years.[3] These lengthy periods of exile proved fortuitous for Athanasius. His time in the West gave him the opportunity to forge strong links with those he encountered there, especially with Julius of Rome and his fellow exile Marcellus of Ancyra.[4] The time he spent

[1]Wiles, "Attitudes to Arius," 43.

[2]For the charge, see the *Index* (to the *Festal Letters*) 3. The minimum age for ordination was set at thirty years (or twenty-nine on inclusive reckoning) by Canon 11 of the Council of Neocaesarea (held sometime between 314 and 325), which probably reflects general practice. A later Coptic fragment (O. von Lemm, "Koptische Fragmente zur Patriarchengeschichte Alexandriens," *Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St. Pétersbourg*, series 7, tome 36, no. 11 [1888], 20; Frag. P5 [text], 36 [translation and discussion]), would place Athanasius' birth in 295, though the evidence of the *Index* seems preferable. Cf. Barnes, *Athanasius*, 10.

[3]Following Barnes (*Athanasius*, xi–xii) Athanasius was in exile: (1) November 7, 335–June 337; (2) April 16, 339–summer 345, though he returned to Alexandria only on October 21, 346; (3) February 356–February 26, 362; (4) October 362–February 14, 364; (5) October 5, 365–February 366.

[4]On the importance of Athanasius' time in Rome, see Chapter One and M. R. Barnes, "The Fourth Century as Trinitarian Canon."

in the Egyptian desert provided occasion to develop close relationships with the ascetics living in the desert, a bond which was to be mutually beneficial. Antony himself made an appearance in Alexandria in a show of support for Athanasius, and thereafter the monks of Egypt were amongst the most loyal supporters of the bishops of Alexandria. And, in return, through such works as the *Life of Antony*, Athanasius contributed significantly to ascetic theology, so making his own contribution to the development of monasticism, as well as popularizing its ideals and propagating them far beyond the borders of Egypt. Even more important was the theology that Athanasius expounded during the stormy course of his life, developing the central intuitions of his predecessor, Alexander, considered in the last chapter, into a full exposition of Nicene theology. These factors and others projected a *persona* that commanded universal respect. A few years before his death, Athanasius received a series of very flattering letters from Basil of Caesarea (who was born after Athanasius had become bishop), requesting that he support his plans to reconcile the splintered supporters of Nicaea.[5] But, by this time, Athanasius was no longer engaged in affairs outside Egypt and declined even to respond. Then seven years after his death, on May 2, 380, Gregory of Nazianzus delivered a eulogy on "The Great Athanasius" to demonstrate, with an eye to the Egyptians who had arrived in the capital, his alignment with the renown bishop of Alexandria.[6] Thus, on the eve of the Council of Constantinople, Athanasius was canonized and an image of him enshrined that portrayed him as a steadfast saint, a model pastor, and an unerring theologian, whose very name was synonymous with orthodoxy.

The importance of Athanasius for the fourth century is inseparable from the fact that the majority of our information about the struggles of the fourth century comes either from his own pen or from those of his supporters. It is principally from his writings that church historians, such as Socrates and Sozomen, constructed their accounts of the fourth century. A few sources do record other traditions, such as the historians Sabinus of Heraclea, whose work was used by both Socrates and Sozomen,[7] and Philostorgius, whose history survives by being excerpted and paraphrased by Photius, and of course

[5]Basil of Caesarea *Epp.* 61, 66, 67, 69, 80, 82. Cf. J. T. Lienhard, "Basil of Caesarea, Marcellus of Ancyra, and 'Sabellius,'" *CH* 58 (1989): 157–67.

[6]Cf. J. McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 265–69.

[7]On the relationship between Socrates, Sozomen, and Sabinus, see Barnes, *Athanasius*, 205–8.

the conciliar statements against Athanasius and his responses to them. However, the predominance of the material in support of Athanasius has preserved, even into modern times, the image of a saint struggling alone *contra mundum*. Gibbon, who is usually fairly scathing about the history and figures of Christianity, used his eloquence instead to praise Athanasius:

> Amidst the storms of persecution, the archbishop of Alexandria was patient of labour, jealous of fame, careless of safety; and although his mind was tainted with the contagion of fanaticism, Athanasius displayed a superiority of character and abilities, which would have qualified him, far better than the degenerate sons of Constantine, for the government of a great monarchy.[8]

Harnack also admired Athanasius, for while he might have "erased every trait of the historical Jesus of Nazareth" (whatever that meant to Harnack), Athanasius nevertheless "saved the character of Christianity as a religion of the living fellowship with God."[9] He was even prepared to concede that "his stern procedure in reference to the Melitians" may have been a "necessity," for "an energetic bishop who had to represent a great cause could not be anything else but imperious." Thus, Harnack concludes, "If we measure him by the standard of his time, we can discover nothing ignoble or mean about him."[10] Other nineteenth-century scholars, such as J. A. Moehler, Cardinal Newman, J. M. Neale, H. M. Gwatkin, W. Bright, and A. Robertson, to mention a few, are even more effusive in their praise for Athanasius.[11]

The standards of his time, however, are not necessarily our own. Although Athanasius has had plenty of admirers during the twentieth century, modern study of Athanasius has often taken quite a different turn. This critical turn really begins with Schwartz and his seven studies on "the history of Athanasius" published at the beginning of the twentieth century.[12] Examining the controversies in which Athanasius was involved, primarily from original

[8]E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. 21, ed., with introduction and appendices, D. Womersley (Harmondsworth: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1994), vol. 1, 796.

[9]Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. 4, 45.

[10]Ibid., 62.

[11]For a survey of nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship on the character of Athanasius, see Arnold, *Early Episcopal Career*, 11–23.

[12]Collected together in E. Schwartz, *Zur Geschichte des Athanasius*, Gesammelte Schriften, vol. 3 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1959).

documents, Schwartz came to the conclusion that Athanasius was an unscrupulous propagandist, concerned more with his own status and acquisition of power than with any regard for truth, and that he "operated as a political personality, not as a theologian or dogmatician."[13] The editors of Schwartz's collected works acknowledged his "undisguised antipathy" toward Athanasius but suggested, rather lamely, that this was directed toward the aura of holiness surrounding his image rather than the man himself.[14] However, with the discovery of a private letter dated to late May or early June 335 (*Papyrus London* 1914), never intended for publication and therefore all the more damning, which describes the violence inflicted upon Melitians by supporters of Athanasius, more credence has generally been given to the complaints continually raised against Athanasius in numerous councils during the mid fourth century.[15] Thus, Barnes, for instance, accuses Athanasius of organizing "an ecclesiastical mafia," possessing "a power independent of the emperor which he built up and perpetuated by violence," so that "like a modern gangster, he evoked widespread mistrust, proclaimed total innocence—and usually succeeded in evading conviction on specific charges."[16] In his later work on Athanasius himself, Barnes draws a much more sensitive sketch than such judgments might lead one to expect, despite opening with the disconcerting avowal that "this study starts from the presumption that Athanasius consistently misrepresented central facts about his ecclesial career," in particular about his relationships with the imperial family.[17] At the hands of Barnes, Athanasius regains some of his former stature, as an "Elder Statesman," but in a double-edged manner: "he could not have cut such an impressive figure had he not been conspicuously lacking in the Christian virtues of meekness and humility."[18]

Many charges were raised against Athanasius during the course of his episcopacy, but the one which he could not shake concerned the violence shown towards Ischyras, a presbyter ordained by Colluthus. It was alleged that one of Athanasius' presbyters had overturned Ischyras' altar and broken

[13]Ibid., 318. For a critical assessment of Schwartz' work, see Barnes, *Athanasius*, 2–3.

[14]Schwartz, *Zur Geschichte des Athanasius*, vi.

[15]For the letter, see H. I. Bell, *Jews and Christians in Egypt* (London: 1924), 53–71. Arnold (*Early Career*, 62–89, 180–1) attempts to discredit the manner in which *London Papyrus* 1914 has been used and so minimize its evidential significance, though not really satisfactorily nor providing a viable alternative.

[16]T. D. Barns, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 230.

[17]Barnes, *Athanasius*, 2.

[18]Ibid., 1.

his chalice, precisely the kind of violence that is independently witnessed to by *Papyrus London* 1914. It was for this that Athanasius was deposed by the Council of Tyre in 335, a verdict which was recognized by most of the Eastern bishops for the next couple of decades. The accuracy of this charge is now impossible to determine, though, as Hanson observes, Athanasius never actually denies that Ischyras was assaulted but only that he was not actually a presbyter, for Colluthus had never been consecrated a bishop by anyone other than himself: "In short, his opponents cried 'Violence and sacrilege' and Athanasius replies, 'No: only violence.'"[19] It is also noteworthy that despite Athanasius' constant strategy of insisting that the various charges raised against him were simply a veiled doctrinal opposition, he was never actually formally charged with heresy. It is his insistent claim that behind all the accusations lay an "Arian conspiracy" that contributes to the picture of the saint being attacked from all sides for his orthodoxy.

Although written before the papyrological evidence came to light, Harnack's assessment is probably the most balanced: that judged "by the standard of his time, we can discover nothing ignoble or mean about him." He certainly displayed courage and tenacity of purpose. In addition, he was also capable of being extremely congenial when needed, so that he was able, through personal interview, to win over Constantine and Constantius. The standards of his time may have tolerated more violence in the exercise of his purpose than we might do, yet even granting this, there is no indication, as Hanson points out, that he was "lastingly vindictive," for by the time of his death, "he had been reconciled to almost all of his early enemies."[20] Athanasius may indeed have established an undesirable precedent, which later patriarchs of Alexandria followed in a much more questionable manner. Nevertheless, this shadow side to the legendary figure does not do much to reduce his significance for Christian history and theology: Nicene Christianity exists by virtue of his constancy and vision.

Athanasius' earliest written work, the double treatise *Against the Pagans—On the Incarnation*, is also the best introduction to his theology, providing a clear statement of his theological vision and thus the proper context for understanding the particular points he defends, and explores further, in his anti-Arian writings. Finally, this chapter will conclude by looking at the

[19]Hanson, *Search*, 257.
[20]Ibid., 242.

exegetical and ascetic dimensions of his vision, as treated in the *Letter to Marcellinus* and his *Life of Antony*.

Against the Pagans and *On the Incarnation*

The date of the works *Against the Pagans* and *On the Incarnation* has been the matter of some debate. The absence of any reference to Arius in these treatises has been taken by some to indicate a date for the works prior to the outbreak of the controversy, though this would mean that they were written at an exceptionally young age. Others have taken the opening words of the first treatise, which speak of not having the works of his teachers to hand, as an indication that they were written while in exile, most plausibly his first, in Trier from 335 to 337, before Athanasius began to write against the "Arians." However, these opening comments could readily be a literary affectation. Recently, Anatolios has argued very strongly for a date, accepted here, in the early years of his episcopacy, a period when the question of Arius appeared to have been settled and other issues, considered below, needed to be addressed.[21] The works themselves are almost catechetical pieces. Toward the end of *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius claims to have provided "an elementary instruction and an outline of the faith in Christ and his divine manifestation to us" (*Inc.* 56). And, indeed, the work is not a treatise on disputed points of abstract theology, but presents, in simple yet elegant prose, a clear exposition of Athanasius' theological vision, one which is based on key intuitions that he had learnt from Alexander and that had been upheld at Nicaea, and which continued thereafter to drive his struggle to give fuller expression to Nicene theology. In a comprehensive and compelling manner, Athanasius expounds the central mystery of Christian theology, the Incarnation, but in a manner that embraces all aspects of God's work, from creation to recreation. Here, if anywhere, is the "real" Nicene theology, using Newman's terms as borrowed by Vaggione, "not doctrine *per se*, but doctrine imagined,"[22] that which was capable of inspiring faith in real men and women, giving flesh, as it were, to the words of doctrine.

It would be hard to overstate the importance of these texts; *On the Incarnation*, in particular, had a massive impact on later theology. It could almost

[21] Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 26–9.

[22] Vaggione, *Eunomius*, 103. Cf. pp. 10–11 above.

be described as the defining exposition of Nicene theology, certainly as understood by the later Byzantine tradition. However, for this reason, it also has to be read very carefully, if it is not to be misread. It is often expounded from the perspective of the "divine dilemma": What is God to do now that man has fallen into sin and death? To which the answer is presented in terms of the work's most oft-quoted line, "he became man so that we might become god" (*Inc.* 54). As such, it is read as the first in a long line of works attempting to explain why God became man, the Eastern equivalent of Anselm's *Cur Deus homo* (1098), and as another voice in the debate between Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–74) and Johannes Duns Scotus (c. 1265–1308) concerning whether the Incarnation would have happened if man had not fallen. Yet, even if Athanasius poses a rhetorical question that eventually leads to such speculation, it is anachronistic to read his works in this way. More specifically, it limits the scope of the term "incarnation" to the becoming flesh of the second person of the Trinity, the Word, by being born of the Virgin Mary, in a manner that does not do justice to Athanasius' work. Athanasius did not begin his theological reflection with an already elaborated notion of an "immanent Trinity," and we should be hesitant to approach his works with this presupposition.[23] It is because insufficient attention has been given to how Athanasius himself presents his theological vision that a good deal of modern scholarship has devoted itself to pursuing misguided questions. For instance, if "incarnation" is understood in terms of the Word becoming flesh by being born of Mary, then it may well be a matter of importance to analyze the composition of Jesus Christ, considering whether he possesses a human soul or whether the Word takes the place of the soul, animating his body. However, as is commonly admitted, though with some frustration, Athanasius devotes little space, if any, to such analysis. A further consequence of approaching Athanasius in this manner is that the unity of his theology is fragmented, so that the composition of Christ's being, as it were, is separated from his work of salvation and treated under a different rubric ("Christology" rather than "Soteriology") in a separate chapter. To try to recapture a glimpse of the vision that ensured *On the Incarnation* its place as a classic of Christian literature, it is necessary to examine both these works carefully and in detail.

[23] For the problems, both methodological and theological, involved here, see the Introduction above.

AGAINST THE PAGANS

The first thing to note about these two works is what they themselves say about their purpose. The first part of the double work, *Against the Pagans*, opens by affirming that although "the knowledge of religion and of the truth of things" can be learnt without human teachers, since it is revealed every day, shining more brightly than the sun through the teaching of Christ, yet as he has been asked to expound a little of the Christian faith he will do so. Moreover, while it can be discovered from the words of Holy Scripture, "for the sacred and divinely inspired Scriptures are sufficient for the exposition of the truth," there are also many treatises of blessed teachers, which "if one happens upon them he will gain some notion of the interpretation of the Scriptures (τὴν τῶν γραφῶν ἑρμηνείαν) and will be able to attain the knowledge he desires." This setting of the learning of the knowledge of God in the context of the interpretation of the Scriptures is picked up again at the end of *On the Incarnation*, to form an inclusion, when Athanasius directs his readers back to Scripture so that they "can learn from them more completely and more clearly the accuracy of what has been said" (*Inc.* 56). Athanasius then continues, in *Against the Pagans*, by stating his aim:

> But since we do not have the works of these teachers to hand, we must expound for you in writing what we have learnt from them—I mean the faith in Christ the Savior—that no one may regard the teaching of our doctrine (τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς λόγου) as worthless, or suppose faith in Christ to be irrational (ἄλογον). Such things the pagans misrepresent and scorn, greatly mocking us, though they have nothing other than the Cross of Christ to cite in objection. It is particularly in this respect that one must pity their insensitivity, because in slandering the cross they do not see that its power has filled the whole world, and that through it the effects of the knowledge of God have been revealed to all. For if they had really applied their minds to his divinity they would not have mocked at so great a thing, but would rather have recognized that he was the Savior of the universe and that the cross was not the ruin but the healing of creation. For if, after the Cross, all idolatry has been overthrown, and all demonic activity is put to flight by this sign, and Christ alone is worshipped, and through him the Father is known, and opponents are put to shame while he every day invisibly converts their souls—how then, one might reasonably ask them, is this matter

> still to be considered in human terms, and should one not rather confess that he who ascended the cross is the Word of God and the Savior of the universe? (*Pagans* 1)

As Anatolios has observed, this work, and also *On the Incarnation* which, as we will see, opens with a similar statement, is clearly, first and foremost, an apology for the Cross[24]: Athanasius is going to show that "he who ascended the cross is the Word of God" and that therefore the Christian faith is not "without its word," "irrational" (ἄλογον). Athanasius proposes to demonstrate this by reference to the demise of idolatry and demonic activity, all of which has been vanquished by the Cross, so that Christ alone is now worshipped. Athanasius thus uses idolatry, especially that of the body, as a kind of barometer, measuring the perversity into which humans have fallen, the degree to which their knowledge of God has been lost, and the extent to which the image of God in them has been obscured, the consequence of which is corruption and death. The prevalence of such idolatry, to which the bulk of *Against the Pagans* is given over to describing, demands the drastic solution presented in *On the Incarnation*. The death of idolatry since the advent of Christ demonstrates the power of Christ and his Cross, a power which has filled the whole world, overcoming whatever has separated human beings from God, re-creating them and restoring them to communion with God. The Christian faith therefore does indeed have its own *Logos*, the teaching of which requires the application of the mind, even if the divinity of Christ cannot be perceived when understood in merely human terms.

This particular character of these two works prompts Anatolios to suggest that they were written in the early years of Athanasius' episcopacy, before his exile to Trier. Athanasius' triumphant Christ-centered interpretation of history most plausibly belongs after the conversion of Constantine and, more particularly, after the various controversies have been settled, apparently at least, at Nicaea. Moreover, it is arguable, Anatolios suggests, that in these works "Athanasius is consciously revising the imperialist triumphalism of Eusebius of Caesarea by making sure that the triumph of Constantine is strictly attributed to Christ, to the point of not even mentioning the emperor."[25] The

[24]Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 28.

[25]Ibid., 29. Cf. p. 216, n. 19: "Athanasius may be trying to transfer what Eusebius rendered to Caesar back to God."

occasion for this final triumph may have come about through Constantine, but, Athanasius insists, the victory is Christ's alone.

In the course of recounting at great length the variety and perversity of pagan idolatry, *Against the Pagans* also lays a number of structural elements which are of great importance for understanding the second part of the work. Especially important is his treatment, in the opening chapters, of the origin of idolatry and, toward the end of the work, the relationship between the Creator and creation. Athanasius begins his exposition of the Word of the Cross with the origin of idolatry, emphasizing that idolatry, and evil more generally, is not "from the beginning," that is, is not a proper characteristic of created existence, but is rather a deviation from the right relationship between God and creation:

> Evil has not existed from the beginning, nor even now is it found among the holy ones nor does it exist at all with them. But it was human beings who later began to conceive of it and imagine it in their own likeness. Hence they fashioned for themselves the notion of idols, reckoning what was not as though it were. For God, the creator of the universe and king of all, who is beyond all being and human thought, since he is good and exceedingly noble, has made the human race according to his own (ἰδίαν) image through his own (ἰδίου) Word, our Savior Jesus Christ. He also fashioned the human being to be perceptive and understanding of reality through his similarity to himself, giving him also a conception and knowledge of his own eternity, so that preserving this identity (ταυτότητα) he might never abandon his concept of God or leave the company of the holy ones, but, retaining the grace of him who bestowed it, having also [God's] own power from the Paternal Word (τὴν ἰδίαν ἐκ τοῦ πατρικοῦ λόγου δύναμιν), he might rejoice and converse with the divine (τῷ θείῳ), living an idyllic and truly blessed and immortal life. For having no obstacle to the knowledge of the divine, he continuously contemplates by his purity the image of the Father, God the Word, after whose image he was made; he is awestruck when he grasps the providence which, through the Word, extends to the universe, being raised above the sensual and every bodily appearance, cleaving instead, by the power of his mind, to the divine and intelligible realities in heaven. For when the mind of human beings has no intercourse with bodies, nor has mingled with it, from outside (ἔξω(θεν),

> anything of their desires, but is entirely above them, as it was in the beginning, then, transcending the senses and all human things, it is raised up on high, and beholding the Word sees in him also the Father of the Word, taking pleasure in contemplating him and being renewed by its desire for him. Just as the Holy Scriptures say that the first created of human beings, who was called Adam in Hebrew, at the beginning had his mind fixed on God in unembarrassed boldness, and lived with the holy ones in the contemplation of intelligible reality, which he enjoyed in that place which the holy Moses figuratively (τροπικῶς) called paradise. So purity of soul is sufficient to [reflect and] behold, through itself, God (τὸν θεὸν δι' ἑαυτῆς κατοπτρίζεσθαι, cf. 2 Cor 3.18) as the Lord himself said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." (*Pagans* 2)

Having specified that evil does not belong to God's creation, but rather that it exists when human beings turn from what is truly real to insubstantial fantasies, so giving evil some kind of phantasmagorical existence, Athanasius here provides a description of the proper, original or primary, relationship between God and human beings. Particularly characteristic of this relationship is the interplay between transcendence and immanence. God is transcendent to all creation, "beyond all being and human thought."[26] Yet, his transcendence is not such that it renders his presence impossible. As God is good, Athanasius continues, he has created the human race by his Word, "our Savior Jesus Christ," and through likeness to him granted human beings knowledge of himself, so that by preserving the grace and God's "own power from the Father's Word," they might contemplate the Word and in him behold the Father, continuously being renewed in their desire for him.

It is very striking that Athanasius speaks here, and throughout the work, of "our Savior Jesus Christ" as the one by whom God has made the human race, fashioning it into his own image. Athanasius, it must be remembered, is expounding the Word of the Cross and, as a preliminary aspect of this task, describes the proper character of human existence, as a contrast to the

[26]Though this expression (ὁ ὑπερέκεινα πάσης οὐσίας καὶ ἀνθρωπίνης ἐπινοίας ὑπάρχων) immediately recalls Neoplatonic descriptions of God, based upon Plato's description of the Good (*Republic* 6.509b), E. P. Meijering (*Athanasius:* Contra Gentes*: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* [Leiden: Brill, 1984], 16) points out that Athanasius "does not betray any profound knowledge of Neo-Platonism" and that by the term οὐσία Athanasius only meant "created substance" (as parallels in *Pagans* 35, 40 indicate). The main concern of Athanasius, here and elsewhere, is the distinction between Creator and created.

idolatrous state which had predominated prior to the Cross. In this way, then, Athanasius characterizes the proper state of human existence from the point of view of what has been revealed by Christ in his work of salvation, that human beings were created for communion with God through contemplation of his Word and Image, the Savior Jesus Christ. That is, Athanasius' analysis is more concerned to determine, in the light of Christ, what is the proper characteristic or state of human existence, rather than to speculate about primordial beginnings. Thus, Athanasius can assert both that "evil has not existed from the beginning" (ἐξ ἀρχῆς), for it is not a proper characteristic of God's creation, and also that "in this way the invention and notion [of evil] occurred and was formed by humans from the beginning (ἐξ ἀρχῆς)" (*Pagans* 7), for it is by reference to the Word of the Cross, not to some primordial beginning, that Athanasius has developed his analysis. It is, in fact, only following on from this reflection that Athanasius then brings in "the first created of human beings" *as an example* of what he has outlined: Adam, as he is known in Hebrew, according to the Scriptures enjoyed this contemplation of God. There is no suggestion here that Adam is understood merely as a symbolic figure, but neither is there any emphasis placed upon his historicity.[27] Adam is brought in to exemplify the theological point being made. The place in which Adam enjoyed this contemplation, on the other hand, is specifically said to be "figuratively called paradise," for, as Athanasius makes clear, contemplation of God is not found in any geographical location, either in heaven or on earth, but in and through similarity with the Savior Jesus Christ.[28]

Alongside the interplay between transcendence and immanence, is the tension between, on the one hand, what belongs to God, to his Word, and to human beings, what is their "own," and, on the other hand, what is external, coming from outside (ἔξωθεν). The term "own," or "proper" (ἴδιος), had

[27]Cf. Meijering, *Athanasius*, 19.

[28]A similar point is made, emphasizing again the interplay between transcendence and immanence, in *Pagans* 34: "The way of truth has for its goal the God who truly exists. For the knowledge and unerring understanding of this, we have need of nothing save ourselves. For the way to God is not as far from us or external (ἔξωθεν) to us as God himself is high above all, but it is in us and we are able to find its beginning, as Moses taught: 'The word of faith is within your heart.' This the Savior also indicated and confirmed, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is within you.' So, having faith and the kingdom of God within us, we are able, readily, to contemplate and apprehend the king of all, the saving Word of the Father. . . . And if someone were to ask what path this might be, I say that it is the soul of each and the mind within it." That the introspection described here is not meant to be considered as a natural facility independent of and prior to the person and work of Christ, and the image relationship in which humans stand to him, see Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 65–66.

already been used by Alexander to differentiate Christ's sonship, as God's "own" Son, from the adoptive sonship belonging to others. Athanasius, in his later anti-Arian writings, exploits this term to expound further the relationship of Christ to the Father, by contrasting what belongs properly to God and what participates in him from the outside. In the passage at hand and in the following chapter, however, the contrast turns upon the orientation of the human mind, whether it is pursuing the contemplation of the things which transcend the senses or whether it is turned to the body, receiving impressions "from outside." It is very important to note that although Athanasius affirms quite clearly that living, as Adam, in this "unembarrassed boldness," the human mind would have transcended the senses, contemplating the Word, there is, nevertheless, no indication at all that the human being would have been in any kind of disembodied state. In this condition, human beings would not live by or for the body, and their minds would not have been driven by what comes from outside the mind: sensual impressions and bodily desires. That this ascetic thrust is not aimed at the body itself, but at the image of the body which is forced upon the mind from outside itself, is made clear in the following chapter, when Athanasius considers further what is involved when human beings change their orientation.

Having described the proper state of creation, as created by God, Athanasius introduces another leitmotif running throughout these two works, developing the Johannine theme of "remaining" (μένειν and its compounds): God wished the human race "to remain" in this condition, but having chosen otherwise, they now "remain" caught in corruption and death, until, through the salvific work of Christ, they are enabled "to remain" in immortality. Athanasius begins this line of reflection in the next chapter of *Against the Pagans*:

> In this way then, as has been said, did the Creator fashion the human race, and such did he wish it to remain (μένειν). But men, contemptuous of the better things and shrinking from their apprehension, sought rather what was closer to themselves (τὰ ἐγγυτέρω μᾶλλον ἑαυτῶν ἐζήτησαν)—and what was closer to them was the body and its sensations. So they turned their minds away from intelligible reality and began to consider themselves. And by considering themselves and holding to the body and the other senses, and deceived as it were in their own things (ἐν ἰδίοις), they fell into desire for themselves, preferring their own things (τὰ ἴδια) to the

> contemplation of divine things. Spending their time in these things, and being unwilling to turn away from things close at hand, they imprisoned in bodily pleasures their souls which had become disordered and mixed up with all kinds of desires, while they wholly forgot the power they received from God in the beginning.
>
> One could also see that this was so from the first created man, as the Holy Scriptures relate of him. For he also, as long as he fixed his mind on God and contemplation of him, kept away from the contemplation of the body. But when, by the counsel of the serpent, he abandoned his thinking of God and began to consider himself, then they fell into the desire of the body, and knew that they were naked, and knowing were ashamed. They knew that they were not so much naked of clothing, but that they had become naked of the contemplation of divine things, and that they had turned their minds in the opposite direction. For abandoning the consideration of and desire for the one and the real (τὸν ἕνα καὶ ὄντα), I mean God, from then on they gave themselves up to various and separate desires of the body. (*Pagans* 3)

God wished human beings to remain in the state that he had created them, but they chose otherwise, preferring what is closer to themselves, and this, Athanasius specifies, is their body. Thus, far from denigrating the bodily reality of human existence, the body, for Athanaius, is in fact "closer" to human beings, it is their "own" or what is "proper" to them. As we have seen, God intended human beings to transcend their bodies, with their minds set on high, in contemplation of the Word. If Athanasius does not speak of human beings transcending their minds or souls, it is not because these are somehow more divine, but rather that their mind or soul is the faculty whose orientation effects this transcendence.[29] As human beings were to transcend themselves, not being concerned about "their own things," that is, the things of

[29]Cf. *Pagans* 4: "Knowing its own freedom it [the soul] sees that it can use its bodily members in both ways—for the pursuit of reality or of unreality." Most commentators have noted that Athanasius is not concerned to provide an analysis of the structure of the human being but will use terms such as "soul" (ψυχή) and "mind" (νοῦς) fairly flexibly. Anatolios (*Athanasius*, 62) suggests that "it seems, in general, that the primary association evoked by νοῦς is that of relation to God, while the primary association evoked by ψυχή is its relation to the body . . . the body is the crucial existential locus for the exercise of human freedom: the self-determination that is intrinsic to human spiritual freedom is related directly to the use that the soul makes of its own body." On the faculty of the soul and its relation to the body, see *Pagans* 31–33.

the body and this life, but rather occupying themselves with the Word of God, the body can even, as Anatolios suggests, be said to be the locus of "the 'selfness' of being human."[30] However, human beings turned their attention towards themselves, to the body and its sense perception, receiving impressions from outside itself, and have consequently ended up being deceived even in "their own things."[31] In this way, humans fell into the chaos of the fleshly desires of the body, forgetting what they had originally received from God. With their souls directed towards the body, in, by, and for itself, the body is now the very point of human separation from God, not because of its materiality, but because it has become an idol.

After reflecting in this way on the origin of idolatry in human preference for their own, their body, Athanasius again brings in the Genesis account. Adam, Eve, and the serpent are brought in as an example of the truth that Athanasius has expounded in his demonstration of the Word of the Cross. Rather than coming to know, by eating of the tree, that they were already naked, Athanasius plays upon the image of a garment of contemplation, which they lost when they succumbed to their own desire, thus becoming truly naked. Athanasius also heightens the dramatic effect of this, by changing from the singular (he had his mind fixed on God, which he then abandoned) to the plural (they fell into the desire of the body, becoming naked). The plurality into which each human being has descended, given over to a multiplicity of desires, reverberates in the plurality of multiple conflicting voices, each asserting itself.[32]

In the following thirty or so chapters of *Against the Pagans*, the bulk of the work, Athanasius describes the history of idolatry and perversity into which the human race has fallen. Despite the prevalence of idolatry, Athanasius

[30]Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 64. A similar position is taken by Irenaeus; cf. Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 38, 86–115.

[31]Cf. *Pagans* 8: "For learning of the diverse forms of pleasure and girded with the forgetfulness of things divine, taking pleasure in the passions of the body and only in things of the moment, it paid regard to opinions about them and thought that nothing existed other than visible phenomena, and that only transitory and bodily things were good. So perverted, and forgetting that it was made in the image of the good God, the soul no longer perceived through its own power God the Word, in whose form it had been created, but turning outside itself (ἔξω δὲ ἑαυτῆς) it regarded and pictured non-existent things. For it had hidden in the complexity of fleshly desires the mirror it had as it were within itself, through which alone it was able to see the image of the Father."

[32]Cf. *Pagans* 23: "For when they had turned away from the contemplation of the one God, they fell into many various cults; since they abandoned the true Word of the Father, Christ the Savior of all, it is right that their minds should be turned in many directions."

suggests that it was still possible for human beings to know God. If the soul were to turn back to God, casting off all desires and every accretion it has acquired from outside, so that it "keeps pure only what is in the image, then when this shines forth, it can truly contemplate as in a mirror the Word, the image of the Father, and in him meditate on the Father, of whom the Savior is the image."[33] Yet such "teaching," Athanasius also acknowledges, may not be adequate, "because of the external (ἔξωθεν) influences which disturb the mind and prevent it from seeing the better course" (ibid.). Nevertheless, Athanasius continues, following Paul (quoting Rom 1.20), human beings could still have learnt about God through their sense perception, for "he so ordered creation that although he cannot be seen by nature, yet he can be known from his works" (*Pagans* 35). The order and harmony of creation demonstrate not only that there was a creator, but that there is one creator. More specifically, as his argument has refuted all idolatry, Athanasius claims that

> the pious religion must be ours, and the only true God, he whom we worship and preach, [must be] the Lord of all creation and demiurge of all existence. Who then is he, if not the all-holy Father of Christ, beyond all created being, who, as supreme steersman, through his own Wisdom and his own Word, our Lord and Savior Christ, guides and orders the universe for our salvation, and acts as seems best to him? . . . For if the movement of creation was meaningless (ἄλογος) and the universe was carried about haphazardly, one could well disbelieve our statements. But if it was created with reason (λόγῳ), wisdom, and understanding, and has been arranged with complete order, then he who governs and ordered it can be none other than the Word of God. (*Pagans* 40)

It is important to note how Athanasius again affirms that it is by "our Lord and Savior Christ," his own Word, that the Father acts to govern and order the universe. The creative and providential work of God cannot be separated from the salvific work of Christ. The Word he refers to is not, therefore, the word that is "involved and innate in every creature, which some are accustomed to call seminal" (σπερματικός), for such a word has no life of its own but merely expresses the art of the Creator (*Pagans* 40). Nor does he mean "such a word as belongs to rational beings, consisting of syllables and expressed in the air" (ibid.). Rather he is speaking of "the living and powerful Word of the good God

[33] *Pagans* 34. See above, p. 174 n. 28.

of the universe, the very Word that is God, who, while other than all created things and all creation, is the Father's own and only Word, who ordered all this universe and illuminates it by his providence" (ibid.).

Athanasius then continues by analysing the constitution of this creation itself, both in relation to the Word by whom it was brought into being and who now governs and regulates it and, equally importantly, in relation to the nothingness from which it was created. Athanasius is very clear that creation itself has been brought into being by the will of God. Creation is not derived from some preexisting matter, such that it would have its own independent subsistence: "He, the power and wisdom of God, turns the heaven, has suspended the earth, and by his own will has set it resting on nothing (ἐπὶ μηδενὸς κειμένην)" (*Pagans* 40). Created from nothing, creation rests upon nothing; it depends totally for its existence upon the will of God alone, by which it was called into being. Yet rather than allowing it to relapse into nothingness, God acts to ensure its stability:

> And the cause why the Word of God really came (ἐπιβέβηκεν) to created beings is truly wonderful, and shows that things should not have occurred otherwise than as they are (οὐκ ἄλλως ἔπρεπεν ἢ οὕτω γενέσθαι, ὥσπερ καὶ ἔστι). For the nature of created things, having come into being from nothing, is unstable, and is weak and mortal when considered by itself (τῶν μὲν γὰρ γενητῶν ἐστιν ἡ φύσις, ἅτε δὴ ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ὑποστᾶσα, ῥευστή τις καὶ ἀσθενὴς καὶ θνητὴ καθ' ἑαυτὴν συγκρινομένη τυγχάνει). But the God of all is good and excellent by nature; therefore he is also benevolent (φιλάνθρωπος)—for a good being would be envious of no one, so he envies nobody existence but rather wishes everyone to exist, in order to exercise his kindness. So, seeing that all created nature according to its own definition is in a state of flux and dissolution, therefore, lest it suffer this and the universe be dissolved back into non-being, making everything by his own eternal Word and giving substance to creation (οὐσιώσας τὴν κτίσιν), he did not abandon it to be carried away and be tempest-tossed through its own nature, lest it run the risk of returning to nothing. But, being good, he governs and establishes the whole world through his Word, who is himself God, in order that creation, illumined by the leadership, providence and the ordering of the Word, may be able to remain firm (διαμένειν), since it participates in the Word who is truly from the Father, and is aided

> by him to exist, and not thus suffer what would otherwise have happened, I mean a relapse into non-existence, were it not protected by the Word, "who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, for through him and in him all things subsist, things visible and invisible, and he is the head of the Church," as the servants of the truth teach in the holy writings. (*Pagans* 41; cf. Col 1.15–18)

The previously sketched pattern of the relationship between God and human beings, with God granting human beings a share in the power of his Word so that they might remain in communion with him, is now used by Athanasius to explain God's creation as a whole. Coming into being from nothing (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων), created nature, considered in itself, is inherently unstable, corruptible, tending to dissolve back into non-existence. However, God, who is benevolent (φιλάνθρωπος, literally "loving-humankind"), envied no one a share in existence and so did not abandon his creation once it was made by his own Word, but instead governs and establishes this world through his Word, so that, guided and ordered by the Word, it is enabled to remain firm. This should not be thought of as two separate and sequentially distinct actions. Rather, as everything has been created by God through his Word, the order of the Word is, as it were, imprinted upon everything, so that every aspect of his creation manifests the creative work, the power, of the Word.[34] Bearing the imprint of the Word, and so making the Word present, the cosmos is maintained in existence by the Word, and this creation Athanasius identifies, following Colossians, as the Church.

That Athanasius, as Anatolios notes, is reading back into the framework of creation as a whole, the pattern established by the Savior Jesus Christ in his work of salvation, is made clear by the way in which he introduces this analysis: this is "the cause why the Word of God really came to created beings."[35] Similar language (ἐπιβαίνω, ἐπίβασις) is used in *On the Incarnation*

[34]The transcendence and immanence of the Word is described succinctly in *Inc.* 17: "He was not enclosed in the body, nor was he in the body but nowhere else. Nor did he move the latter while the universe was deprived of his action and providence. But what is most wonderful is that, being the Word, he was not contained by anyone, but rather himself contained everything. And as he is in all creation, he is in essence (ἐκτὸς μέν ἐστι τοῦ παντὸς κατ' οὐσίαν) outside the universe but in everything by his power (ἐν πᾶσι δέ ἐστι ταῖς ἑαυτοῦ δυνάμεσι), ordering everything and extending his providence over everything."

[35]Cf. Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 55: "Indeed, the Incarnation is even read back into the account of Genesis in the *Contra Gentes*, as when the Word through whom the Father creates, . . . is simply identified as 'our Lord Jesus Christ.'"

to describe the "coming" of the Word in a body.[36] That things should not have occurred in any other way is also, as we will see, asserted even more bluntly in the second part of the work. Athanasius wants to stress this dual aspect of creation, which has its own inherently corruptible nature, because brought into being from non-being, but which, in being brought into being by the Word, is simultaneously ordered by the Word into a harmony which preserves it in existence. Athanasius' theological framework, as Anatolios has emphasized so well, is built upon the interplay between these two movements: the world traces its being back to God's will to create, but itself stands over the nothingness from which it was created, so that it is maintained solely by God's grace, by his power.[37] While standing as completely other to creation, as transcendent, God is nevertheless immanent, present to creation, through the providence he exercises through his Word.

But, again, one must remember that this analysis of transcendence in immanence, in terms of creation *ex nihilo* and the consequent dependency of creation upon God, is all expounded as an apology for the Cross. His reflections proceed from the perspective of the Cross: using the terminology for the presence and activity of the salvific work of Christ, the philanthropy of God manifest in the coming of the Word to created beings, to speak of creation through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is the Word of the Cross, or the Word on the Cross, that Athanasius expounds by describing how all things

[36]Cf. C. Kannengiesser, *Athanase d'Alexandrie: Sur L'Incarnation du Verbe*, SC 199, rev. ed. (Paris: Cerf, 2000), 95. Note also the statement in *Inc.* 4: "If, having such a nature as not ever to exist, they were called into being by the advent and benevolence (παρουσία καὶ φιλανθρωπία) of the Word, . . ."

[37]Anatolios finds the basic coherence of Athanasius' theology in this relationship between Creator and created, and proceeds with his examination of Athanasius' works from this starting point. Thus, he claims that "it is a certain concept of God . . . that constitutes the starting point of that trajectory which leads through creation to the incarnation" (*Athanasius*, 45), and even that "it is because of such a doctrine of God that Athanasius can arrive quite naturally at the conception of the cross exactly as the sign of divine glory and power" (ibid., 44). Yet, by the end of his chapter on *Pagans–Incarnation*, Anatolios comes to realize that Athanasius himself proceeds in the opposite direction: "If Athanasius's Christology is 'explained' by reference to his general conception of the relation between God and the world, it does not strictly follow that his Christology is thus derivative from this conception. In fact, I would suggest that the opposite is the case. In trying to make an argument for the rational fittingness of the incarnation and the cross, these aspects of the Christian message of redemption determine Athanasius's interpretation of the radical structure of reality (that is, the relation between God and creation) and of human history" (ibid., 84). To go from this latter statement to suggest that a particular framework can lead "quite naturally" to the Cross neglects the need to keep to the proper order of theological reflection (considered above in the Introduction) and undermines the scandal of the Cross, which (especially in *Inc.*) remains important for Athanasius: although he wants to show that the One on the Cross is the Word of God, this cannot be understood, in human terms, as a "rational fittingness."

have come into being by and for him; it is Christ himself that Athanasius is reflecting upon, not the creation accounts in and of themselves: "No one else is found in the Scriptures except the Savior common to all, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ."[38] In doing this, Athanasius is following the basic direction of the Christian gospel itself, which, on the basis of the proclamation of the saving work of Christ describes, in various ways, how human beings stand in need of salvation.[39] Athanasius takes this further by describing how the whole world has come into being by and for the Savior Jesus Christ, and how it is maintained in existence only by his providential activity.[40] It can even be argued that the whole idea of creation *ex nihilo*, which Athanasius is the first to elaborate in any significant detail, is in fact dependent on the crucifixion. In a very different context, Pétrement makes the interesting suggestion that it is, in fact, the Cross that provides the stimulus for this teaching about creation:

> In the Old Testament the world was so narrowly and directly dependent upon God that God himself . . . was in turn almost tied up with and chained to the world. . . . The image of the cross is an image that liberates. . . . *The cross separates God from the world.* If it does not separate him absolutely, at least it puts him at a very great distance. It puts him much further away than the distinction between Creator and creature could do. . . . It is indeed, as Paul sees, something that is profoundly new, "a scandal to the Jews and folly to the Greeks."[41]

The scandal and folly of the Cross indicate quite clearly that God is not of the same order of being as human beings are, that his ways are past finding out. The Cross, as proclaimed by Paul, is the paradigm of wisdom in folly, of

[38] *Inc.* 37. On the retrospective opening up of Scripture by the Cross, see the above, pp. 1–2 (and the references in p. 2 n. 2), 13–14.

[39] Cf. esp. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1977), 443: "Paul's thought did not run from plight to solution, but rather from solution to plight. . . . It appears that the conclusion that all the world—both Jew and Greek—equally stands in need of a saviour *springs from* the prior conviction that God had provided such a saviour."

[40] Cf. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heresies* 3.22.3: "Hence also Adam was termed by Paul 'the type of the one who was to come,' because the Word, the Maker of all things, prefigured in him the economy that was to come of the humanity in regard to the Son of God; God having established that the first man should be psychical, namely, that he should be saved by the spiritual. For, since he who saves already existed, it was necessary that he who would be saved should come into existence, that the one who saves should not exist in vain."

[41] S. Pétrement, *A Separate God: The Christian Origins of Gnosticism*, trans. C. Harrison (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 37, emphasis in original.

strength in weakness, of transcendence *in* immanence, or even more specifically, transcendence in a particular manner of immanence. How this is so is explored further in *On the Incarnation*, which is also, together with *Against the Pagans*, an apology for the Cross.

Finally, having explored the relationship between the Word of God and created reality, Athanasius can insist that the Word of God belongs to the divine realm: Jesus Christ is himself what it is to be God. Created beings, brought into being from non-existence, are intrinsically "from outside" (ἔξωθεν), external to God, though they can come to participate in God. The Son, on the other hand, is God's own (ἴδιος) Word and so is divine, not by participation, but in himself:

> His holy disciples teach that everything was created through him and for him, and that being a good offspring (γέννημα) of a good Father, and true Son, he is the Power of the Father and his Wisdom and Word; not so by participation (κατὰ μετοχὴν), nor do these properties accrue to him from outside (ἔξωθεν) in the way of those who participate in him and are given wisdom by him, being strong and rational in him; but he is Wisdom-in-himself (αὐτοσοφία), Word-in-himself (αὐτολόγος), himself the Father's own Power (αὐτοδύναμις ἰδία), Light-in-himself, Truth-in-himself, Righteousness-in-himself, Virtue-in-himself, yes, and the Stamp (χαρακτήρ) and Effulgence (ἀπαύγασμα) and Image (εἰκών). In short, he is the supremely perfect fruit (καρπός) of the Father, and is alone Son, the exact image (εἰκὼν ἀπαράλλακτος) of the Father. (*Pagans* 46)

All the attributes usually only applied to the one God—wisdom, truth, light, righteousness, virtue—the Son is, not as himself a mere attribute of God, but in himself: he is what it is to be God and so is the exact image of the Father, his perfect fruit. That the Son is himself true God of true God by being the Father's own Son Athanasius had learnt well from Alexander and Nicaea; a fuller examination of how this is so is undertaken later in his anti-Arian writings. Finally, Athanasius concludes by returning to the main theme of *Against the Pagans*, pointing out that "this being so, and nothing being outside him, but both heaven and earth and all that is in them is dependent upon him, nevertheless humans in their folly, setting aside the knowledge of and piety towards him, have honored things that are not instead of things that are" (*Pagans* 47). Their folly is shown specifically in that they do not recognize

God and do not worship "his Word, the Savior of all, our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the Father orders the universe and contains and provides for all things" (ibid.). Athanasius' account of the constitution of created being, the universe as a whole, has its starting point in the salvific work of Christ and is intended to provide a means of understanding who he is, "that he who ascended the Cross is the Word of God."

On the Incarnation

Athanasius opens the second part of his double treatise in very much the same key as he had in *Against the Pagans*. Noting that he has discussed the origin of idolatry and made a few comments concerning the divinity of the Word and the dependency of all things upon him, he then outlines his project for this work:

> Well then, my friend and true lover of Christ, let us next with pious reverence tell of the Incarnation of the Word and expound his divine manifestation to us, which the Jews slander and the Greeks mock, but which we ourselves adore, so that from the apparent degradation of the Word you may have ever greater and stronger piety towards him. For the more he is mocked by unbelievers, the greater witness he provides of his divinity, because what men cannot understand as impossible he shows to be possible, and what men mock as unsuitable by his goodness he renders suitable, and what quibbling men laugh at as human by his power he shows to be divine, overthrowing the illusion of idols by his apparent degradation through the cross, and invisibly persuading those who mock and do not believe to recognise his divinity and power. (*Inc.* 1)

This is the first time that Athanasius mentions the "Incarnation" (ἐνανθρώπησις) of the Word, his divine "manifestation" (ἐπιφάνεια), yet he does so alluding to Paul's words on the folly of preaching Christ crucified (cf. 1 Cor 1.23). In doing this, Athanasius is not replacing the scandal of the Cross with the scandal of the Incarnation or the scandal of particularity, but instead uses the word "incarnation" in a broader sense than has since become customary in theology. The "apparent degradation of the Word" is not simply a kenotic or self-deprecating act of a divine person assuming human nature, but is "his apparent degradation through the Cross." By connecting the "Incarnation"

and "manifestation" of the Word to the Cross in this way, Athanasius certainly does not mean to suggest that the Jesus born from Mary is not the Word of God, but rather that he is known as such from the manner of his death: the more he is mocked, the more his divinity is made manifest, and the absolute limit of such degradation, the ultimate humiliation, is death on the cross. In other words, "incarnation" does not simply refer to the birth of Jesus from Mary, conflating Jn 1.14, which does not speak of a birth, with the infancy narratives, which do not speak of a previously existing heavenly being, but rather refers to this birth when seen from, and then described in, the perspective of the Cross.[42] But this perspective considerably enlarges the scope of what is meant by "incarnation." Thus, Athanasius does not in fact allot any time to considering the infancy narratives and only mentions a few times, and then in passing, the birth from the Virgin or, to use his typical expression, the Word's fashioning for himself the body from the Virgin as a temple in which to dwell.[43] Likewise, he devotes only a few passages to considering the divine works of Christ as recorded in the Gospels. Rather, as we will see, Athanasius, after examining the "rationality" Christ's suffering on the cross, gives considerably more space to the divine works which Christ now does in those who have "put on (ἐνδυσάμενος) the faith of the Cross"

[42]See esp. Behr, *Way to Nicaea*, 49–51; R. E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), and more concisely, *An Adult Christ at Christmas* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1988); T. Hopko, *The Winter Pascha* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984). See also the discussion concerning similar themes in Gregory of Nyssa, p. 445 n. 66 below.

[43]*Inc.* 8, 18, 20, 33, 37. It is worth noting that the feast of the Nativity only began to be celebrated in the East in the late fourth century (see, for instance, the homilies delivered by John Chrysostom in 386, discussed by T. Talley, *The Origins of the Christian Year*, 2nd ed. [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991], 135–36); in Alexandria the adoption of the feast on December 25 seems to be slightly later: according to John Cassian, the Egyptians celebrate the feast of Epiphany on January 6, and this feast commemorated both the baptism of the Lord and his birth in the flesh (*Conference* 10.2.1, written between 418–27), though in the fourth century the feast of Epiphany was exclusively focused on Christ's baptism, so that the sixteenth of the *Canons of Athanasius* (of disputed attribution, but dating from the second half of the fourth century) does not even mention the Nativity (W. Riedel and W. E. Crum, *The Canons of Athanasius of Alexandria* [London, 1904, reprinted Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1973], 26–27). The Nativity had been celebrated from earlier times in the West, where, significantly, the date of December 25 seems to have been based, prior to any connection with solar symbolism and independently of pagan celebrations, on the date, nine months earlier, of the Passion, on March 25 (evidenced on the statue of "Hippolytus"; cf. Talley, *Origins*, 9); subsequently this date was also computed to be the date of his conception (cf. Talley, *Origins*, 91–99 for variations on the "computation hypothesis"). This connection is still made at the time of Augustine, who comments (*Trinity* 4.2.9, trans. E. Hill): "He is believed to have been conceived on 25 March, and also to have suffered on that day. Thus to the new tomb he was buried in, where no mortal body was laid before or after, there corresponds the womb he was conceived in, where no mortal body was sown before or after."

(*Inc.* 28), so demonstrating the resurrection of the body which Christ had "put on" (ἐνεδύσατο, e.g., *Inc.* 44). The body, fashioned from the Virgin, in which the Word dwells, as seen in the light of his Passion, cannot be separated from the body of Christ, that is, those who by faith in the Cross are no longer subject to the corruption of death.[44] The dynamic of this reflection follows the movement of Isaiah, in the text which was one of the most important, in the early Church, for understanding the person and Passion of Christ, the movement, that is, from the suffering of the servant, bruised for our iniquities and pouring out his soul unto death (Is 52.13–53.12), to the joyful exclamation "Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in travail! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her that is married, says the Lord" (Is 54.1). The virgin birth of Christ himself, seen in the light of the Passion, cannot be separated from the birth of those now born by the barren one, commonly identified as the Church, so that, as we will see Athanasius emphasize, the body in which the Word dwells as in a temple cannot be separated from the body in which he now dwells.

To understand the coherence of Athanasius' theology, it is necessary to retain his perspective and be sensitive to the connections he assumes and layers of meaning he deploys. Neglecting the overall aim of the work, as an apology for the Cross, and the way in which the birth and the Passion of Christ, along with the relation of Christ to the Christian, are spoken of as "Incarnation," can lead to serious distortions. Assuming, anachronistically, that "Incarnation" refers solely to the birth from Mary of the divine Word in or as Jesus tends to lead, for example, to an approach which holds that the proper task of Christology is to analyze the composition of the being of Jesus Christ, to determine whether he has the requisite elements of a true human being, or whether the divine Word has replaced the soul, the question which has beset modern scholarship on Athanasius.[45] Separating Athanasius' understanding of who Christ is from what Christ has done, specifically his saving Passion, also results in ascribing to Athanasius what is often referred to as a

[44]E.g., *Inc.* 9: "And now no longer does the actual corruption in death hold ground against humans because of the Word dwelling in them through the one body" (διὰ τὸν ἐνοικήσαντα λόγον ἐν τούτοις διὰ τοῦ ἑνὸς σώματος). Cf. A. Pettersen, *Athanasius and the Human Body* (Bristol, UK: The Bristol Press, 1990).

[45]E.g., A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. J. Bowden (London: Mowbrays, 1975), 308–28, and the abundant literature on the human soul of Christ in Athanasius.

"physical theory of redemption." Hanson, for instance, comments that "one of the curious results of this theology of the Incarnation is that it almost does away with a doctrine of the atonement. Of course, Athanasius believes in the atonement, in Christ's death as saving, but he cannot really explain why Christ should have died."[46] Hanson continues by referring to Athanasius' discussion, beginning in chapter 19 of *On the Incarnation*, which presents, he says, "a series of puerile reasons unworthy of the rest of the treatise," to conclude that "the fact is that his doctrine of the Incarnation has almost swallowed up any doctrine of the atonement, has rendered it unnecessary." Besides the various points already highlighted, Hanson overlooks the fact that in chapter 26 Athanasius signals that the preceding chapters are not his final word, indeed, they are not even his own proper word: "These remarks are for those outside the church, who pile argument on argument for themselves." Only after having toyed with such spurious reasons, allowing perhaps his readers, ancient and modern, to identify with them, does Athanasius undermine such speculation and provide instead a reflection on why Christ died, not by some other means, but on the cross, for those who inquire about this "not in a contentious spirit, but as a lover of truth." Clearly the first task of understanding an author, especially an ancient one, whose perspectives and presuppositions may differ even more considerably from our own than a contemporary, is to pay attention to what he himself says about his text.

Athanasius himself divides his work *On the Incarnation* into several sections. After the introductory chapter, already discussed, and a chapter on pagan notions of creation, Athanasius begins his exposition of "the teaching of faith in Christ" with two analyses of the reason for the Incarnation (chaps. 3–10 and 11–19).[47] After a brief recapitulation of his treatment of the death of Christ, in chapter 20 and the first part of 21,[48] the remainder of chapter 21 through to chapter 26 is given over to discussing the reason for the Cross as the means of death, and chapters 26–32 to the topic of the resurrection of

[46]Hanson, *Search*, 450.

[47]*Inc.* 10 ends: "This, therefore, is the primary cause of the incarnation of the Savior. One could also recognize that his blessed parousia among us was justified from the following." *Inc.* 19 ends: "It is our next task to describe the end of his life and activity in the body, and to say also what death befell his body, especially because this is the chief point of our faith and absolutely everyone talks of it, in order that you may know that particularly from this Christ is known to be God and the Son of God."

[48]Finishing with a quotation of 1 Cor 15.53–55: Chapter 21, line 15 in Thomson's edition; 21.2 in Kannengiesser's edition.

Christ's body. Chapters 33 to 40 provide a "refutation" of the Jews from their own Scriptures, and chapters 41 to 55 give a "refutation" of the Gentiles, leaving the final two chapters for concluding remarks. That Athanasius undertakes two analyses for the rationale of the Incarnation is important. The first analysis, which focuses specifically on the death of Christ, provides what he describes as "the primary cause of the Incarnation of our Savior" (*Inc.* 10). Only on this basis does he then go further to examine the broader dimensions involved with the Incarnation.

Athanasius begins these analyses by establishing the same interplay that he had sketched in *Against the Pagans*, between the nothingness from which creation came into being and the grace of the Word that maintains creation in being, though this time the center of attention is specifically the human race and the necessity for them to maintain actively their total dependency upon God. Citing Gen 1.1, Heb 11.3, and the Shepherd (of Hermas, *Mandate* 1.1), Athanasius argues that creation was not made from pre-existing matter, as he claims in the previous chapter that Plato had taught, but that, previously existing in no way at all (μηδαμῆ μηδαμῶς), the universe was brought into being by the Word of God. He then continues:

> God is good, or rather the source of goodness, and the good has not envy for anything. Thus, grudging nothing its existence, he made all things from nothing through his own Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. Among these, of all those upon earth, having mercy (ἐλεήσας) upon the human race, seeing that by the definition of its own origin (κατὰ τὸν τῆς ἰδίας γενέσεως λόγον) it would be unable to persist for ever (διαμένειν ἀεί), giving them a further grace (πλέον τι χαριζόμενος), he created human beings, not simply like all the irrational (ἄλογα) animals on the earth, but he made them according to his own image, giving them [a share] of the power of his own Word (μεταδοὺς αὐτοῖς καὶ τῆς τοῦ ἰδίου λόγου δυνάμεως), so that having as it were shadows (σκιάς τινας) of the Word and being made rational (λογικοὶ), they might be able to remain (διαμένειν) in blessedness, living the true life in paradise, which is really that of the holy ones. (*Inc.* 3)

Athanasius again speaks of everything having come into being through Jesus Christ and further describes the measures taken to prevent the human race from falling into non-existence as an "extra grace" bestowed in an act of "mercy," using terminology also clearly derived from Christ's salvific work.

This "extra grace" is to be made in the image of Jesus Christ, which Athanasius understands as sharing in the power of the Word, being "rational" rather than an irrational animal. Instead of locating the locus of the "image" exclusively in the soul or the mind, the content of what it is to be "rational" is here determined in terms of relationship to *the* image, Jesus Christ the Word of God.[49] All created being, as we have seen, depends for its continued existence on the presence of the Word; human beings, however, have been given an extra grace, enabling them to remain in paradise, living a blessed life.

The reason for this extra grace is intimated for Athanasius in the manner in which God secured his gift:

> Furthermore, knowing that the free will (τὴν προαίρεσιν) of human beings could turn either way, he, in anticipation, secured the grace they had been given by a law and a set place. For he brought them into his paradise and gave them a law, so that if they guarded the grace and remained good (μένοιεν καλοί) they would enjoy the life of paradise, without sorrow, pain, or care, besides having the promise of immortality in heaven; but that if they transgressed and turned away and became wicked, they would know [what it is] themselves to endure (ὑπομένειν) the natural corruption of death (τὴν ἐν θανάτῳ κατὰ φύσιν φθοράν), and would no longer live in paradise, but in future dying outside it would remain (μένειν) in death and corruption. (*Inc.* 3)

In the case of human beings, therefore, there is a significant modification of the relation between God and creation. As we have seen in *Against the Pagans*, the inherent instability of the universe is resolved by the presence of the Word, ensuring that creation "remains" in being. Such "protection" comes from the divine sphere and is active, compared to the passive reception of this protection by creation: it is God himself who, through the Word, regulates, orders, and governs creation, keeping it in harmony and existence. In the case discussed here, however, that of human beings, the matter is not so straightforward. As Anatolios points out, Athanasius does not use terminology suggesting "governance" to describe God's activity toward human beings.[50] Human beings certainly depend for their continuance on the power of God; their perseverance in the state willed by God depends totally upon

[49]As Origen put it, "the saint alone is rational" (*Commentary on John* 2.114).

[50]Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 59.

the grace already bestowed. God remains the primary agent, bestowing the gift of which human beings are the passive recipients. But the fact that human beings are created with free will (προαίρεσις) modifies the nature of this passivity, for they have the possibility of turning away from the gift itself. In a further initiative, God secured the grace by imposing a law and providing a place, so that if they were to guard the grace already given, remaining good, they could live the life of paradise. Thus, unlike the rest of creation, human beings are charged with receiving and keeping this gift *actively*. Although the general paradigm of the relation between God and creation, in terms of activity and passivity, remains, a new fundament dynamic is introduced: human beings are themselves active, insofar as they must keep themselves receptive to such grace, even if it is only by receiving this grace that they are able to be active in this manner. In Anatolios' words, "humanity's special position is that of being ordained to actively maintain its own passivity."[51]

It is also important, as Anatolios notes, not to misconstrue Athanasius' words here in terms of later scholastic nature-grace models; Athanasius uses these terms "within the more radical framework of the fundamental distinction between created and uncreated."[52] Athanasius does not use the word "nature" (φύσις), or the phrase "according to nature" (κατὰ φύσιν), to refer to how things were originally created and intended by God. Rather "nature" here signifies created existence taken in and by itself. As with his analysis of creation in *Against the Pagans*, so also here: the creation of the human race and gracing them with the presence of his Word, Jesus Christ, should not be thought of in terms of two separate and distinct acts, but as two aspects of the same action. Humans were brought into being made in the image of God. Neither does Athanasius differentiate between the "image," as an initial gift, and the "likeness," as a state to be achieved. But human beings have also, of course, from the beginning turned away from this grace, and in doing so, they have turned to what is merely "natural," created from non-being, and therefore inherently corruptible. As Athanasius puts it in the next chapter, "the transgression of the commandment turned them to what was natural . . . for man is by nature mortal in that he was created from nothing" (*Inc.* 4). Having turned away from the source of their existence, human beings now "remain" in corruption, unable to escape the death that is theirs by nature.

[51]Ibid., 61.
[52]Ibid., 55.

Athanasius develops a similar position at the beginning of the second analysis of the rationale of the Incarnation. Here, however, his reflections are more "epistemological," concerning the knowledge of God, rather than "existential," as in the previous analysis, dealing with nature of human existence and its proclivity toward non-being, the corruption of death in which humans are now bound. Though the "epistemological" and the "existential" cannot be separated, Athanasius treats them independently to emphasize that Christ's death is the "chief point of our faith" and to ensure that the "epistemological" dimension of his work does not become detached from Christ's death, as the imparting of a salvific knowledge independent of the Cross, for it is "particularly from this that Christ is known to be God and the Son of God" (*Inc.* 19). Thus, Athanasius begins his second analysis by establishing the same paradigm of the relation between God and creation, though in its epistemological dimensions:

> God, who has dominion over all, when he made the race of humans through his own Word, saw again that the weakness of their nature was not capable by itself of knowing the Creator or of taking any thought of God, in that he was uncreated, whereas they had been made from nothing, and he was incorporeal, but humans had been fashioned here below with a body, and he saw the creatures' complete lack of understanding and knowledge of their Maker. So, having mercy (ἐλεήσας) again on the human race, in that he is good, he did not leave them destitute of knowledge of himself, lest even their own existence should be profitless. For what advantage would there be for those who had been made, if they did not know their own Maker? Or in what way would they be rational, without knowing the Word of the Father, in whom they had come to be? For indeed, they would in no way have differed from irrational creatures, if they had known nothing more than earthly things. And why would God have made them by whom he did not wish to be known? Therefore, lest this should happen, since he is good, he bestowed on them of his own image, our Lord Jesus Christ, and made them according to his own image and likeness, in order that, understanding through such grace the image, I mean the Word of the Father, they might be able through him to gain some notion about the Father, and, knowing the Maker, might live a happy and truly blessed life. (*Inc.* 11)

Knowledge of God has always been dependent upon Jesus Christ, the image of God, for it is only through him, by the mercy of the Father, that human beings had any conception of God. Being created in the image and likeness of God, human beings have shared in his own image, Jesus Christ himself, and this is sufficient (αὐτάρκης) for knowing the Father through the Word (*Inc.* 12). Parallel to his earlier interpretation of the provision of a law and a place, as being an anticipatory action of God to secure his gift, Athanasius here continues by suggesting that, knowing human weakness, God made "provision for their negligence," so that if they did not recognize him through themselves, they would be able to know the Creator through the works of creation and, failing that, through the more immediate instruction provided by the law and the prophets, the holy ones of old (*Inc.* 12). The knowledge of God provided by these means is thus derivative of the knowledge of God provided by Christ himself, the one to whom all of creation testifies and who alone is found throughout the Scriptures,[53] knowledge which should have been enjoyed by all human beings by virtue of being created by him and in him, the image of God.

That these provisions, as with creation itself, are described in terms which Athanasius draws from the apostolic proclamation of Christ is because, quite simply, there is no other way of knowing God—for from the beginning, human beings have turned away from the gifts offered, transgressing the law and turning to knowledge gained through the senses of things pertaining to the earth. It is only through Jesus Christ, the Word and Image of the Father, that knowledge of God and his creation, its origin and God's providence in sustaining the world and providing means to know him, is derived. Athanasius, we must recall, is reflecting on who the crucified one is, and in expounding the solution, he postulates a problem that is both "existential" and "epistemological": choosing death, rather than life in communion with God, human beings have no way out of their predicament but are condemned to remain in the corruption of death; turning their minds away from what is truly real, they themselves give existence to evil, which in itself has no existence, but is conjured up by human imagination.

This specific perspective is further evidenced in the way that Athanasius follows the dramatic question he then poses—What then should God do?—

[53]Cf. *Inc.* 37: "No one else is found in the Scriptures except the Savior common to all, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ."

with an even more dramatic rhetorical question. In the first analysis, this predicament is again couched in terms of life and death:

> For these reasons death held greater sway and corruption remained firm against humans; the race of humans was perishing, and the rational human being, made in the image, was disappearing, and the work of God was being destroyed. . . . And what had happened was truly both absurd and improper. It was absurd that, having spoken, God should lie—having ordained that the human being would die by death if he transgressed the commandment, and that after transgressing he did not die but God's word was made void. . . . And, furthermore, it would have been improper that what had once been created rational and had partaken of his Word should perish and return again to non-existence through corruption. . . . Therefore, since rational creatures were being corrupted and such works were perishing, what should God, who is good, do? Allow corruption to hold sway over them and death to capture them? But then, what need would there have been for them to have been created in the beginning (καὶ τίς ἡ χρεία τοῦ καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς αὐτὰ γενέσθαι)? (*Inc.* 6)

Given the starting-point of Athanasius' examination, the solution provided by God, it is not surprising that Christ appears at the penultimate moment before the rational creature, made in the image, vanishes altogether. Thus, Athanasius can hold that the image has been predominantly destroyed, yet elsewhere maintain that human beings can come to know God through themselves, as created in the image, for such knowledge, as we have seen, has only ever been provided through Christ, the solution to the impasse.[54] As it is, however, rational creatures have, in their freedom, turned away from their Creator, disintegrating into the non-existence from which they had been created. So what was God to do? Given what the solution has proven to be, Athanasius argues that it was not fitting for God to go back on his word, and also that repentance and forgiveness would not have been sufficient: the

[54]The possibility is affirmed in *Pagans* 8 and 34 (cited above, nn. 31 and 28 respectively), yet in *Inc.* 11–14, where he gives his "epistemological" rationale for the Incarnation, Athanasius accordingly denies the possibility (for Christ has come precisely to impart the knowledge of God that humans lack). Anatolios rightly points out, against most commentators, that Athanasius' position should not be interpreted in paradigms derived from Reformation–Roman Catholic polemic: "If by 'image' we mean the relation with God, as Athanasius himself seems to mean, then Athanasius himself seems to answer that this relation is decisively broken by sin, and yet that it does not altogether disappear after sin" (*Athanasius*, 65).

transgression would have been forgiven, but its effects—the corruption of death—would remain.[55]

But before turning to the solution, Athanasius poses an even more striking question than the one just asked: why should God do anything anyway? What was "the need," as he puts it, for creating in the first place? In the second analysis, in which the problem concerns the bestial irrationality into which humans have fallen, even worshipping idols in the form of beasts, Athanasius poses the dilemma in even more arresting terms:

> Since humans had become so irrational (ἀλογωθέντων) and the deceit of evil spirits was casting such a wide shadow everywhere and hiding the knowledge of the true God, what was God to do? Be silent before such things, and let humans be deceived by demons and be ignorant of God? But then what need (χρεία) would there have been for the human being to have been created in the image from the beginning? For he should have been made simply irrational, or else, having been created rational, he should not live the life of irrational creatures [i.e., as an embodied being]. But what need was there at all for him to gain an idea about God from the beginning? For if he is not now worthy to receive it, neither ought it to have been given him from the beginning. And what advantage (ὄφελος) would there be to God who made him, or what glory would he have, if humans who had been created by him did not honour him, but thought that others had made them? (*Inc.* 13)

These are strong words indeed, suggesting that God has a "need" of creation, that it is to his "advantage," and that he would have no "glory" were it not for his creatures. Rather than imagining God prior to creation, to postulate some kind of primordial lack in God himself—as Athanasius exclaims, in a different context, "such is their mythology, for it is no theology, far from it!" (*Pagans* 19)—Athanasius, as has been continually emphasized, begins with the given fact of the revelation of God in Christ and, on this basis, and in its terms, develops a theology and cosmology in which Jesus Christ is truly the beginning and end, and the glory which he receives and exhibits as the crucified one is the glory which he had with the Father from all eternity, for there is no other glory.

[55]Cf. *Inc.* 7: "Repentance would not have preserved God's reasonableness (τὸ εὔλογον), for he again would not be true unless humans were in the power of death; repentance does not recall them from what is according to their nature, but merely looses sins."

In his first reflection on the divine dilemma, Athanasius goes straight to the main point: it is death which is the ultimate enemy, and so the conquering of death, by the very death of the Lord, is the "primary cause" of the Incarnation. Here, Athanasius does not really consider any further implications of the Lord's presence in the flesh, as he will do in his second analysis, but keeps to the central issue. Thus, having given his first analysis of the predicament, Athanasius conludes with a lengthy reflection on the death of Christ which deserves to be quoted in full:

> [8] For this reason the incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Word of God came to our realm; not that he was previously distant, for no part of creation is left deprived of him, for, remaining with his own Father, he has filled all things everywhere. But he has come, condescending in his benevolence and manifestation (φιλανθρωπίᾳ καὶ ἐπιφανείᾳ) to us. And seeing that the rational race was perishing and that death was reigning over them through corruption; seeing, too, that the threat of the transgression was firmly supporting the corruption which was upon us, and that it would have been absurd for the law to be dissolved before it was fulfilled; seeing, once more, the impropriety of what had occurred, that the things of which he was the Creator should perish; and seeing, further, the excessive wickedness of human beings, and that they were gradually increasing it against themselves and making it intolerable; and seeing, lastly, the liability of all humans in regard to death: having mercy on our race, and compassion towards our weakness, and descending to our corruption and not tolerating the mastery of death—lest creation perish and the work of his Father for humans be in vain—he takes (λαμβάνει) to himself a body, and that not foreign (ἀλλότριον) to our own. For he did not wish simply to be in a body (ἐν σώματι γενέσθαι), nor did he wish only to appear, for if he wished only to appear, he could have made his theophany through some better means. But he takes our [body] (τὸ ἡμέτερον), and not merely so, but, from a pure and spotless virgin, ignorant of man, [a body] pure and truly unalloyed by intercourse with men. Being himself mighty and the creator of everything, he fashions in the virgin a body as a temple for himself, and makes it his own (ἰδιοποιεῖται τοῦτο), as an instrument, making himself known in it and dwelling in it. And thus, taking from ours the same (ἀπὸ τῶν ἡμετέρων τὸ ὅμοιον), since all were liable to the corruption

of death, surrendering it to death on behalf of all, he offered it (προσῆγε) to the Father—and doing this lovingly (φιλανθρώπως) in order that, firstly, as all die in him, the law concerning the corruption of humans might be abolished (since its power was concluded in the dominical body [πληρωθείσης . . . ἐν τῷ κυριακῷ σώματι] and no longer held ground against humans who are like him), and, secondly, that as humans had turned towards corruption, he might turn them again towards incorruption, and give them life instead of death, by making the body his own (τῇ τοῦ σώματος ἰδιοποιήσει) and by the grace of the resurrection, banishing death from them as straw [is destroyed] by fire.

[9] For the Word, realizing that the corruption of humans could not be undone in any other way than by dying (ἄλλως οὐκ ἂν λυθείη τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἡ φθορὰ εἰ μὴ διὰ τοῦ πάντως ἀποθνεῖν), but the Word was not able to die, being immortal and Son of the Father, for this reason he takes to himself a body capable of death, in order that it, participating in the Word who is above all, might suffice for death on behalf of all and, through the Word dwelling in it (τὸν ἐνοικήσαντα λόγον), might remain incorruptible, and henceforth corruption might cease from all by the grace of the Resurrection. Therefore, offering (προσάγων) to death the body which he had taken to himself, as an offering (ἱερεῖον) and sacrifice free of all spot, he immediately abolished death from all who were like him by the offering of an equivalent (τοῦ καταλλήλου). For being over all, the Word of God, by offering his own temple and his bodily instrument as a substitute (ἀντίψυχον) for all, naturally fulfilled the debt by his death; and, as being united to all by the like [body] (ὡς συνὼν διὰ τοῦ ὁμοίου τοῖς πᾶσιν), the incorruptible Son of God naturally clothed (ἐνέδυσεν) all with incorruption by the promise concerning the resurrection; and now no longer does the actual corruption in death hold ground against humans, because of the Word dwelling in them through the one body (διὰ τὸν ἐνοικήσαντα λόγον ἐν τούτοις διὰ τοῦ ἑνὸς σώματος). (*Inc.* 8–9)

Athanasius compares this maneuver to that of a king who enters a city and takes up residence in one of the houses: his imperial presence renders the whole city secure from attack. Moreover, Athanasius continues, if the city is besieged because of the negligence of its inhabitants, it befits the king to rescue his own work. Then, after a number of scriptural quotations (2 Cor 5.14–15; Heb 2.9; Heb 2.10; Heb 2.14–15), he concludes:

> For by the sacrifice of his own body he both put an end to the law that lay against us, and renewed for us the origin of life by giving hope of the resurrection. For since it was from humans that death prevailed against humans, so for this reason, conversely, by the incarnation of God has come about the destruction of death and the resurrection of life, as the man who bore Christ says "since by man came death, so by man came the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive," and so forth [1 Cor. 15.21–2]. For now no longer as condemned do we die, but as those who will rise again we await the general resurrection of all, which God, who has wrought and bestowed it, "will reveal in his own time" [1 Tim 6.15]. This, therefore, is the primary cause (πρώτη αἰτία) of the incarnation of the Savior. (*Inc.* 10)

There is no question but that Athanasius understands the Incarnation in terms of the Passion: the Savior takes a body to die, for it is only through death itself that death is overthrown and life resurrected. Athanasius employs a variety of images to expound the death of Christ: sacrificial (offering his body to the Father and to death), satisfaction and substitution (his death suffices for all), the fulfillment of the debt, and the conquering of the tyranny of death. Most important, however, is the emphasis that Athanasius places on the solidarity of Christ with human beings: by sharing a body with us, he enables those who share in his body to partake also of his life and resurrection. The solidarity of the one body is accentuated by the use of the present tense: the Word takes a body, he takes what is ours. And by dwelling in the body, the Word dwells in us "through the one body."

The redemptive efficacy of the assumption of the body, the Incarnation, therefore, cannot be devolved solely to the birth of Jesus from Mary, separating this moment from the Passion and dividing his body from the body in which he still dwells. Death is vanquished by the voluntary death of the dominical body, so that those who share in him, having the Word dwelling in them, die no longer in condemnation but in the hope of the Resurrection. Indeed, the very taking of the body by the Word is inseparable from his offering of it. As Athanasius puts it at the beginning of Chapter 9, "he takes to himself a body capable of death, in order that it, participating in the Word who is above all, might suffice for death on behalf of all and, through the Word dwelling in it, might remain incorruptible, and henceforth corruption might cease from all by the grace of the Resurrection." The body is not

simply rendered incorruptible by the presence of the Word in it, but rather the body *remains* incorruptible through the death for which purpose it was assumed, so that corruption is overcome by *the grace of the Resurrection*. The whole process and rationale of the Incarnation of the Word is determined by the death of the Son of God. The further consequence of this analysis, however, is that the Word offers his body freely, as a pure sacrifice, for had he died as all other human beings have died, that is, as a result of the condemnation, nothing would have been achieved, and death would have retained its dominion. For this reason, Athanasius continually qualifies the economy of the Passion by saying that it was undertaken out of love for human beings, as an act of mercy. Moreover, this logic, the Word of the Cross, entails, as a prerequisite, the birth from the Virgin, herself pure and spotless: his birth from the Virgin is, as it were, the guarantee that Christ freely offered his body to death. Although a prerequisite, in the order of theology the virgin birth is a conclusion, the premise for which is the redemption wrought by the Passion. Athanasius does not begin with the divinity of Christ, evidenced from the virgin birth and his divine works prior to the Passion, to then consider what more is effected by his death; approaching his work in this order one may well conclude that the Incarnation has overshadowed the Passion.[56] Rather, beginning with "the primary cause of the Incarnation," the Passion, Athanasius reflects on the manner of Christ's death, expounding it as the work of the Word of God born of the Virgin. In this perspective, then, it can be seen that his body is, from the beginning, the body of the Word.

Such is Athanasius' first analysis of the purpose of the Incarnation. But before beginning to examine Athanasius' treatment of the death and resurrection of Christ, it is necessary to note his "epistemological" resolution to the divine dilemma. Here Athanasius reflects further on the implications of the fact that the one by whom the body is taken is the Word of God. Broadening his scope from the crux, the death and resurrection of Christ, Athanasius now takes, as his point of departure, human immersion in the body and its sensations and their consequent failure to manifest the image of God. As the attention of human beings is now focused on things of sense perception, Athanasius contends that the Word, as a good teacher coming down to the level of his pupils and dealing with them in simple terms (*Inc.* 15), needed to appear in a perceptible body:

[56]As, amongst many others, Hanson, *Search*, 450, cited above, p. 187.

> For once the mind of humans had descended to perceptible things, the Word submitted to being revealed through a body, that he might transfer humans to himself as a man, and turn their senses to himself, and that thenceforth, although they saw him as a man, he might persuade them through the works that he did that he was not only a man, but also God (δι' ὧν ἐργάζεται ἔργων, πείσῃ μὴ εἶναι ἑαυτὸν ἄνθρωπον μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ θεὸν), and the Word and Wisdom of the true God. (*Inc.* 16)

Athanasius cites Paul (Eph 3.17–19) to indicate that the Word now fills all things, so that everything is filled with the knowledge of God, and then continues:

> For this reason, he did not immediately upon his arrival accomplish the sacrifice on behalf of all, delivering his body to death and resurrecting it, making himself thereby invisible. But by means of it he rendered himself visible, remaining in it and completing such works and giving such signs as made him known to be no longer a man but God the Word. For in two ways our Savior had compassion through the Incarnation: he both rid us of death and renewed us; and also, although he is unseen and invisible, yet by his works he appeared and made himself known to be the Son of God and himself the Word of the Father, leader and king of the universe. (*Inc* 16)

Athanasius here intimates a very important epistemological principle for theology, following on from the priority he gives to the death of Christ as the crux of the Incarnation and needing to be read in that perspective. If read carelessly, the passage just quoted might be taken to imply that Christ was not really human. But Athanasius is very clear that it is because he is a man that all can turn their senses towards him, and then, when looking closer, discover that he is in fact the very Word of God—the very same one, that is, not someone else. In this, Athanasius is following the general pattern of the Gospels, where it is a given that Christ is a man (born as a baby, growing in both body and soul, being hungry and tired, and ultimately dying), but a man unlike others (calming the seas, forgiving sins, raising the dead, and not being conquered by death himself), so that from his works, done in and through the body, it is clear that he is not merely a man (though he is that as well), but a man who is God: "Among men this one alone is God the Word" (*Inc.* 45). It is through his actions that we understand what kind of being he is, for

it is axiomatic for Athanasius that acts correspond to nature.[57] Thus, in addition to destroying death and renewing human beings, the Incarnation also restores our knowledge of the Word and, through the Word, the Father.

Athanasius continues his second analysis in chapters 17 and 18 by looking at the way in which the Lord made known his divinity through the works he accomplished, considering further the relationship between the Word and the body, the instrument he has made his own in order to make himself known. These will be left aside until the following section of this chapter where, along with Athanasius' more thorough treatment of such issues in his anti-Arian writings, they will be considered more systematically. But it is worth noting now that it is only in these two chapters that Athanasius mentions the divine works done by Christ in his body as described in the Gospels. Far more space of *On the Incarnation* is devoted to commenting on the divine works done by Christ after the Resurrection, when, although invisible, he works in and through those who share one body with him. Athanasius concludes his second analysis of the rationale of the Incarnation by returning again to the overriding centrality of the death of Christ. Creation not only witnesses to the divinity of Jesus Christ, as the one who governs and orders creation, but, Athanasius points out, it witnesses to the divinity of the one who died on the cross:

> Nor did he cause creation itself to be silent, but what is most amazing, even at his death—or rather at the victory over death, I mean the Cross—the whole of creation was confessing that he who was known and suffered in the body was not simply man, but the Son of God and Savior of all. For the sun turned back, and the earth shook, and the mountains were rent, and all were terrified; and these things showed that the Christ who was on the cross was God (ταῦτα δὲ τὸν μὲν ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ Χριστὸν θεὸν ἐδείκνυον), and that the whole of creation was his handmaid and was witnessing in fear to the coming (παρουσίαν) of her master. So in this way God the Word revealed himself to men through his works.
>
> It is our next task to describe the end of his life and activity in the body, and to say what kind was the death of the body, especially because this is

[57]Cf. *Pagans* 16: "For acts must correspond to natures so that the actor is known from his effects, and the action can be known from its nature." *Inc.* 32: "It is a property of God that he should be invisible, but known by his works."

> the chief point (τὸ κεφάλιον) of our faith and absolutely everyone talks of it, in order that you may know that it is from this especially, not less so (ἐκ τούτου μᾶλλον οὐδὲν ἧττον), that Christ is known to be God and the Son of God. (*Inc.* 19)

The death of Christ is at once the chief point of the Christian faith and also that which, in particular, reveals Christ to be God: all creation witnesses to the coming and presence of the God made manifest on the cross.

Having examined the existential and epistemological dimensions of the Incarnation, Athanasius provides a short recapitulation of his analysis of the death of Christ, before turning to the means of that death, the Cross, and the Resurrection. Many of his points, as Athanasius himself notes, repeats what he has already said, but his summary of them makes various aspects clearer. Athanasius reiterates the point that prior to his death the Word proves his divinity, so demonstrating that his death is not simply the death of another human being but the death of a man who is God, and as such his death is not merely a natural necessity but a sacrificial offering on behalf of all. He then underscores the inseparability of the presence of the Word in the body and the Passion:

> So the body, as having the common substance of all, was a human body. Even if it had been constituted by a new miracle, from a virgin only, nevertheless it was mortal and died in the fashion of those similar to it. But through the coming of the Word into it (τῇ δὲ τοῦ λόγου εἰς αὐτὸ ἐπιβάσει), it was no longer subject to corruption according to its proper nature, but because of the indwelling Word of God, it became external (ἐκτός) to corruption. And both these things occurred simultaneously (ἐν ταὐτῷ γενέσθαι) in a paradoxical manner: the death of all was accomplished in the dominical body (ὁ πάντων θάνατος ἐν τῷ κυριακῷ σώματι ἐπληροῦτο), and also death and corruption were destroyed because of the Word united to it (διὰ τὸν συνόντα λόγον). For there was need of death, and death on behalf of all had to take place, in order that what was owed by all might be paid.
>
> Therefore, as I said above, the Word himself, since he could not die, for he was immortal, took to himself a body capable of dying, in order to offer it as his own on behalf of all, and as himself suffering for all, that through his coming into it (διὰ τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸ ἐπίβασιν) "he might destroy him who held the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those

> who through fear of death had been all their lifetime subject to bondage" [Heb 2.14–15]. (*Inc.* 20)

When Athanasius specifies here that, though born of a virgin, his body is similar to ours as being mortal, it would seem that he means that it is capable of death, so that he could die as we do, rather than subject to death, for the "coming" (ἐπίβασις) of the Word into the body renders it immune from corruption by natural death. The death of the Lord must therefore be a voluntary death, his self-offering. However, it would be wrong to take this immunity from death as effected in any other way than through the Lord's death itself. Thus, he uses the same expression, the "coming" of the Word into the body, in connection with his suffering for all, so destroying the power of death. It is the manner of his death, as a spotless self-offering, that demonstrates his divinity, and because of his divinity, so manifest, it is impossible that his body should remain in death.[58] Two effects are wrought by this one act. First, in the dominical body is accomplished "the death of all" (ὁ πάντων θάνατος), that is, both the death common to all undergone by the Lord himself, and also, as offered on behalf of all, the death of all, so that, second, his death vanquishes death itself, for death is thereby completed, expended, emptied of its power. Thus, Athanasius continues his rehearsal of his previous argument by claiming that as Christ has died for all, the condemnation of death is destroyed, so that Christians no longer die (ἀποθνήσκομεν) but are merely dissolved (διαλυόμεθα) for a while in preparation for the Resurrection (*Inc.* 21).

When addressing the question of why Christ died on the cross, Athanasius presents at some length (*Inc.* 21–25) various explanations which largely invert the order of theology that he had outlined (that Christ is first known as God from the manner of his death, and then, in a secondary reflection, by the works he did and does), by assuming the divinity of Christ and only then asking why he died on the cross. For instance, he asks rhetorically, pointing out that it is an all too human objection, would it not have been more

[58]Cf. *Inc.* 31: "It [the body] was unable not to die (μὴ ἀποθανεῖν μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἠδύνατο), as it was mortal and had been offered to death on behalf of all, for which very reason the Savior had prepared it for himself; but it was also unable to remain dead, because it had become the temple of life (μεῖναι δὲ νεκρὸν οὐχ οἷόν τε ἦν, διὰ τὸ ζωῆς αὐτὸ ναὸν γεγενῆσθαι). Therefore it died as being mortal, but came to life because of the life which was in it; and its works are the indication of its resurrection." It is as the crucified one that his body is the temple of life, so that those who "put on the faith of the cross" (*Inc.* 28) need no longer fear death because of Christ.

becoming "to put the body aside honorably, than to suffer death with ignominy" (*Inc.* 21)? But, he answers, had Christ died in private, it would have been assumed that he died from sickness as other men. And, if he had died secretly, what credence would his resurrection have had (*Inc.* 23)? Perhaps, alternatively, Christ "should have kept himself hidden from the plotting of the Jews, in order to keep his body immortal" (*Inc.* 22)? Though such reasoning has long fascinated his commentators, they should not be taken as his own answer. Indeed, Athanasius continues by undermining such explanations and pointing in a different direction:

> These remarks are for those outside the Church, who pile argument on argument for themselves. But if any one of us, not in a contentious spirit but as a lover of truth, were to inquire why he endured [death] in no other way than the cross, then let him hear that in no other way than this was it for our advantage, and it was right that the Lord endured this for us. For if he came to bear the curse, which had fallen upon us, how could he have "become accursed" in any other way except by accepting the death which follows on a curse? And that is the cross, for so it is written: "Cursed is he who is hanged on the wood" [Deut 21.23]. Furthermore, if the death of the Lord is a ransom for all and by his death "the wall of partition" [Eph 2.14] is broken down and the call of the Gentiles is effected, how would he have called us had he not been crucified? For only on the cross does one die with hands stretched out. Therefore it was fitting for the Lord to endure this and stretch out his hands, that with the one he might draw the ancient people and with the other those of the Gentiles, and that he might join both in himself. This he himself said when he indicated by what manner of death he would ransom all: "when I shall be raised up I shall draw all men to myself" [Jn. 12.32]. (*Inc.* 25)

In other words, the proper medium for understanding the crucifixion is the scriptural matrix, the texts and their images that illumine its significance. Athanasius draws on various other texts (Eph 2.2, Heb 10.20, Lk 10.18, Ps 23.7 LXX), to conclude that the death on the cross "was suitable and fitting" (πρέπων καὶ ἁρμόζων), and its cause "reasonable" (εὔλογος), so that "in no other way except through the Cross was it necessary (ἔδει) for the salvation of all to take place" (*Inc.* 26). As with the "need" for creation, seen earlier, Athanasius can speak this way as he begins with the given fact of the Passion,

which he then explains, rather than assuming a different starting point, whether cosmology, the problem of evil, or the divinity of Christ, and then faltering at the stumbling block of the Cross.

The Cross, as we have seen, stands not simply for the death of Christ, but for his victory over death by his death. Thus, after underlining the "necessity" of the crucifixion, Athanasius asserts that "not even thus did he leave himself invisible on the cross" (*Inc.* 26). That is, had the crucifixion been merely his death, who it was who had died in this way would have remained unknown. Rather, creation itself witnesses to the "presence (παρουσίαν) of its own creator," while "he did not allow the temple of his body to remain [dead] long, but having merely shown it to be dead by the contact (συμπλοκῇ) of death with it, he straightway raised it up on the third day, bearing as trophies and victory over death the incorruptibility and impassibility of the body" (*Inc.* 26). After giving some rather spurious, humanly oriented reasons for the Resurrection on the third day (if it had been longer, what had happened would have been forgotten; if shorter, then it might be supposed that he had not really died), Athanasius goes on to examine the Resurrection, and its proof, in a much more profound fashion:

> That death has been dissolved (καταλελύσθαι) and that the cross was a victory over it and that it is no longer powerful but is itself truly dead, is demonstrated in no uncertain manner and is clearly credible by the fact that it is despised by all Christ's disciples and everyone treads it underfoot and no longer fears it, but with the sign of the cross and by faith in Christ they trample on it as a dead thing. For formerly, before the divine sojourn (ἐπιδημίαν) of the Savior occurred, all used to weep for the dead as if they were lost. But now that the Savior has raised up the body death is no longer to be feared, but all believers in Christ tread on it as nought and would rather die than deny their faith in Christ. For they really know that when they die they do not perish but live and become incorruptible through the resurrection. And as for the devil, who previously used to exult wickedly in death, "since its pains have been loosed" [Acts 2.24] only he remains truly dead. The proof of this is that before humans believe in Christ they view death as fearsome and are terrified at it, but after they have come to his faith and teaching they so despise death that they willingly encounter it and become witnesses for the resurrection the Savior accomplished

> against it. For even when they are but little children they hasten to die, and not only men, but also women prepare for it with ascetic exercises (μελετῶσι κατ' αὐτοῦ ταῖς ἀσκήσεσιν). . . . So death having been conquered and branded by the Savior on the cross, and bound hand and foot, all those in Christ, as they pass by, trample on it, bearing witness to Christ but mocking at death, charging it and saying what has been written from above against it, "Where is your victory, death, where your sting, hell?" [1 Cor 15.55]. (*Inc.* 27)

It is Christians themselves who are the primary testimony to Christ's resurrection. Their attitude towards death, nurtured by ascetic practices, which will be considered briefly in the third section of this chapter, demonstrates that they are no longer bound by death. They have "put on the faith of the cross" (*Inc.* 28), as he has put on our body, so that, by virtue of the solidarity of the body, Christ himself works the victory over death in them: "It is Christ, to whom humans are bearing witness, who himself gives and grants to each the victory over death, making it powerless in each of those who have his faith and bear the sign of the cross" (*Inc.* 29). It is not the mark of a dead man, Athanasius further points out, to convert others to himself, persuading them to live a righteous life and so overthrowing the false idols in which they previously believed: "This is not the work of one dead, but of one alive, and rather of God" (*Inc.* 30). The invisibility of Christ, Athanasius insists, is not an obstacle to believing in his Resurrection, for it is a property of God to be invisible, and the works that he now does demonstrate that he is God (*Inc.* 32). That these works are done in and through Christians demonstrates that they are in fact his own body.[59] From these works, Athanasius concludes, it should be clear that

> the Savior raised up his own body, and that he is the true Son of God, being from him, as from the Father, his own Word and Wisdom and Power; who in the last times for the salvation of all took a body, and taught the world about the Father, destroyed death and bestowed incorruptibility on all through the promise of the Resurrection, as first-fruits of which he raised up his own body, displaying it, by the sign of the Cross, as a trophy over death and its corruption. (*Inc.* 32)

[59]Origen had also made this connection, an observation for which I am indebted to Vitaly Permiakov, in *Commentary on John* 10.225–45; put most succinctly: "The Resurrection of Christ, which followed from his Passion on the Cross, also contains the mystery of the Resurrection of the whole body of Christ" (ibid., 10.229).

That Christ is alive and divine is made clear by his works, now done through Christians as the body of Christ. In all of this, Athanasius, very noticeably, does not refer to the post-resurrection appearances of Christ to the disciples described in the Gospels. It might be possible to argue, though it would mean assuming that the work was addressed to non-believers, that such an argument would not have been persuasive. More important for Athanasius himself, however, both here and throughout the work, is the identity of the body assumed by the Word with all human beings, an identity now manifest in those who put on Christ, so giving a far broader scope, than is often done, to what is meant by "incarnation."

Having fully treated the subject of the Incarnation, in all its dimensions, Athanasius then turns to a long refutation of the Jews (*Inc.* 33–40), arguing that all these things are proclaimed in their own sacred books, and then a longer refutation of the Gentiles (*Inc.* 41–55), demonstrating, once again, the reasonableness of the Christian faith and offering further proofs of the divinity of the Savior. Those who worshipped idols now tread them under foot, and those who were enthralled by their own books now "prefer the interpretation (ἑρμηνείαν) of the Gospels to everything else," so that "the crucified Savior is proclaimed throughout the whole world as God and the Son of God" (*Inc.* 53). Finally, Athanasius concludes this work with an exhortation to study the Scriptures (*Inc.* 56) and to lead a virtuous life (*Inc.* 57). He describes this work as "the rudiments and paradigm of the faith in Christ and his divine manifestation to us," so that by taking their lead, and reading the Scriptures, "genuinely applying your mind to them," one can learn more completely and more clearly the accuracy of what has been said, especially concerning "his second glorious and truly divine manifestation to us, when no longer in lowliness, but in his own glory, no longer in humble guise, but in his own magnificence, he is to come, no more to suffer, but thenceforth to render to all the fruit of his own cross, that is, the resurrection and incorruption" (*Inc.* 56).

It has been necessary to examine this double treatise in some detail so that the full scope of its vision, and the perspective from which it is seen, can be made clear. Beginning from the Passion of Christ, and indeed as an apology for the Cross, Athanasius presents the "rudiments and paradigm" of the Christian faith by outlining the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word, as revealed in and through the Cross, the death of Christ and the resurrection of the dominical body, that is, all those who now live the life in Christ, so

demonstrating Christ's victory over death. This thoroughly Christ-centered theological vision is, on the one hand, comprehensive, showing how the Lord of creation, who brought about its renewal, was the one who called it into being at the beginning, and whose presence in the body is continued by his presence now in Christians, and, on the other hand, very careful in the manner in which it proceeds, beginning with the resolution of the "existential" dilemma in the Passion, and only then turning to the "epistemological" dimensions of his work, as it also begins with the Christ known as human, who by his works is shown to be divine. Yet it is the apparent simplicity of the work that enabled it to inspire others, becoming a classic exposition of Nicene theology.

The Anti-Arian Writings

Having seen the scope of Athanasius' vision, and bearing in mind its proper vantage point, we can now turn to examine key aspects of this theology as he articulated them more thoroughly in his later anti-Arian writings. Of particular interest is how he understands Christ to be both divine and human and the relationship of Christ to his Father, "Christology" and "Trinitarian theology" to use anachronistic terms, the very usage of which runs the risk of fragmenting Athanasius' theology by dividing it along the lines of later dogmatic schema. Although the theology that we have seen Athanasius develop in *On the Incarnation* dictates, as he puts it later, that Christ "was not man and then become God, but he was God and then become man" (*Arians* 1.39), nevertheless, the epistemological order, in which, it was also noted, Athanasius himself proceeds, and so is followed here, begins with Christ as man, the one who confronts us in the Gospels and, then, by reflection on the works that he has done and still does, affirms that he is God.[60] The most important works of

[60]Pannenberg makes an important point when he observes that "Christology from above" necessarily begins with a general, rather than a specifically Christian concept of God, as revealed by Christ, while "Christology from below" begins with a general understanding of the human being, uninformed by the revelation of the true human being, Jesus Christ (W. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994], 290). Pannenberg himself concludes in a somewhat evolutionary manner, that we should speak of a "reciprocal conditioning" between our idea of God and our human self-understanding, though his justifiable precautions would seem to force us to start, instead, with the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, as preached by the apostles, as the content and definition, for us, of both God and man. On the necessity of keeping in mind the epistemological order, see also R. Williams's comment (*On Christian Theology*, 131) that "theology, in short, is perennially tempted to be

Athanasius in this regard are his three *Orations against the Arians* (written c. 339/40–345),[61] and his works *On the Council of Nicaea* (c. 352) and *On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia* (late 359), together with various letters, especially those to Serapion (written in the late 350s), the letter to Adelphius (written c. 370–1), and that to Epictetus (c. 371).

Exegesis, Economy, and Theology

The basis of Athanasius' argument against those whom he calls "Arians" is exegetical: he claims that they have not properly understood the scriptural texts that they cite in support of their contention that the Son is a creature. Several times, during the course of examining the disputed texts, Athanasius turns to the principles of exegesis and the elements of the text that should be taken into account, following what any student would have learnt from his *grammatikos*.[62] In order to understand a text properly, Athanasius insists, it is necessary to expound the "time" (καιρόν), the "person" or "character" (πρόσωπον), and the "subject matter" (πρᾶγμα) of the text, lest the reader miss the true sense (διάνοια) of the text (*Arians* 1.54.1). Despite sounding very modern, the examples that Athanasius then offers all make it clear, as Sieben points out, that he is not concerned with the "historical" or even the "literary" context of the text.[63] Thus, Athanasius continues: "Understanding this [the principles of interpretation] that studious eunuch entreated Philip, 'I beseech you, of whom is the prophet speaking? Of himself or of another?' [Acts 8.34] For he feared lest, in taking this reading contrary to the person [intended], he should wonder from the right sense" (*Arians* 1.54.2). The true "sense" of the text, therefore, is not determined by such modern considerations as its history, redaction, or literary setting, but by the apostolic perspective which sees

seduced by the prospect of bypassing the question of how it *learns* its own language." This point, and the problems that arise when it is ignored, have been discussed more fully in the Introduction.

[61]Although Kannengiesser has argued that the third *Oration against the Arians* is not by Athanasius, his arguments have not convinced many; the attribution is accepted here. Cf. C. Kannengiesser, "Athanasius' *Three Orations against the Arians*: A Reappraisal," *SP* 17.3 (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982): 981–95, reprinted in idem, *Arius and Athanasius: Two Alexandrian Theologians* (Aldershot: Variorum Reprints, 1991), article IX; and idem, *Athanase d'Alexandrie évêque et écrivain: Une lecture des traités* Contre les Ariens (Paris: Beauchesne, 1983); for a review of the latter see C. Stead, *JTS* n.s. 36 (1985), 220–29.

[62]Cf. H. J. Sieben, "Herméneutique de l'exégèse dogmatique d'Athanase," in C. Kannengiesser, ed., *Politique et théologie chez Athanase d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1974), 195–214; F. Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 29–45 (chapter 2, "The Mind of Scripture").

[63]Sieben, "Herméneutique," 201–3.

Scripture (in this case, Is 53.7–8) as referring to Christ. Athanasius then illustrates the question of "time," giving as examples the disciples, who, in wishing to learn "the time of what was said," asked Jesus, prior to his passion, "when shall these things be? and what is the sign of your coming?" (Mt 24.3). Having learnt about the "time," the disciples, Athanasius continues, could correct the Thessalonians, and also Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim 1.20), who were "beside the time" when saying that the Resurrection had already taken place, and the Galatians, who were "after the time" in still holding to circumcision. The aspect of "time," therefore, is also related to the person of Christ: his disciples were waiting for the time of his coming as it had already been spoken of, while others misunderstood the "time" intended by holding to such texts as those prescribing circumcision, which apply before Christ, or other texts, which are yet to be fulfilled by Christ at the fullness of time. The point of scriptural exegesis for Athanasius, once again, is not to determine the "original" literary or historical meaning, but to disclose the true sense of Scripture, speaking of or in the "person" of Christ,[64] as revealed when the "time" is fulfilled by Christ himself.

In his work *On the Council of Nicaea*, Athanasius subjects these elements of scriptural interpretation to further scrutiny, and this time in the context of discussing the scriptural verse that lay at the heart of the fourth-century controversy, Prov 8:22: "The Lord created me at [or as] the beginning of his ways unto his works." If one "studies and ponders what is read," investigating "the time" (τὸν καιρόν), "the characters" (τὰ πρόσωπα), and "the object" or "purpose" (τὴν χρείαν) of what is written, one will find, Athanasius claims, that this text too has an apposite meaning (διάνοια), for although the Son is also spoken of as "created," "this took place when he became man, for this is a property (ἴδιον) of a human being" (*Nicaea* 14.1). Thus, the "time" spoken of by this text refers to the Incarnation, "for one will find for certain that, whereas the Lord always is, afterwards (ὕστερον) at the completion of the ages he became man, and being the Son of God, he became Son of man also." The "purpose" is the vanquishing of death, for which reason he took to himself a body from the Virgin Mary, offering it as a sacrifice. And, "the 'character' is indeed that of the Savior, but it is said then, when thereafter, taking the body, he said (τότε δὲ λέγεται, ὅτε λοιπὸν λαβὼν τὸ σῶμα λέγει), 'The Lord

[64]Although cited above, it bears repeating here: "No one else is found in the Scriptures except the Savior common to all, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ" (*Inc.* 37).

created me a beginning of his ways unto his works'" (*Nicaea* 14.2). Thus, Athanasius postulates that, in this Christocentric reading of Scripture, a distinction has to be made concerning *how* Christ is spoken of, that is, in which "character"—whether as God, which he always is, or whether as human, which he becomes for the specific purpose of the Passion. The basis for this distinction is the difference between the properties that apply to God and those that apply to humans: "As it fits well the Son of God to be eternal and in the bosom of the Father, so to [him] become human (ἀνθρώπῳ γενομένῳ) befit the words 'the Lord created me'" as also do his hunger, thirst, ignorance (of where Lazarus lay), death, and rising again (*Nicaea* 14.3). Rather than applying in a uniform manner to Christ everything that is said of him, to conclude that he is both created and divine in the same respect, and so neither fully ("a creature but not as one of the creatures," divine but not as God himself), the partitive reading of Scripture advocated by Athanasius enables him to affirm that Christ is fully both God and human, or more precisely, God become human, with the object being his death. Although not picked up again, when introducing the three elements of exegesis, Athanasius speaks tantalizingly of a duality of "characters" (πρόσωπα). The sense of the term as employed here, however, is more that of "aspect," the way in which the one subject appears, rather than implying two distinct "subjects," where what is divine is said of one, and what is human is said of an other, a position which Athanasius explicitly rejects.[65] Although this latter position is not entailed by Athanasius' use of this partitive exegesis, it nevertheless became the focus of theological controversy later in the fourth century and continued into the fifth, when such implications were drawn out. Once again, therefore, the task of scriptural exegesis is to explain the "time" of a scriptural text, that is, its relation to the fulfillment of the text by Christ rather than its context in history, while the "character" in question is now not simply Christ, but further refined to discern under which "aspect," God or human, the text relates to him. Finally, the "purpose" or "object" governing this exegesis, which was left aside in *Arians* 1.54, is specifically the Passion of Christ, for this is the subject matter of theological reflection.

[65]Cf. Athanasius *Epict.* 2: "How can they wish to be called Christians who say that the Word came upon a holy human being as upon one of the prophets, and did not himself become man, taking the body from Mary, but that Christ is one and the Word of God another, being before Mary and before the ages the Son of the Father."

The third text to be considered, from the third *Oration against the Arians*, suggests that this partitive exegesis reflects the double nature of Scripture itself:

> Now the scope and character (σκοπὸς καὶ χαρακτήρ) of the Scripture, as we have often said, is this—that there is in it a double account (διπλῆν ἀπαγγελίαν) concerning the Savior: that he was ever God, and is the Son, being the Word and Radiance and Wisdom of the Father; and that afterwards (ὕστερον), taking flesh from the Virgin, Mary the God-bearer (θεοτόκου), he became man. And this [scope] is to be found indicated throughout the inspired Scripture, as the Lord himself has said, "Search the Scriptures, for it is they that testify to me" [Jn 5.39]. (*Arians* 3.29.1)

The "scope" and "character" of Scripture, that is, its guiding direction or focus and its particular quality, is such that it presents a "double account" of Christ, of his different "aspects" or modes of existence. The distinction between these two accounts, first as God and then "afterwards" as man, does not correspond to a temporal sequence from the Old Testament, seen as speaking of Christ only as divine, to the New Testament, taken as relating his incarnation, describing him as human, for the same twofold scope is found throughout Scripture.[66] If a distinction is to be made between the "Old Testament" and the "New Testament," it must be done in terms of promise and fulfillment, so that the subject matter of each is identical: they both witness to Christ in each of his aspects.[67] The sequence of the double account proposed by Athanasius concerns, rather, their theological order, that the one who *is* God, *became* man, bearing in mind all that this affirmation presupposes and entails, as we have seen in *On the Incarnation*.[68] Athanasius makes this point by citing passages from John and Paul (Jn 1.1–3, 14; Phil 2.6–8) and then claims that by using "the same sense" disclosed in these passages, one can go through the whole of Scripture to find the same movement described throughout, from God speaking to his Son at creation (citing Gen 1.3, 6, 26),

[66]Thus at *Nicaea* 14.2, it is "afterwards" (ὕστερον) and "henceforth" (λοιπόν), when taking the body and becoming the Son of man, that Christ says "The Lord created me."

[67]Cf. Sieben, "Herméneutique," 211–12.

[68]The sequence implied by the term "afterwards" (ὕστερον) thus concerns a distinction, in thought alone, between being and doing, a distinction, moreover, which is known by a reverse sequence. Cf. *Arians* 3.55.3: "For *by these means* he made it known that being divine and impassible, he took passible flesh, yet from his works also showed himself to be the Word of God and subsequently become man (ἑαυτὸν λόγον ὄντα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ὕστερον γενόμενον ἄνθρωπον)" (my emphasis). That he *is* the Word of God is made known by the works he does as human.

to the human birth of the Son from the Virgin at the completion of the ages (Mt 1.23, itself citing Is 7.14). Thus, Athanasius concludes: "Let the one, then, who studies the divine Scripture learn, from the ancients, the words (τὰ ῥητά), and behold, from the gospels, the Lord become man" (*Arians* 3.30.1). The "Old Testament" provides the "words" for our knowledge of God, though their meaning is only revealed in the apostolic proclamation of Christ, which thereby enables the double account of Christ to be found throughout the Scriptures.[69] Once again, the epistemological order of theological reflection begins with what Christ, as man, has done for us, and then, on this basis, affirms that he, the same one, is truly God.

That the double account of the Savior corresponds to the theological order, that Christ *is* God *become* man, means that it, together with the partitive exegesis it entails (and Athanasius' tantalizing mention of "persons" [πρόσωπα]), cannot be straightforwardly aligned to a "two nature Christology," though it is tempting to do so. In his second *Oration against the Arians*, which is largely devoted to the interpretation of Prov 8.22, Athanasius points out that there is a significant difference between the way in which Christ is said in this verse to be created, and how, three verses later, he is said to be begotten: the verb "created" is immediately qualified by a statement of purpose, "for the works," while no such qualification modifies his being begotten. If it says that he was created "for the works," Athanasius argues, then it is not his "essence" that is indicated, "but the economy which took place for his works," and this, he continues, is "second to being."[70] Or, as he puts it a little later, "he created me" is said on account of something (διά τι), while "he begets me" is not, and this is therefore "prior to 'he created' " (*Arians* 2.60.2). No reason is required for Christ being who he is, and so, when speaking of himself (Athanasius cites the "I am" statements from John), Christ speaks absolutely, without qualification (ἀπολελυμένως); but when he "becomes man," it is expressly for a purpose, the restoration, redemption, and deification

[69]The Gospels are therefore already exegetical works ("the interpretation of the Gospels" preferred by the wise, *Inc.* 53), which, by revealing the meaning of the words of Scripture (the "Old Testament"), enable the Son of God to be seen as man, and thus facilitates the continuing presence of his body, his Incarnation.

[70]*Arians* 2.51.3. Anatolios (*Athanasius*, 121), makes an important qualification: "The point of distinction does not refer so much to the *terminus a quo* (i.e., the divine agency) as it does to the *terminus ad quem* (the external effects of that agency). So it is not God's will that is secondary to God's being, but what comes to be through God's will is secondary to what eternally exists as constitutive of the divine being."

of the human race (*Arians* 2.54.1–2). So completely is his becoming man related to "the need of humans," that Athanasius even suggests that "apart from this, he would not have put on flesh" (ibid.). The point here is to demarcate very clearly what belongs to Christ himself—his being or essence, what he always is—from what belongs to him by virtue of the economy, what he has done for us. That what he has done is the basis of our knowledge of who he is mitigates against taking his counterfactual comment for more than is intended in its context; as we have seen, Athanasius uses what Christ has done for us in the Passion as the paradigm of the activity, in time, of "our Savior Jesus Christ" (*Pagans* 2, etc.). The two "aspects" of Christ presented in the double account of Scripture, as discerned by a partitive exegesis, correspond to who Christ *is* and what he has *done*, *theology* and *economy*, rather than to an unqualified "two nature Christology" (i.e., one which does not, as Chalcedon was later to do, apply both natures to one and the same subject).[71] In this way, Athanasius was able to affirm that one and the same Christ is both fully divine and fully human. However, as we will see, his manner of doing this, in terms of who Christ is and what he has done, makes it difficult, somewhat paradoxically, for Athanasius to see the human nature of Christ as anything other than a passive instrument for his divine works.

As both Athanasius and those whom he called "Arians" agreed that the referent of the text of Scripture is the Word of God, the brunt of Athanasius' argument against his opponents falls upon his claim that Scripture speaks throughout of Jesus Christ, himself the Word of God, and does so in a twofold fashion. As Athanasius sees it, by failing to differentiate how or under what "aspect" any given text of Scripture speaks of Jesus Christ, the "Arians" have conflated theology and economy and have so ended up with an intermediary being, their Word, who is himself subject to time (or at least subsequent to God), even if begotten before our time. Athanasius, on the other hand, by distinguishing what is spoken of Christ as he is from what belongs to what he has done, the economy, can maintain that the abiding, timeless, subject of theological reflection is Jesus Christ, who has himself acted in time

[71] See F. Young (*Biblical Exegesis*, 44): "while it is true that the Antiochenes would use Athanasian passages of this kind to good effect to defend their own dualistic exegesis [referring to Theodoret of Cyrrhus], and that much in *Contra Arianos* III supports that estimate, that procedure is not so evident in I and II. Cyril's appeal to Athanasius reflects his mind better: the Alexandrian way was to distinguish the Being or Essence of the Word from what the Word accepted in the 'Economy', that is, the providential saving plan of God worked out in the Incarnation."

for us.[72] To maintain this position coherently requires that due attention be given to the "time" of the scriptural text, noting especially its prophetic character, lest otherwise it be taken to suggest that Christ's human flesh existed in the heavens prior to his birth from Mary, or that he had always existed in a soul even before his earthly sojourn, positions which Athanasius is at pains to correct in his *Letter to Epictetus*.[73] Yet neither is it permissible, according to Athanasius, to separate "the Christ" from another, "the Word of God, who before Mary and before the ages was the Son of the Father."[74] To maintain that it is not a "pre-incarnate Word," but actually Jesus Christ himself who, as divine, created the world, yet that he only becomes Jesus Christ at the time of the Incarnation, stretches the limits of human comprehension, especially if this theological statement is taken as part of a temporal account narrating discrete divine actions, rather than as a way of "theologizing" him, affirming his divinity. The alternative not only collapses the timelessness of theology into the narrative of the economy, but ends up changing the very subject matter of theological reflection itself—the one Lord Jesus Christ who in his passion as a human being reveals to us the one true God. It is *this* divine (and therefore timeless and so unchanging) action that Athanasius then sees retrospectively throughout the Scriptures and the whole economy that they narrate, from creation onwards.[75]

The twofold account of Scripture, and its partitive exegesis, reflects the principle that Christ is God become man, and this Athanasius calls the "scope" of Scripture, a term which seems to function for him as the "rule of truth" did for Irenaeus and, prior to that, the "pattern of sound words" to

[72]Cf. F. Young (*Biblical Exegesis*, 143): "There is no possibility of 'narrative' in *theologia*, but narrative constitutes *oikonomia*; one is in time, the other beyond time." On the inapplicability of the category of time to God, see *Arians* 1.11–13; cf. P. Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 151–54.

[73]Cf. esp. Athanasius *Epict.* 8. Cyril of Alexandria finds himself in similar difficulty, when, after pointing out that Paul "tells us that all things have come into existence through Jesus Christ, and this same one is one and single," has his dialogue partner exclaim: "Are we to say, then, that all things were made through a man, and that he who undergoes birth from a woman in these last times of the age is the Creator of heaven and earth, the sum of all that they contain!?" (*Quod Unus Christus Dialogus*, ed. P. E. Pusey [Oxford: James Parker, 1877], 374–75, trans. J. McGuckin, *On the Unity of Christ* [Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1995], 87). This whole issue is developed further in debate with Apollinarius, especially by Gregory of Nyssa (see the discussion of his "transformative Christology," below, pp. 435–58).

[74]Athanasius *Epict.* 2, cited above, n. 65.

[75]See the comments of Young (cited above, n. 72) regarding the impossibility of a temporal narrative in theology, and also the passage from R. Williams (*Arius*, 244) cited above, Chapter Four, p. 149 n. 77.

which Paul exhorted Timothy to hold (2 Tim 1.13). Athanasius certainly introduces a new facet into the scriptural contemplation of Christ; that he cannot demonstrate, but only assert, the legitimacy of this partitive exegesis is only to be expected, for first principles cannot themselves be demonstrated.[76] Ultimately, the question, as Athanasius realized, can only be determined by an appeal to what kind of Christ these approaches present, whether, that is, they preserved the Christ proclaimed by the apostles or have substituted a different "character" altogether: "Which words theologize (θεολογεῖ) and set forth our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Son of the Father? This which you vomited forth or that which we have spoken and speak from the Scriptures?" (*Arians* 1.10.1). That Athanasius takes "our Lord Jesus Christ" as the one who is "theologized," spoken of as God, supports his claim to be preserving the apostolic deposit; that this is done by reference to the Scriptures, demonstrates the abiding exegetical nature of such theology.

Christ as Divine and Human

Although the proper order of theology is that Christ is God become man, the epistemological order, as noted in various ways, requires that the starting point for theological reflection is what Christ has done. Having extensively explored the work of Christ, as presented in *Against the Pagans* and *On the Incarnation*, and examined Athanasius' exegetical approach, we can now turn to the specific issue pertaining to this economy, that is, how he understands Christ to be divine and human. Although, as has been observed, Athanasius does not approach this subject in terms of the composition of Christ's being, by analyzing its structure, this is, nevertheless, how his works have consistently been read. The key to Athanasius' Christology is found, it is claimed, in such passages as the following:

> Being himself mighty and the creator of everything, he fashions in the virgin a body as a temple for himself, and makes it his own as an instrument (ἰδιοποιεῖται τοῦτο ὥσπερ ὄργανον), making himself known in it and dwelling in it. (*Inc.* 8)

From such a statement, it is usually inferred that Athanasius holds that the Word dwells in the body in place of the soul, for, as is repeatedly rehearsed, mention of Christ's human soul is glaringly absent in his writings. The

[76] Cf. Behr, *Way to Nicaea*, 17–48; Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 40–45.

description of the body as an "instrument" (ὄργανον), Grillmeier claims, "sums up the whole significance of the Logos-sarx [flesh] relationship."[77] The flesh, Grillmeier continues, is "moved directly and physically by the Logos";[78] it is the "instrument" by which the Word acts within this world. While enabling the Word to be "physically" present, the body also protects the Word from the suffering to which human beings are involuntarily subject, functioning as a kind of "space-suit," to use Hanson's image: it is the human body of Christ that suffers, in which the Word dwells impassibly.[79]

Anatolios has convincingly and comprehensively demonstrated the inadequacy of this approach.[80] Such interpretations usually ignore the second half of the sentence, that the body is used by the Word as an instrument to make himself known and in which to dwell. Human beings, in Athanasius' analysis, have descended to the level of the senses, and so the Word condescends to meet us there, by means of a perceptible body; as Anatolios puts it, "the reference is to knowledge rather than locomotion and animation."[81] One might also add that the "dwelling" in question is far broader in scope than a matter of animating a particular human body. Moreover, as we have also seen, for Athanasius the body is, in some ways, that which is most particular to being human; "mind" and "soul" are understood more in terms of faculties of orientation. If a human "soul" plays no role in Athanasius' understanding of Jesus Christ, it is not because the Word is the agent "physically moving" the flesh instead of a "soul"; the "Word" and the "body" are not parts alongside each other. Rather, the whole being of Jesus Christ is understood, without minimizing its physical reality, in terms of the Word of God, for it is the Word that has become flesh. Finally, as Athanasius makes explicitly clear in the very next sentence, the Word takes a body, not to provide a means of dwelling impassibly in the world, but so that the Word can undergo death in a body capable of dying.

Athanasius' own approach to the question at issue, how Jesus Christ is both divine and human, is not to catalogue the constituent elements of his

[77]Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, 317.

[78]Ibid., 318. Though note Anatolios's observation about the misleading translation of this sentence (*Athanasius*, 224 n. 103).

[79]Hanson, *Search*, 450, 456.

[80]In addition to Anatolios, *Athanasius*, see idem, " 'The Body as Instrument': A Reevaluation of Athanasius' 'Logos-sarx' Christology," *Coptic Church Review* 18 (1997): 78–84. The following pages are very much indebted to Anatolios's work.

[81]Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 72.

being, but to look at *how* he is *spoken* of in Scripture. We have seen (in *Inc.* 16) that Athanasius indicates the human and divine reality of Jesus Christ (in that order) by describing how the Word, having taken a body to himself, shows that he is human by the human things he does and then makes himself known as God by the divine works that he does. Jesus Christ is said in Scripture to do all things that are characteristically human and characteristically divine; all the various properties belonging to humanity and divinity are ascribed to him. Not surprisingly, the key term in this approach is the term ἴδιος, that is, something which is "proper" to a particular being, its "own," its "property" or "characteristic." We have already seen this term used by Alexander. Its use in contemporary philosophy emphasizes the point that the term does not denote something that has existence in and of itself, but is, as Williams puts it, "an 'essential condition' . . . of a particular concrete reality," rather than a contingent property.[82] The body of Christ does not exist separately from the Word, for the Word appropriates the body, "makes it his "own" (ἰδιοποιεῖται τοῦτο, *Inc.* 8, cited above) in order to make himself known by activities which are his own. When the Word becomes flesh, the flesh necessarily is his own, so that whatever belongs to the flesh, whatever is its "own," now belongs to the Word himself, is "his own" along with his flesh he has assumed.

In line with his practice of partitive exegesis, Athanasius introduces the important qualification regarding how things are said of Christ: as the divine Word has made the body his own, all things belonging to the flesh now belong to the Word, but only in respect of the body which is his, not in respect of his divinity. For example:

> When therefore the theologians [i.e., the evangelists] who speak of him say that he ate and drank and was born, know that the body, as body, was born, and was nourished on suitable food; but that he, God the Word united with the body (αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ συνὼν τῷ σώματι θεὸς λόγος), orders the universe, and through his actions in the body made known that he himself was not a man but God the Word. But these things are said of him (λέγεται δὲ περὶ αὐτοῦ), because the body which ate and was born and suffered was no one else's but the Lord's; and since he became man, it was right for these things to be said [of him] as concerning man (ὡς περὶ

[82] R. Williams, "The Logic of Arianism," 60.

> ἀνθρώπου λέγεσθαι), that he might be shown to have a true, not an unreal, body. And as, from these things, he was known to be bodily present, so by the works he did through the body he made himself known to be the Son of God. (*Inc.* 18)

Athanasius appears to be claiming that it is the body itself that ate, was born, and suffered, as if the body were a second subject alongside the Word who dwells in it. But, as with his treatment of partitive exgesis, where two subjects also seemed to be implied, closer examination shows that the primary concern for Athanasius is the unity of the one subject, about whom, nevertheless, various things are said in two distinct categories. His point is that, the Word having become man, what happens to the body is properly "said of him"; these things are said of no other, for the body belonged to no one else but the Word. Yet they are said of him only in so far as they refer to his body, for it does not belong to God to be born, to eat, and to drink. To go from attributing these properties to the Word himself, to speaking of the body as that which was born and nourished, certainly seems to make the body into an independent subject alongside the Word, but does not necessarily do so, any more than to say "Peter's body aches" or "a thought came to Peter's mind" separates the aching body or the inspired mind from Peter himself. In this human analogy (which, as with all analogies, should not be pushed too far), "body" and "mind" are distinct categories or aspects of Peter, in terms of which we attribute different affections and actions to him, but which are granted an autonomous existence by colloquial speech. The body-soul analogy played a very ambiguous role in theological controversy from the time that those who condemned Paul of Samosata at the Council of Antioch in 268 suggested that the Word might be thought of as taking the place of the soul in Christ. Athanasius does not explicitly use this analogy, and its mention here is only to illustrate how different properties, even incompatible ones, might be ascribed to one and the same subject.

Athanasius is very insistent that there is only one and the same subject to whom is attributed both human and divine properties. In fact, for Athanasius, our salvation depends upon our humanity being attributed to the Word of God:

> For if the works of the Word's divinity had not taken place through the body, man would not have been deified. And again, if the properties (τὰ

> ἴδια) of the flesh had not been attributed (ἐλέγετο) to the Word, man would not have been thoroughly delivered from them. . . . Yet the Word having now become human and making his own (ἰδιοποιουμένου) what pertains to the flesh, these things no longer touch the body, because of the Word who has come in it, but they are destroyed by him, and henceforth human beings no longer remain sinners and dead according to their own sufferings (τὰ ἴδια πάθη), but having risen according to the Word's power, they abide ever immortal and incorruptible. Whence also, whereas the flesh is born from the God-bearer (θεοτόκου) Mary, he himself is said to be born, who furnished to others an origin of being, in order that he might transfer (μεταθῇ) our origin (γένεσιν) to himself, and that we may no longer, as mere earth, return to earth, but as being knit into the Word from heaven, may be carried to heaven by himself. Therefore, he has similarly transferred to himself (εἰς ἑαυτὸν μετέθηκεν) the other sufferings of the body also . . . so that we, no longer being merely human, but as the Word's own (ὡς ἴδιοι τοῦ Λόγου), may participate in eternal life . . . the flesh being no longer earthly, but being henceforth made word (λογωθείσης) through God's Word who for our sake "became flesh." (*Arians* 3.33)

As the Word has become human and made his own what belongs to the flesh, everything then that belongs to the flesh, its "properties," are "attributed" to the Word who has "transferred" them to himself: the flesh is born, therefore, as it is his own flesh, he is said to be born. By being born in the flesh from the God-bearer, he establishes himself as the "origin" of human beings, he who granted them an origin of being from the earth, so that they can now abide eternally in him.[83] Human beings are now "proper to the Word," and so themselves become "worded," made word.[84] Established in him in this way, human beings are delivered from the "properties" of the flesh, or, more specifically, the flesh's own sufferings, that is, those things the flesh is subjected to or endures (the *need* to eat, sleep, etc.) rather than the flesh itself, for their life now is in him.

[83]Irenaeus (*Against the Heresies* 3.21.10) points out that the manner of Christ's birth, from a virgin and by the power of God, preserved the manner of Adam's formation, from the virgin earth and by the hand of God, so that Christ recapitulates all in himself, becoming the "head" of all those whose head had been Adam.

[84]Ignatius of Antioch speaks in a similar way, pleading with the Christians of Rome not to interfere with his impending martyrdom: "If you are silent about me [so that I may go to my death] I am a word of God (ἐγὼ λόγος θεοῦ); but if you love my flesh, I shall be only a cry" (*Romans* 2.1).

Athanasius refers to various episodes from the Gospels to demonstrate that this twofold predication applies to the Word at every stage of his economy. In doing so, Athanasius also indicates a very important point following on from the fact that both attributes apply to one and the same subject:

> Thus, when the flesh suffered, the Word was not external (ἐτικὸς) to it, and therefore the suffering is said to be his (αὐτοῦ λέγεται καὶ τὸ πάθος). And when he divinely accomplished his Father's work, the flesh was not external (ἔξωθεν) to him, but the Lord did them in the body itself. . . . [Jn 10.37–8; Mt 8.14–15, Jn 9; Jn 11.43] Such things were done and manifest in this way, because he had a body not in appearance but truly. And it was fitting that the Lord, in putting on human flesh, put it on entirely with its own sufferings (μετὰ τῶν ἰδίων παθῶν), so that, as we say that the body was his own, so also we may say that the sufferings of the body were his own alone, though they did not touch him according to the divinity. If then, the body had been another's, the sufferings of the body would have been attributed to that other; but if the flesh is the Word's (for "the Word became flesh"), necessarily then the sufferings of the flesh are attributed to him whose flesh it is. And to whom the sufferings are ascribed, such namely as to be condemned, to be scourged, to thirst, and the cross, and death, and the other infirmities of the body, of him too is the triumph and the grace. For this reason, it is consistent and fitting that such sufferings are ascribed not to another but to the Lord, so that the grace may also be from him. (*Arians* 3.32)

That is, what Jesus does as divine is not done in any other way than through his human existence: the flesh was not external to such activity, but the Lord divinely accomplished his Father's works in the body itself. And, in reverse, the Word is not external to the suffering of the flesh, for it is his own body. The unity of the one subject is such, for Athanasius, that although we can conceptually distinguish which properties applying to him are divine and which are human, we cannot separate these categories into two subjects of predication: there is not "a man" alongside "the Word," each doing their own thing, as it was alleged of Paul of Samosata in the context of a polemic against Nestorius for doing the same.[85] This is a fundamental tenet of Athanasius'

[85]Cf. Behr, *Way to Nicaea*, 224–35.

understanding of the person of Christ, as an exegetical endeavor, that would later be reaffirmed even more forcefully and explicitly by Cyril of Alexandria.

It is clearly crucial, for Athanasius, that the human condition, and all things belonging to it, be ascribed to the Word, for this is the basis of human salvation. Yet, it is equally crucial to maintain the principle that such things are not said of the Word with respect to his divinity: "They did not touch him according to the divinity." However, one must not take such statements to imply that the Word did not, therefore, really "suffer," undergo what belongs to human beings. It might appear this way, if one approaches Athanasius' words in terms of a compositional analysis of the being of Christ, trying to determine which "parts" suffered and which did not. But, for Athanasius, it is a question of predication: he is emphatic that the "sufferings" of the flesh, which has been assumed by the Word and belongs to him, are "sufferings" which therefore also belong to no one else but the Word. And since the Word is divine, and therefore "impassible," the attribution to him of human attributes and affections results in a paradoxical language. As Athanasius writes in his *Epistle to Epictetus*:

> For what the human body of the Word suffered, this the Word, united to it (συνὼν αὐτῷ), attributed to himself (εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἀνέφερεν), in order that we might be enabled to participate in the divinity of the Word. And it is truly wonderful (παράδοξον) that it was he himself who suffered and did not suffer (αὐτὸς ἦν ὁ πάσχων καὶ μὴ πάσχων): he suffered because his own body suffered, and he was in that which suffered; yet he did not suffer because the Word being by nature God, is impassible. And while he, the incorporeal, was in the body liable to suffering (τῷ παθητῷ σώματι), the body had in it the impassible Word, destroying the weaknesses of his body. (*Epict.* 6)

It is emphatically *not* that one "part" of him (his body) suffered, while another "part" (his divinity) remained above suffering; such resolution would dissolve the paradox, which ultimately goes back to the stumbling block proclaimed by Paul. Both elements of the paradox must be maintained and, at the same time, attributed to one and the same subject: it is he himself who suffers and suffers not.

Before turning to examine what Athanasius might mean by "suffering" (πάθος), the body which is "liable to suffer" or "passible" (παθητός), or the body's "own sufferings" (τὰ ἴδια πάθη), it is necessary to reiterate the point

that his interest in reflecting on the person of Christ is not to define the constituent parts of his being, but to explain what Christ has done, his work of salvation: that Christ became flesh *for our sake*. Athanasius explicitly corrects those who attempt to explain the Word's becoming flesh in terms of an "addition" (making the Trinity into a "tetrad"): "They have failed to understand that the Word is become flesh, not by reason of an addition to the divinity, but in order that the flesh may rise again" (*Epict.* 9). Rather than exploring the question of an "addition," Athanasius redirects the focus to consider what Christ has done. This salvific economy even directs his understanding of the very unity of God and human in Christ: "For the conjunction (συναφή) was of this kind, that he might unite what is human by nature to him who by nature is of the divinity, so that his salvation and deification may be secure" (*Arians* 2.70.2). In other words, it is the work of redemption and deification that provides the logic for his understanding of the person and work of Christ; as Anatolios puts it, "the unity of Christ in Athanasius is best represented linguistically not as a substantive but as a verb."[86] There is a purpose to the Word's becoming flesh, and this purpose determines how we are to understand the person of Christ.

This purposive logic is exemplified in Athanasius' partitive exegesis, where what is said of Christ as divine is taken to refer to who he is, and what is said of him as human refers to what he has done. This results in an asymmetrical relationship between the divine and human in Christ. For Athanasius, the two sets of attributes, divine and human, are not simply predicated symmetrically, in parallel, of the one Christ. Rather, human properties are, by virtue of the Word becoming flesh, attributed to the divine Word himself, and in being thus "transferred" to the Word, they are transformed: human suffering, passibility, becomes impassible; human nature is deified. As Athanasius, discussing Peter's words that "Christ suffered in the flesh" (1 Pet 4.1), comments:

> Therefore also when he is said to hunger and thirst and to toil and not to know and to sleep and to weep and to ask and to flee, and to be born and to ask to avoid the cup and, in a word, to undergo all that belongs to the flesh, let it be said, as is congruous, in each case, "Christ then hungering and thirsting 'for us in the flesh'" . . . and, in a word, all such things "for

[86]Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 149.

> us in the flesh." For on this account has the Apostle himself said, "Christ then having suffered," not in his divinity, but "for us in the flesh," that these sufferings may be acknowledged as, not the very Word's own according to nature, but the very flesh's own by nature. Let no one stumble at what belongs to humanity, but rather let it be known that in nature the Word himself is impassible, and yet because of that flesh which he put on, these things are ascribed to him (λέγεται περὶ αὐτοῦ ταῦτα), since they are the flesh's own (ἴδια), and the body itself is the Savior's own (ἴδιον). And while he himself, being impassible in nature, remains as he is, not harmed (μὴ βλαπτόμενος) by these, but rather obliterating and destroying them (ἐξαφανίζων καὶ ἀπολλύων αὐτά), [so] humans, with their passions as if changed and abolished in the Impassible, henceforth become themselves also impassible and free from them for ever. (*Arians* 3.34)

The unity of the divine and human in Christ, determined by his act of salvation, lies in the non-symmetrical relationship between them: the predication of suffering to a divine, impassible subject, results in the transformation of suffering into impassibility. When the Word becomes flesh, this is a real involvement of the divinely impassible Word in the human state of suffering. In this act, however, the divine Word remains what he always is, impassible. The Word has involved himself not simply by undergoing suffering, but by transforming that very suffering, making it impassible.

Thus, for Athanasius there is no diminution of the status of the Word when the Word becomes flesh. Commenting on Peter's words, that the Father has "made him Lord and Christ," the anointed one (Acts 2.36), and Paul's words to the Philippians, Athanasius states:

> The Father, in making him human (for to be made is a property of humans), did not merely make him human, but has made him [human] for the sake of his being Lord of all mankind, and for the sake of sanctifying all through the anointing. For though the Word, "being in the form of God, took the form of a servant," yet the assumption of the flesh did not make a servant of the Word, who was by nature Lord; but rather, not only was it that liberation of all humanity which takes place by the Word, but that very Word, who is by nature Lord and made man, has through a servant's form been made Lord of all and Christ, that is, in order to make all holy by the Spirit. (*Arians* 2.14)

When the Word becomes flesh, is made man, he does not simply become a servant. Instead, by taking the form of a servant he is made Lord of all. His acceptance of the servant's form simultaneously transforms that form, not into something else, but to be the means whereby the one who *is* Lord by nature becomes Lord of all, for the service of all. In other words, the Lord was never simply a servant; he was never merely subject to suffering. Nor is his being Lord and his being a servant simply juxtaposed as two parallel modes of predication. Rather, because both attributes are predicated of him in different manners (one as who he is, the other as what he has accepted to do), one is transformed into the other, so resulting in a firm unity: the Word is not reduced to the condition of a servant, yet the form of the servant is the way in which the one who is Lord by nature becomes the Lord of all. It is, in the terms of the previous quotations, by taking upon himself human suffering that the Word transforms the same suffering into impassibility. Speaking more generally, one could say that for Athanasius, the Word becoming man is at the same time the becoming God of man. For human beings, this is subsequent to Christ's own work, "he became human so that we might become god" (*Inc.* 54), but for Christ the becoming-human is simultaneously its transformation, the "becoming Word" of his flesh, so that every aspect of his human existence, from conception onwards, as proclaimed in Scripture, reveals him to be divine, the Word and Son of the Father, remembering that this is known, and then told, only from the perspective of the Cross, a perspective which we have seen Athanasius develop so carefully.

Becoming man, therefore, Christ does not simply lower himself to our estate, but raises us up to his stature. As Athanasius puts it in his *Letter to Adelphius*:

> And we know that while "in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God," now that he has become also human for our salvation, we worship him, not as equal [to the body], coming in an equal body (οὐχ ὡς ἴσον ἐν ἴσῳ γενόμενον τῷ σώματι), but as Master, assuming the form of the servant, and as Maker and Creator, coming in a creature, in order that, in it delivering all things, he might bring the world near to the Father, and make all things to be at peace, things in heaven and things on earth. (*Adelph.* 8)

There is no time, as it were, when he is merely like us: when he comes in the body he does not equalize himself to it, but, rather, in taking a body, he transforms all that belongs to human nature, in particular all those things to which human nature is subjected, which human beings now "suffer" or endure, such as fear, ignorance, hunger, and death. It is important to recall what we have seen when examining how Athanasius speaks of the Lord's coming in his body, that this is not something that can be reduced solely to his birth from Mary. He does not preemptively transform all the human passibilities simply by taking a body, by being born, for otherwise he would not actually have undergone them. Rather, the "Incarnation," the "coming" of the Lord or his "parousia," encompasses his whole life, so that, for Athanasius, Christ really did grow in wisdom, suffer hunger and fear, and ultimately die on the Cross. Christ really does appropriate the suffering that belongs to the human nature which has become his own; he suffers, as Athanasius repeatedly states, while also insisting that Christ's appropriation of this suffering is simultaneously its reversal, transforming suffering into impassibility. It is the perspective of the scriptural account of Christ, where what is narrated of Christ is related in terms of the victory already accomplished, that accounts for the simultaneity of the transformation. That is, Athanasius does not treat the Gospels as a modern biography of the human Jesus, but as an account of the economy, grounded in theology, of the Word of God, the crucified and exalted Christ Jesus.

Such an understanding of the person and work of Christ is very far removed from the concerns which have taxed modern theology. From its concern for the historical human Jesus, it is very difficult to assess in what sense, for Athanasius, Christ really did become human and undergo all things proper to human beings if he does so impassibly. It is noticeable that whenever Athanasius attempts to deal with the passages, especially from the Synoptics and Hebrews, which speak graphically of Christ's suffering, passages which Athanasius' opponents latched on to as most supportive of their claims, Athanasius always, almost instinctively, refers to the transformation which occurs when the Word "suffers" such experiences. For instance:

> That the words "Why have you forsaken me?" are as his (ὡς αὐτοῦ), according to the above explanations (though he suffered nothing [μηδὲν πάσχοντος], for the Word is impassible), is likewise declared by the evangelists: since he became man, and these things are done and said as from man (ὡς

> παρὰ ἀνθρώπου), that, lightening these very sufferings (τὰ παθήματα) of the flesh himself, he might free it from them. (*Arians* 3.56.3)

Again, his suffering effects freedom from suffering, not sequentially, but simultaneously, so that the Word suffers nothing. In what sense, however, is this really suffering? If, by assuming human nature, the Lord transforms it so that it is no longer subject to the passions appropriate to human nature, then is he really even human? When human suffering is attributed to Christ "as concerning man," is it intended that Christ, being truly human, does things "as" human, or that the Word merely undergoes human suffering "as if" he were a human being? The latter seems to be implied when Athanasius further states that, as all the human sufferings have been transformed, then any manifestation of the weakness of the flesh only occurs by his permission:

> He who did the works is the same as he who showed that his body was liable to suffering (παθητόν) by allowing it (ἐν τῷ ἀφιέναι) to weep and hunger and to show other properties of a body. For by these means he made it known that being divine and impassible, he took flesh liable to suffering, yet from his works also showed himself to be the Word of God and subsequently become man. (*Arians* 3.55.2–3)

In other words, it was permissible for the incarnate Word to allow his flesh to appear weak, in order to show that he was man, and yet to act divinely, to demonstrate that he was God. If the flesh only exhibits its characteristic weakness because it is allowed to do so by the Word dwelling within it, then in what sense is it really weak? Does Athanasius' Christ really experience weakness, suffering, and temptation as we do, yet without sin, as insisted upon by Hebrews and described in the Synoptics? Or is Athanasius' Christ solely, as it were, the Johannine Christ, the one who is always in control, showing no fear even in Gethsemane. As a result of such considerations, it is sometimes asserted that if Arius' Christ is a Savior who, though not fully divine, yet gives us an example of a human being who genuinely underwent suffering and tribulation, and emerged victorious, Athanasius' Savior also gives us an example, but one of a God operating through a not-quite-human instrument.

Athanasius would probably reply, Anatolios suggests in terms drawn from the *Letter to Adelphius* cited earlier, that such criticism indicates an inability to understand the Word's becoming fully human as anything other than the

Word's equalizing himself with such a condition.[87] But if the Word had done this, Athanasius would contend, how is his becoming human also the redemption and deification of human beings? How is his incarnation our deification, unless his assumption of human nature is simultaneously a transformation of that nature, rather than simply an abasement on his part? Even in the passages from the third *Oration against the Arians* just cited, Athanasius *does* explicitly state that Christ wept and hungered, actions proper to the body which was his. Moreover, it is by such actions, Athanasius claims, that he made himself known to be the Word of God. It is, as we have repeatedly seen, in the manner which Christ acts, as human, that we come to know him as divine.

The discomfort that many have felt when reading Athanasius, and subsequent Alexandrian theologians, can be considerably relieved by Anatolios's insightful observation that when Athanasius speaks of the "sufferings" of the flesh or the human experiences of Christ in general, he is not talking in a modern psychological manner:

> For Athanasius, the interaction of passibility and impassibility in Christ is conceived not so much in terms of feeling and no-feeling, but of activity and passivity—in terms of what is acting upon what, and the distinction between the "subject" and "object" within the process of transformation. Thus the unity and distinction in Christ is conceived in terms of the divine working upon the human in order to make the human divine.[88]

What is at stake for Athanasius is not whether Christ "felt" hunger, fear, and pain, whether he "really experienced" being human as we do, but the relationship between activity and passivity: Is Christ the active agent in this or the passive subject? "Suffering" here is to be understood in terms of "passivity," being acted upon, rather than in terms of "feeling" or "experiencing." In reverse, "impassibility" is not understood as a lack of involvement, or an inability to change; if God is impassible, this means that he is not subject to anything, that he cannot be compelled. Further to this, one might add that if we have been speaking about the one "subject" in Athanasius' analysis of the being and works of Christ, this "subject" is likewise not understood in terms of psychological content, the modern "person," about whom it would make no sense

[87]Ibid., 152.
[88]Ibid., 155.

to say "he suffered and did not suffer."[89] The one "subject" is rather to be understood in logical or grammatical terms, as a subject of predication: the one Jesus Christ, the Word of God, is spoken of as God and as human.

The impassibility of the Word in the midst of the suffering that afflicted his body is thus best understood in terms of the Word's active, willing acceptance of our human condition. Only by accepting to undergo what human beings undergo, rather than having it forced upon him, does Jesus Christ overturn the hold that it has on human beings. Thus, Athanasius comments:

> And as for his saying, "If it be possible, let the cup pass," notice how, though he said this, he also rebuked Peter saying, "You do not consider the things of God." For he willed what he asked to avoid, and "for this reason he had come." The willing was his (for he came for this), but the terror pertained to the flesh. Therefore as a man he says such words, and yet both were said by the same (καὶ ἀμφότερα πάλιν παρὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ λέγεται), to show that he was God, himself willing, but becoming man he had a flesh that was in terror, on account of which [i.e., the flesh] he combined his own will with human weakness, so that destroying this [suffering] he might in turn make man fearless in the face of death. . . . For as he abolished death by death, and by human means all human [sufferings] (ἀνθρωπίνως πάντα τὰ ἀνθρώπινα), so by this supposed terror he removed our terror, so that man may never more fear death. (*Arians* 3.57.1, 3)

So, when Athanasius speaks of the Word remaining impassible in the face of everything which he really undergoes as man ("he suffers and does not suffer"), this, once again, emphatically does not mean that part of the Word remains above it all, while another part undergoes the experience of suffering. Rather, having actively accepted our state, having willed to become human, the Word actively, or voluntarily, accepts our "sufferings," those things to which we are subjected involuntarily. Thus, Christ really "suffers" temptations, just as we do, as Hebrews insists so emphatically: that our pioneer of salvation is made perfect through suffering, and that he is a high priest able to sympathize with our weakness because he has also suffered, without sin (Heb 4.15, cf. 2.10, 2.18). But, if Christ undergoes all that we undergo, to

[89]For example, see Grillmeier's comment (*Christ in Christian Tradition*, 312): "There can be no doubt that the Logos is not merely the personal subject of Christ's bodily life, but also the real, physical source of all the actions of his life."

the point of death, this is not forced on Christ: he is not compelled to endure that which we suffer. Rather, he voluntarily subjects himself and does so out of love: it is for this that he has come. He has taken upon himself all the negative experiences that afflict human beings, but his acceptance of them is simultaneously their overcoming, for he has *willed* to undergo them; they are not conquered by any other means than themselves. Willing to accept our condition, Jesus Christ, as God, remains "impassible" in the midst of them all. His voluntary, active, "impassible" acceptance of "suffering," reverses the effects of our "suffering," it looses the bondage that such afflictions have on human beings: his adoption of the form of a servant simultaneously shows that in that very form he is Lord of all. Christ really did, according to Athanasius, undergo all that we undergo, but by voluntarily undergoing it, he reverses its hold on those who now live in him: the fear truly undergone by Christ gives us confidence, his ignorance grants knowledge, his service is lordship, and finally his death is the destruction of death. It is by human means, as Athanasius points out, that Christ conquers all things to which human beings are subjected. Once again, for Athanasius, while the suffering and the transformation of it can be distinguished conceptually (it is as human that Christ dies, as God he conquers death), yet they cannot be separated into two distinct actions or treated as chronologically sequential: it is by his death that he conquers death. Christ's divine impassibility, his freedom from suffering, is the very mode in which he suffers as man, voluntarily. To use the later formula of Cyril of Alexandria, "he suffered impassibly" (ἔπαθεν ἀπαθῶς).

It is, moreover, because Jesus Christ is both divine and human that what he effects is made secure for us. Noting that some passages of Scripture speak of Jesus Christ as receiving grace or being exalted (in particular Phil 2.9 and Ps 44.8 LXX), yet that others speak of him as bestowing the Spirit (Jn 15.26), Athanasius argues that this "receiving" and "giving" refer to the two aspects of the one who is himself always the same: " 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever' [Heb 13.8], and, remaining unalterable, it is the same one who gives and receives, giving as God's Word, receiving as human" (*Arians* 1.48.5). But because Jesus Christ himself is also the recipient of this gift, the grace remains secure even for us:

> Through whom and from whom should the Spirit have been given but through the Son, for the Spirit is his? And when were we enabled to receive

> it, except when the Word became man? . . . [Paul (Phil 2.9) and David (Ps 44.8 LXX) show that] in no other way would we have partaken of the Spirit and been sanctified, if it were not that the Giver of the Spirit, the Word himself, had spoken of himself as anointed (χρίεσθαι) with the Spirit for us. Thus we have securely received it (βεβαίως ἐλάβομεν), he being said to be anointed in the flesh; for the flesh being first sanctified in him, and he being said, as human, to have received [the Spirit] for its [i.e., the flesh's] sake, we have the consequent grace of the Spirit (ἡμεῖς ἐπακολουθοῦσαν ἔχομεν τὴν τοῦ πνεύματος χάριν) receiving "out of his fullness." (*Arians* 1.50.6–8; Jn 1.16)

In the Incarnation, because of the identity of the body which the Word has with ours, the reception of the Spirit, sanctifying the flesh and anointing him as the Christ, extends through him to us. The security of the gift bestowed in this way picks up on the dialectic, developed in *Against the Pagans* and *On the Incarnation*, between the benevolence of God, bestowing upon human beings a share in the Word and creating them in his image, and the inability of human beings to preserve this gift. Now that the Word is embodied, he not only bestows the gift, but also himself receives it:

> For though he had no need, he is still said to have received humanly what he received, so that as it is the Lord who received, and as the gift rests in him, the grace may remain secure (βεβαία ἡ χάρις διαμείνῃ). For when the human being alone receives it, he is liable to lose it again (and this is shown by Adam, for he received and lost). But in order that the grace may not be liable to loss, and may be guarded securely for human beings (βεβαία φυλαχθῇ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις), he himself makes the gift his own (ἰδιοποιεῖται), and so he says that he has received power, as man, which he always had as God. (*Arians* 3.38.3–4)

The unity of the subject is thus understood by Athanasius to imply that the immutability of Jesus Christ as the Word of God is manifest even in his being human. So whereas the preservation of the gift given by God to all depended upon their inherently unstable, because creaturely, response to him, that Jesus Christ himself, "the same yesterday today and forever," is the recipient as well as the bestower, renders the gift fully secure. Christ thus not only "appropriates" a body, but in doing so "appropriates the gift," or, as Anatolios puts it, "the unsurpassable gift of the Incarnation is that we were given

the very reception of the gift."[90] Christ is not only the one who has wrought all of this, but is now, for us, "an image and type of virtue" (*Arians* 1.51.2).

There is, however, one further aspect that is not quite fully resolved in Athanasius. As we have seen, for Athanasius, created being as a whole, and human nature in a qualified manner, is defined by its passivity towards God: human beings are receptive to the divine, to be transfigured in union with the divine. Even in being transfigured, becoming "impassible," human nature demonstrates its continuing passivity in the hands of God, for it is transformed rather than transforms itself. Yet, the qualification which differentiates human beings from other creatures is that we are to maintain actively, freely and deliberately, our own passivity. Thus, in the case of human beings, salvation and deification is neither a result of human action nor is it a mechanical procedure, for it requires our total and active cooperation to make our own what is offered in Christ. But what about the case of the human nature of Christ? Is the human body of Christ anything more, for Athanasius, than a passive instrument in the hands of the divine Word, effecting the redemption of human beings from death and granting them knowledge? In some ways, the very asymmetry of Athanasius' particular manner of partitive exegesis and his consequent understanding of the person and works of Christ, where human properties, referring to what Christ *has done*, are applied to the Word who *is* divine, does not allow for any fuller understanding of the human being of Christ. This question does not really begin to be resolved until Chalcedon, where it is affirmed that both divine and human predicates (or natures) are equally to be ascribed to the one Jesus Christ, who is thus not only divine but *is* also truly human. Yet, even then, it takes two more centuries before Maximus the Confessor is able to explain how the energy and will proper to human nature not only retains its integrity in Christ, but is fulfilled in him *actively*.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

It is clear that, for Athanasius, Christ's body, the reality of which is shown by his deeds, is his own. Yet the works which Christ does are, in a significant sense, not his own: he has come not to do his own will, but the will of the one who sent him (Jn 6.38). As such, the Son is himself God's own (ἴδιος) Son, and having such a Son is in turn a "property" (τὸ ἴδιον) constitutive for

[90] Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 161.

God being the Father. And, finally, this means that the Son shares in his Father's own divinity. As Athanasius writes:

> "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor 5.19); for the Son, in whom the creation was then reconciled to God, is the property of the essence of the Father (τὸ γὰρ ἴδιον τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς οὐσίας ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς). Thus what things the Son then wrought are the Father's works, for the Son is the form of the divinity of the Father (τὸ γὰρ εἶδος τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς θεότητός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός), which wrought the works. (*Arians* 3.6.2)

Being himself intrinsic to the being of God, the very expression of his divinity, the Son is himself truly divine. We have already seen Athanasius asserting, at the end of *Against the Pagans* (46, cited earlier), that the Son is divine not by "participation," acquiring such properties "from outside," but that he is "Wisdom-in-himself" (αὐτοσοφία), "Word-in-himself," and similarly light, truth, and righteousness, so that he is the exact image of the Father. From his earliest literary works, Athanasius held that the Son possesses, in himself, all the properties which are usually only attributed to the one God, even if he did not, to begin with, use the language of Nicaea to express this.

Athanasius' gradual adoption of the language of "being" or "essence" (οὐσία) to describe the relation between Father and Son reflects the process he recounts happening at the Council of Nicaea, when the term *homoousios* was settled upon because the supporters of Arius, "with a wink," accepted all the more scriptural designations for the Son and his relationship to the Father (such as "image," "power," "from the Father"), taking them as equally applicable to created beings (*Nicaea* 19–20). For Athanasius such terminology was not meant to supplant that of Scripture, but to reinforce its central point, guaranteeing that we are indeed speaking of God himself. Titles such as "God," "Father," "Lord," and "I am" are held, by Athanasius, to indicate not something "about God," but "his essence itself," which, though signified, remains "incomprehensible" (*Nicaea* 22). That the title "Father" is here listed with other titles indicative of the "essence" of God is significant. It demonstrates that the term "essence" is not used by Athanasius in a generic sense, as referring to the kind of being that God is, but to indicate the very being of God, God himself. Yet that God is essentially Father, as we will see further below, entails there being a Son, who is, as the Creed of Nicaea put it, "from the essence of the Father" and so "consubstantial with him." When considering elsewhere the

content of this latter assertion, Athanasius necessarily qualifies the use of the title "Father," for if the Son is of the same essence as the Father who begot him, he is not however called "Father." So, Athanasius points out, as "the Son, being an offspring from the essence, is one in essence (τῇ οὐσίᾳ ἕν), himself and the Father who begot him," the Son therefore "has equality with the Father by titles expressive of unity, and that what is said of the Father is said, in Scripture, of the Son also, all but his being called Father, for the Son said 'All things that the Father has are mine' [Jn 16.15]."[91] After citing numerous scriptural texts illustrating how the same terms, expressive of divinity, are used of both the Father and Son (e.g., "almighty," "being everlasting," "worshipped," etc.), Athanasius concludes:

> If what the Father has is naturally the Son's, and the Son himself is from the Father, and because of this oneness of divinity and of nature, he and the Father are one, and "he that has seen the Son has seen the Father" [cf. Jn 14.9], reasonably is he called by the fathers [of Nicaea] "consubstantial"; for to what is other in essence it belongs not to possess such [attributes]. (*Councils* 50)

The Son, as seen from the scriptural account, is spoken of in exactly the same terms as the Father, with the only qualification being that the Son is from the Father and is not himself the Father. There is, therefore, a single divinity or nature, of the Father in the Son, so that, in reverse, the Son is "consubstantial" with the Father and the one in whom we see the Father. The full import of all this will be explored further; for now it is clear that the content of this language, which by its usage risks becoming too abstract, is exegetical, summarizing how Scripture speaks of God.

Athanasius continues, in *On the Councils of Ariminum and Selucia*, with the argument, which recurs throughout his works, that if Christ were divine by participation, and not himself from the Father and of his essence, "he would not deify being deified himself" (*Councils* 51). The logic of this argument has been questioned on the grounds that it is not self-evident that Christ would not reveal the true God if he were not himself truly divine, or that if he were a created being he would not be able to pass on what he has received. Such an argument depends, it is claimed, "upon the general principle that one can only communicate to others that which is in the fullest

[91] Athanasius *Councils* 48–49; this is a point already made in *Arians* 3.15.

sense one's own."[92] Athanasius does not, however, begin with such a presupposition and, prior to it, an independently formed concept of divinity. His starting point is what is wrought in and by Christ as described in the Scriptures, and this is, for him, the definition of divinity: because God has acted in this way, we can know what God is, being brought into communion with him. Moreover, as Anatolios points out, Athanasius does not mean to deny that a creature cannot share with another creature what it has received, but that the reception of this grace depends upon the presence of God within the created realm; if the Son were a deified creature, whatever he communicated to us would not be an immediate access to the Giver of grace.[93] Yet what has come to pass in Christ, as the very "form of the divinity of the Father" (*Arians* 3.6.2, cited above), demonstrates the immediate presence of God within creation.

We have already seen how Athanasius refers to the Holy Spirit when describing the work of Christ, the one anointed in the flesh with the Spirit for the sanctification of the flesh (*Arians* 1.50, cited above). While the Spirit was not a direct point of concern in his anti-Arian writings, Athanasius addresses the issue more fully in his letters to Serapion of Thmuis, concerning those, whom he calls the *tropici*, who claimed that the Spirit is a creature and therefore other in essence from Christ and the Father. Here, Athanasius argues for the divinity of the Spirit in the same manner as he had done for Christ, that is, by considering the language of Scripture:

> Let us look, one by one, at the references to the Holy Spirit in the divine Scriptures, and, like good bankers, let us judge whether the Spirit has any property (ἴδιόν τι) of creatures, or the property of God (ἴδιον τοῦ θεοῦ); that we may call him either a creature or else other than the creatures, proper to and one with the divinity in Trinity (ἴδιον δὲ καὶ ἓν τῆς ἐν τριάδι θεότητος). (*Serapion* 1.21)

Such examination shows, for Athanasius, that the Spirit is unquestionably to be counted together with the Father and the Son as being fully divine. In the Scriptures, the Spirit, while not being confused with the Son, is also called "the Spirit of God and is said to be in God himself and from God himself."

[92]Cf. M. Wiles, "In Defence of Arius," *JTS* n.s. 13 (1962): 339–47, at 346; he continues: "It is not clear that this principle is self-evidently true and it is difficult to see how it could be established."

[93]Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 127–29.

Therefore, Athanasius concludes, "if the Son, because he is of the Father, is proper to his essence, it must be that the Spirit, who is said to be from God, is in essence proper to the Son," so that while the Son is spoken of as being Wisdom and Truth, the Power and Glory of God, so the Spirit is called "the Spirit of Wisdom and Truth," "the Spirit of Power and of Glory" (*Serapion* 1.25). It is through his relationship to the Son that the Spirit is seen to belong properly to God, to be of God. The Father, as Athanasius puts it, is Light, the Son is his Radiance, and "we may see in the Son the Spirit, by whom we are enlightened" (*Serapion* 1.19). If the Son is the Image of God, then the Spirit, according to Athanasius, can be called "the image of the Son" (*Serapion* 1.24). Moreover, as it is "through the Spirit that we are all said to be partakers of God," the Spirit cannot be counted as a creature: "That we are called partakers of Christ and partakers of God shows that the unction and the seal that is in us belongs, not to the nature of things originate but to the nature of the Son who, through the Spirit who is in him, joins us to the Father" (*Serapion* 1.24). The work of the Spirit in Christ and in us shows that he belongs to the same essence, that of the Father; the Spirit, along with the Word, is also "theologized," confessed as God.[94]

The Son and the Spirit do the work of God within creation. But their mediation is not understood by Athanasius as a means of keeping God separate from creation, as if, because of his transcendence, God were incapable of being present in creation. A created mediator would himself be the object of God's creative work, rather than himself doing God's works.[95] For Athanasius, as the works done by the Son in the Spirit demonstrate their own identity of essence with the Father, their mediating activity effects the immediate presence of the Father. Athanasius also points out the logical flaw in his opponents' argument, as he presents it, that as created beings could not bear the direct hand of God, a mediator was brought into being for this purpose: how then, Athanasius asks, was the mediator brought into being? (*Nicaea* 8–9) Such an approach leads to an infinite regress. Athanasius grants that the

[94]Cf. Athanasius, *Serapion* 1.31: it is impious to call the Spirit a creature, who "is conjoined (ἡνωμένον) with the Son as the Son is conjoined with the Father, who is co-glorified with the Father and the Son, who is confessed as God (θεολογούμενον) with the Word, and who works whatever the Father works through the Son."

[95]Cf. Williams (*Arius*, 241): "Such a [mediatorial created] redeemer must himself have a history of relation with God, must in some sense therefore be passive to God, and so cannot embody God's activity directly."

first-formed has some kind of prerogative, but only one of honor, not nature: "He came of the earth, as other men, and the hand which then fashioned Adam also now and ever fashions and constructs those who come after him" (*Nicaea* 9.1). This work, furthermore, involves the Spirit:

> In him [the Spirit] the Word glorifies the creation, and, deifying and making sons, leads [them] to the Father. But the one who joins creation to the Word cannot belong to the creatures; and the one who makes created beings sons cannot be alien from the Son. For we should otherwise have to seek another Spirit, so that by him this Spirit might be joined to the Word. But that would be absurd. The Spirit, therefore, is not one of the things originated, but he is proper to the divinity of the Father, and in him the Word deifies things originated. He in whom creation is deified cannot be outside the divinity of the Father. (*Serapion* 1.25)

The joint work of the Son and the Spirit, glorifying creation by imparting divine life to those who become sons of God, demonstrates that the Son and the Spirit are not external to God, but belong to his very essence. Through their work, each of the Trinity is immediately present to creation, granting created beings a share in the life of God.

In a particularly interesting passage from his first *Oration against the Arians*, Athanasius analyzes further the distinction, yet intimate connection, between the Son's relationship to the Father and the relation between created beings and God and does so by redeploying the notion of participation to explain what is meant by the Father "begetting" his "own" Son. If the Son is such as he is by participation, as his opponents claim, then it cannot be by participating in the Spirit, for the Spirit "receives" from the Son (cf. Jn 16.14), nor can it be a participation "in something external provided by the Father," for, in that case, there would be an intervening principle between the Father and the Son. So, Athanasius concludes, "what is partaken (τὸ μετεχόμενον) is not external, but from the essence of the Father" (*Arians* 1.15.6). Yet if this "what is partaken" is other than the Son, that would again interpose something between the Father and Son. Athanasius then continues:

> We must say that what is "from the essence of the Father," his own, is entirely the Son. For it is the same thing to say that God is wholly participated (ὅλως μετέχεσθαι) and that he begets; for what does begetting

> signify, except a Son? And so all things partake (μετέχει τὰ πάντα) of the Son himself according to the grace of the Spirit coming from him. From this it is clear that the Son himself partakes of nothing, but that-which-is-partaken from the Father is the Son (τὸ δὲ ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς μετεχόμενον, τοῦτο ἔστιν ὁ υἱός). For, as partaking of the Son himself, we are said to partake of God, and this is what Peter said, "that you may be partakers of the divine nature" [2 Pet 1.4]; as the Apostle says also, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God?" [1 Cor 3.16] and, "We are the temple of the living God" [2 Cor 6.16]. And seeing the Son, we see the Father [cf. Jn 14.9]; for the thought and comprehension of the Son is knowledge of the Father, because he is the proper Offspring from his essence (διὰ τὸ ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας αὐτοῦ ἴδιον εἶναι γέννημα). And since no one of us would ever call being-partaken-of a passion or division of God's essence (for it has been shown and acknowledged, that God is participated, and to be participated is the same thing as to beget [καὶ ταὐτὸ εἶναι μετέχεσθαι καὶ γεννᾶν]); therefore that which is begotten is neither a passion nor division of that blessed essence. (*Arians* 1.16)

While human beings partake of the Son by the grace of the Spirit, and in so doing partake of God himself, the Son partakes of nothing; he is, rather, "what is partaken from the Father." That is, the Son is, entirely, a total participation in the Father's essence; there is no part of the Son that is not always already a participation in the Father. The difference between human participation in God and the participation in the Father that is the Son does not, therefore, turn upon the participation itself. Nor does the distinction rest upon a belief that there is part of the human being (say, for instance, the "body" as opposed to the "mind") that does not, or cannot, participate in God, or that there is "part" of God in which we do not participate, for participating in God, we become "partakers of the divine nature." Rather, the distinction concerns whence it is that the participation occurs. While human beings were certainly created to participate in God, the starting point for their participation in God is precisely the nothingness from which they were called into being, and which they have since preferred, falling into a merely "natural" state of corruption and death. To whatever degree human beings partake of the divine nature, they do so from the outside; the gift remains other than what they are, and they are external to the divine essence. The externality to God of created being

is thus not understood by Athanasius as a deprivation, but rather as the founding ground for their participation in God.[96] Unlike created beings, however, the Son, as the Father's "own," is intrinsic to his being, and in turn, his very essence is this total participation in the Father.

Being himself "that-which-is-partaken from the Father," the essence of the Son is understood totally in terms of his derivation from the Father; there is no other point of origin for the Son from which he might be said to come to participate in God. It is this perfect continuity which enables Athanasius to identify it with the divine "begetting." The Father's begetting of the Son is therefore not to be thought of as some kind of division or separation within the divine being, as if God were a material being subject to abscission, or his begetting of the Son were analogous to human parturition. Rather, the begetting of the Son is understood in terms of the perfect continuity of the being of the Father in the Son.[97] It is thus in terms of the contrast between what is one's "own" and what is "external," rather than speculating about the physiognomy of divine begetting, that Athanasius distinguishes between "begetting" and "creating":

> God's creating is second to his begetting; for "Son" implies something his own (ἴδιον) and truly from that divine and eternal essence; but what is from his will comes into existence from without (ἔξωθεν) and is framed through his own Offspring who is from it. (*Arians* 2.2.6)

The existence of the Son does not depend upon a volitional act of God, as if he might have chosen otherwise: "It is something that surpasses the will, that he should have engendered and be by nature the Father of his own Word."[98]

[96]Cf. Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 105.

[97]Cf. Athanasius *Nicaea* 10: Christ is the Son of God not in the sense of Is 1.2 ("I have begotten and exalted sons"), but as Isaac was the son of Abraham, "for what is naturally begotten from any one and does not accrue to him from without, that in the nature of things is a son, and that is what the name implies," though Athanasius emphasizes that the divine begetting must not be understood in human terms, for those who study Scripture properly will "discriminate and dispose of what is written according to the nature of each subject, and avoid any confusion of sense, so as neither to conceive of the things of God in a human way, nor ascribe the things of humans to God."

[98]*Arians* 2.2.4: ὑπεραναβέβηκε δὲ τῆς βουλήσεως τὸ πεφυκέναι καὶ εἶναι αὐτὸν φύσει πατέρα τοῦ ἰδίου λόγου. Arius had affirmed that it was by his will that God gave existence to the Son (cf. Letter to Alexander, Urk. 6.2; cited and discussed above, pp. 136–38). On the role of the "will" in these debates, see C. Stead, "The Freedom of the Will and the Arian Controversy," in *Platonismus und Christentum: Festschrift für Heinrich Dörrie*, ed. H.-D. Blume and F. Mann, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 10 (Münster: Aschendoff, 1983), 245–57; reprinted in Stead, *Substance and Illusion*, essay XVI.

As it is through the Word that God has effected his will, Athanasius describes the Word as being "the living will of the Father, an essential energy, and a real Word, in whom all things both consist and are excellently governed" (*Arians* 2.2.5). In the act of creating and within creation, the Word expresses the will of the Father, which itself suffices for calling all things into being and supporting them in existence.

The premise for the assertion that it is not an act of the Father's will that results in the existence of the Son is not the supposition that the divine realm is subject to some kind of external necessity, but the fact that we have come to know God through his Son, for, although we need to distinguish between who the Son is in himself and what he has done on our behalf, that he is God's own Son entails that God *is* Father rather than chose to become a father. To assert that the Son came into being by the Father's will would imply that there was a point at which the Son was not and open the possibility that the Father could have chosen not to will the Son into being, that God could have been otherwise than the Father he is (*Arians* 3.66.4). As the Son is the "living Will" of the Father, there can be no will prior to the Son himself; there is no separation, in regard to the begetting of the Son, between the divine will and the divine being of God as Father.[99] Yet the fact that the being of the Son, as from the essence of the Father, "precedes" the question of will, does not mean that it was against the will of the Father. Athanasius concludes the third *Oration against the Arians* by introducing the words of Jn 5.20, "The Father loves (φιλεῖ) the Son and shows him all things," to suggest that we must allow not only that the Son "be willed (θελέσθω) and be loved (φιλείσθω) by the Father," but that with the same will the Son "loves (ἀγαπᾷ), wills (θέλει), and honors (τιμᾷ) the Father," so that "there is one will (θέλημα) from the Father in the Son, and from this too the Son may be contemplated in the Father and the Father in the Son" (*Arians* 3.66.3). The relationship between the Father and Son is one of bestowing and receiving a love that is mutually reciprocal in the identity of the love returned. The Father, being "eternally generative by nature" (*Arians* 3.66.5), does not simply create beings upon which he then acts, but generates his Son, who returns the love bestowed upon him.[100] "The Son is the Father's

[99]Cf. Williams (*Arius*, 229): "For Athanasius, the Father is 'naturally generative': what he does in producing the Son is the enactment of what he is; and as his acts are not temporal and episodic, he always and necessarily 'does' what he is—by the necessity of his own being, not by any intrusive compulsion."

[100]Cf. Williams (*Arius*, 241): "The divine act of being is itself inseparably both an initiative and a

all, and nothing was in the Father before the Word" (*Arians* 3.67.2). There is no other way to conceive of God, for this is how the Son has revealed him.

In the passage from *Arians* 1.16 cited above, Athanasius mentioned that "all things partake of the Son according to the grace of the Spirit." In his letters to Serapion, Athanasius employs the same distinction between "partaking" and "being partaken" to affirm that, just as the Son, the Spirit also "is partaken and does not partake," for those who have been enlightened "were made partakers of the Holy Spirit and tasted the good Word of God" (*Serapion* 1.27; Heb 6.4). As the Spirit "is partaken by creatures," and "by participation in the Spirit, we are made 'partakers of the divine nature,'" the Spirit must, once again, be truly divine (*Serapion* 1.24; 2 Pet 1.4). The Son and the Spirit are God's own, and as such, they are the Father's divinity. Coming to partake by the Spirit in the Son, and in this way being made "partakers of the divine nature," created human beings, although "external" to God, come to be in him, even if this "being" is not properly their own:

> We, apart from the Spirit, are strange and distant from God, but by the participation of the Spirit we are knit into the divinity (τῇ δὲ τοῦ πνεύματος μετοχῇ συναπτόμεθα τῇ θεότητι), so that our being in the Father is not ours, but is the Spirit's, who is in us and abides in us, while by the true confession we preserve it in us, as John says, "whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him and he in God." (*Arians* 3.24.5; 1 Jn 4.15)

The externality of created nature to God does not prohibit created beings from "being in the Father," but does entail that this "being in the Father" is not their own; it is not identical with their being nor theirs by nature, as it is for the Son and the Spirit. It is theirs by virtue of their participation in the Spirit, by whom they are introduced into the divine life. That the Son has made the human body his "own," anointing it and sanctifying it with the Spirit, enables all those who now share in his body, receiving the same Spirit, to become by grace what he is by nature.

In his anti-Arian writings, as we have seen, Athanasius is emphatic that the Word has "a real and true identity of nature with the Father."[101] Christ's

response, generative love that is eternally generative *of love* . . . [it] intrinsically *includes* its own answering image."

[101] *Arians* 3.22.1: Ὁ μὲν οὖν λόγος τὴν ὄντως καὶ ἀληθῶς ταὐτότητα τῆς φύσεως τῷ πατρὶ ἔχει.

words, that he and the Father "are one" (Jn 10.30), indicate, for Athanasius, "the identity of divinity and oneness of essence."[102] The Father and Son, therefore, are "one in the particularity and propriety of nature, and in the identity of the one divinity."[103] However, this identity of being, the one divinity or divine nature, is not itself, for Athanasius, the one God of the Christian faith, nor does the fact that both Father and Son are identical in nature entail a belief in "two Gods." After having argued that as the Son does the works of the Father he is the "form of the Father's divinity," Athanasius continues by explaining how it is that Christians believe in and worship one God, in a passage which deserves to be quoted in full:

> Whoever who looks at the Son sees the Father [cf. Jn 14.9], for in the paternal divinity is and is contemplated the Son; and the paternal form in him shows in himself the Father; and thus the Father is in the Son [cf. Jn 14.10]. And the particularity (ἰδιότης) and divinity, which is from the Father in the Son, shows the Son in the Father, and his eternal inseparability from him. And whoever hears and beholds that what is said of the Father is also said of the Son, not as accruing to his essence by grace or participation, but because the very being of the Son is the proper Offspring of the paternal essence, will fitly understand the words, as I said before, "I in the Father and the Father in me," and "I and the Father are one" [Jn 14.10; 10.30]. For the Son is such as the Father is, because he has all that is the Father's. Wherefore also is he signified together with the [word] "Father," for if there is no son, one cannot say "Father"; calling God "Maker" does not necessarily indicate things made, for a maker is prior to the works, but calling him Father at once indicates with the Father the existence of the Son. Therefore, whoever believes in the Son believes also in the Father, for he believes in what is proper to the Father's essence; and thus the faith is one in one God. And whoever worships and honors the Son, in the Son worships and honors the Father; for one is the divinity; and therefore one the honor and one the worship which is paid to the Father in and through the Son. And whoever worships in this way, worships one God; for there is one God and none other than he. Accordingly, when it is said that the

[102] *Arians* 3.3.3: τὴν μὲν ταὐτότητα τῆς θεότητος, τὴν δὲ ἑνότητα τῆς οὐσίας.

[103] *Arians* 3.4.2: καὶ ἕν εἰσιν αὐτὸς καὶ ὁ πατὴρ τῇ ἰδιότητι καὶ οἰκειότητι τῆς φύσεως καὶ τῇ ταὐτότητι τῆς μιᾶς θεότητος.

> Father is "the only God" [Jn 17.3] and that there is "one God" [1 Cor 8.6], and "I am and besides me there is no other God" [Deut 32.39] and "I the first and I the last" [Is 44.6] this has a proper meaning. For God is one and only and first; but this is not said to the denial of the Son—far from it! For he is in that one and first and only, as of that one and only and first, being the only Word and Wisdom and Radiance. And he too is the first, as "the fullness of the divinity" [Col 2.9] of the first and only, being whole and full God. (*Arians* 3.6)

For Athanasius, the "one God" of the Christian faith is unquestionably the Father: "Other than the Father there is no God" (*Serapion* 1.16). But, and this is an important qualification, as soon as the word "Father" is said, as Athanasius points out, it co-signifies the Son and, as we have seen elsewhere, the Spirit.[104] The Son "has all that is the Father's," that is, all the properties of God, with the exception of being Father, are attributed in Scripture to the Son also, so that the Son is the same in essence as the Father, and consequently, the Father is, and is seen, "in" the Son. Being "Father" is, for Athanasius, what the one God is by nature.[105] It is, moreover, a term which applies to him, as does "Son" to the Son, in an absolute manner, unlike in the human realm where if someone is called "father" he is, nevertheless, someone else's son.[106] Thus, calling the Father the one God does not deny the divinity of the Son: he is "in the one and first and only," and as true God from true God, he can himself even be called "the first . . . of the first."

Another term which applies in a uniquely privileged manner to the Father is "unoriginated" (ἀγέν[ν]ητος). The application of this term was already a point of controversy between Athanasius and his opponents, though it is only in the second half of the fourth century that the term really becomes the principle point of non-Nicene theology, calling for a more sustained analysis from the Cappadocians. Following Alexander's insistence on the correlativity of Father and Son, Athanasius had to face his opponents' question, "whether the Unoriginate be one or two?" (*Arians* 1.30). As the only possible answer for a Christian committed to monotheism would be "one," the conclusion, his opponents claimed, is that the Son must therefore be "among the

[104]Cf. Athanasius *Serapion* 1.14: "When mention is made of the Father, there is included also his Word and the Spirit who is in the Son."

[105]Cf. Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God*, 159–87.

[106]Cf. Athanasius *Arians* 1.21; *Serapion* 1.16.

things originated." After listing various definitions of the term "unoriginate," Athanasius argued that if they were to use the term with the meaning supposed by Asterius, that is, "what is not a product but was always," then this would also apply to the Son; but if they take the term in the sense of "existing but not generated of any nor having a father," then, he comments:

> they shall hear from us that the unoriginate in this sense is only one, namely the Father; and they will gain nothing [for their argument] from hearing such things; for to say that God is in this sense unoriginate does not show that the Son is an originated thing, it being evident from the above proofs that the Word is such as is he who begot him. Therefore, if God be unoriginate (ἀγένητος), his image is not originated (γενητή), but is an Offspring (γέννημα), who is his Word and his Wisdom. (*Arians* 1.31.3–4)

That is, given this definition of the term, the Father is the only unoriginate, for the Son derives from the Father, as his Offspring; yet as his Offspring, the Son is such as is the one who begot him, and therefore to be distinguished from the originated things of creation, which are essentially different from both Father and Son.[107] Athanasius' argument here presses towards a clear distinction between "unoriginate/uncreated" (ἀγένητος) and "unbegotten" (ἀγέννητος), with which one could speak of the uncreated yet begotten Son, though this is not clearly spelled out, and his usage elsewhere reflects the widespread identification of these terms prior to the late fourth century.[108]

That the Son is also truly God, yet not "Father," would also seem to press towards a generic use of the term "essence" and a distinction between personal or particular properties and natural properties (i.e., that "Father" indicates who God is, not what he is, for the Son is also what it is to be God). However, Athanasius resists this, because to speak of Father and Son as being two exempla of a generic essence, besides the fact that the divine essence is incomprehensible, would remove the vitally important element of the Son's derivation from the Father and the consequent presence of the Father in the

[107]Cf. T. A. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism* (Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), 90–91: "Correlative to God as ἀγέννητος is the begotten Son, τὸ γέννημα correlative to God as ἀγένητος are all generated things, τὰ γένητα."

[108]For a broad survey, the studies of G. L. Prestige are still useful: "ἀγέν[ν]ητος and γεν[ν]ητός and Kindred Words in Eusebius and the Early Arians," *JTS* 24 (1923): 486–96; and "ἀγέν[ν]ητος and Cognate Words in Athanasius," *JTS* 34 (1933): 258–65.

Son. Because the Son is the Son *of God*, although they possess an "identity of nature," Father and Son cannot be conceived as individuals of the same genus. Against those who denied the co-eternity of the Father and Son, on the grounds that they would then be brothers, Athanasius argues that "the Father and the Son are not generated from some pre-existing origin (ἔκ τινος ἀρχῆς προϋπαρχούσης), such that they may be reckoned brothers, but the Father is the origin and begetter of the Son; the Father is Father, and was not son of anyone, and the Son is Son and not brother" (*Arians* 1.14.4). Athanasius develops this point in his work *On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia*, when he addresses those who rejected the term *homoousios* on the similar grounds that the term implies three: "a certain pre-existing essence and those generated from it, who are *homoousios*," and so are brothers rather than Father and Son (*Councils* 51.3). Athanasius argues that the primary sense of the term *homoousios* implies a relationship of derivation.[109] The most natural example of this, Athanasius continues, is that of a child in reference to the parents, with the necessary qualification that the divine, incorporeal begetting is not understood in terms of human parturition, which involves not only a transmission of human nature but also bodily matter, resulting in a son who is separable and external to his father.[110] So, he concludes, when the fathers of Nicaea "said that the Son of God was from his essence, reasonably have they spoken of him as *homoousios*" (*Councils* 51.7). There is, therefore, an intrinsic asymmetry to their relationship: the Son is *from* the essence of the Father; he is the Son *of* God. Thus, as Stead points out, Athanasius never reverses the formula to say that the Father is *homoousios* with the Son, nor yet does he hold the Father and Son to be *homoousios* together. Neither does Athanasius use the term outside of the relationship between Father and Son to speak, for instance, of "the consubstantial Trinity," as he does "the indivisible Trinity."[111] The term is used specifically to describe the perfect continuity of the being of the Father in the Son, who is from his essence and so *homoousios* with him; although there is identity and unity of nature, there is also a proper order. The one God, as we have seen, is the Father, whose Son, from his

[109]Athanasius does not actually prohibit using the term *homoousios* to express a horizontal relationship between two beings, but would understand this lateral relationship in terms of their common derivation from the same source: if the term is *only* applied horizontally, he argues, then two *homoousios* beings would be "other in essence and unlike" the one that generated them (*Councils* 51.5).

[110]Athanasius *Councils*, 51.7; cf. *Councils* 41; *Nicaea* 10–12, 20.

[111]C. Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 260. Cf Athanasius *Serapion* 1.14.

essence rather than his will, is fully what the Father himself is, with the exception of being Father, true God from true God, so that they are identical in nature, manifesting a single divinity, for the Father is in the Son as the proper and perfect expression of his own being.

That the one God is Father means that the Son, in whom we have come to know the fatherhood of God by contemplating the paternal divinity and paternal form in him, is "eternally inseparable from him," rather than an "addition" to the being of God.[112] The Son is of the essence of the Father, rather than resulting from a volitional act, and so "the Father is eternally generative by nature" (*Arians* 3.66.5). While accepting the eternal correlativity of Father and Son, Athanasius is also careful to distinguish this relation from that implied by the term "maker." Athanasius argues that unlike a son, who is "the proper offspring of the essence," a product is "external to the nature" of its maker, such that it need not always have been, but only comes into existence when the maker wills to make it. Thus, he claims, someone can be called, and indeed be, a "maker," even though the products have not yet been wrought, "but 'father' he cannot be called, nor can he be, unless a son exists" (*Arians* 1.29.2). As such, when God is said to be the Creator, this is understood in terms of his "ability to create" (δυνάμενος ποιεῖν). If God does not deploy this power eternally, it is not because he lacks the ability, for his own Son is always with him, but because "created things did not have the ability to be eternal, for they are out of nothing and therefore were not before they came to be" (*Arians* 1.29.3). Thus, rather than simply justifying calling God "Creator" by reference to his act of creating the world, Athanasius grounds the creative ability of God within his own being, as dependent upon his generative nature, for it is by his Son that creation came to be.[113] Creation depends upon the divine nature itself being generative: "If there is not a Son, how then can you say that God

[112] Cf. Athanasius *Arians* 1.14.5: "If he is called the eternal Offspring of the Father, he is rightly so called. For never was the essence of the Father imperfect, that what is its own should be added afterwards; nor, as man from man, has the Son been begotten so as to be later than his Father's existence. But he is God's Offspring, and as being the own Son of the eternal God, he exists eternally. For whereas it is a property of humans to beget in time, due to the imperfection of their nature, God's Offspring is eternal, for his nature is ever perfect."

[113] Anatolios (*Athanasius*, 120) points to "the fundamental point of convergence between Athanasius' Trinitarian theology and his conception of the relation between God and the world . . . that the relation between God and the world is both contained in and superseded by the relation between the Father and the Son." Cf. Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God*, 209. That God's creative activity must be understood in terms of his existence already as Father, is argued by Origen in *On First Principles* 1.2.10. Cf. Behr, *Way to Nicaea*, 195.

is a Creator? . . . If the divine essence is not fruitful itself, but barren, as they maintain, as a light that does not lighten, and a dry fountain, are they not ashamed to speak of his possessing creative energy?" (*Arians* 2.2.2) The God of his opponents not being able to beget a Son, who is properly his own, is neither able to create, and so remains without any works to demonstrate his existence. For Athanasius, on the other hand, even though, or rather because, God's creative ability is second to his begetting, it is deployed through his own Son, so grounding creation within the trinitarian activity of God.[114]

As the Spirit is also of the same divinity as the Son and the Father, Athanasius speaks of the one divinity as being "in trinity." He most frequently, if not invariably, presents this in terms of the triadic formula found in Eph 4.6, the one God (Athanasius elides the words "and Father," as he differentiates Father, Son, and Spirit in terms of the following prepositions) "who is above all and through all and in all." Thus, he writes:

> There is but one form of divinity (ἓν γὰρ εἶδος θεότητος), which is also in the Word, and one God, the Father (καὶ εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατήρ), existing by himself inasmuch as he is above all, and appearing in the Son inasmuch as he pervades all things, and in the Spirit inasmuch as in him he acts in all things through the Word. Thus we confess God to be one through the Trinity (ἕνα διὰ τῆς τριάδος ὁμολογοῦμεν εἶναι τὸν θεόν); and we say that it is much more religious than the heretic's divinity of many forms and many parts, that we conceive one divinity in Trinity. (*Arians* 3.15.4–5)

The one God, the Father, while existing in himself is nevertheless revealed as working all things through the Son and in the Spirit. The Son and the Spirit are not beings with their own divinity, other than that of the Father, for this would sever the unity of the Trinity into three different divinities. His analysis of what the Son has done, in the Spirit, as the work of the Father, leads Athanasius to maintain that there is only "one divinity" manifest in this Trinity, so that the God who is at work in this triadic manner is confessed as one. In his letters to Serapion, where the status of the Spirit is the subject of concern, Athanasius provides a number of such statements, the most complete being the following:

[114]Cf. Widdicombe (*The Fatherhood of God*, 187): "The divine act of bringing things into existence from nothing can only be conceived if fatherhood is understood to be the primary attribute of the divine being. For Athanasius, the fatherhood of God is the ground of reality."

> There is, then, a Trinity, holy and complete, confessed as God (θεολογουμένη) in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, having nothing foreign or external mixed with it, not composed of one that creates and one that is originated, but being as a whole creative and productive; it is like to itself and in nature indivisible, and its activity is one. The Father does all things through the Word in the Holy Spirit. Thus the unity of the Holy Trinity is preserved. Thus one God is preached in the Church, "who is over all and through all and in all"—"over all," as Father, as beginning and fount; "through all," through the Word; "in all," in the Holy Spirit. It is a Trinity not only in name and form of speech, but is Trinity in truth and existence. For as the Father is one that is (ὁ ὤν), so also his Word is one that is (ὁ ὤν), and God over all. And the Holy Spirit is not without actual existence, but exists and has true being. Less than these, the Catholic Church does not hold . . . nor does she conceive of more. (*Serapion* 1.28)

Here, it is not so much being "over all" that characterizes the Father, for the Son is also said to be "God over all" (cf. Rom 9.5), but rather his being the "beginning and fount" from which the Son and Spirit are derived. The unity of the Trinity, each of whom are equally "theologized" so that they are indivisible in nature, again lies in the activity which has been the subject of theological reflection: what the Father has wrought through the Son in the Spirit. In the Christian proclamation of the one God, therefore, there is implied no more and no less than these three, the Father made known by the Son in the Spirit. As Athanasius puts it in his first *Oration against the Arians*, "theology is now complete in the Trinity" (*Arians* 1.18.4), not that theology is abstracted from the economy to become a realm of theological speculation independent of the economy, but that the analysis of the economy has led us to "theologize" the three at work in the economy, confessing each to be God: the Spirit of God, the Son of God, and God the Father.

Although by the time of the Council of Alexandria in 362, Athanasius had come to accept the legitimacy of others speaking of "three *hypostaseis*," he did not adopt this terminology himself. He reports that when he questioned those who used this language, he was satisfied with their explanation that, while emphasizing, in this way, the concrete reality of the Father, Son, and Spirit, each "existing and subsisting in truth," they also maintained that there is only "one divinity and one beginning," for the Son is *homoousios* with the Father, and the Spirit is "proper to and inseparable from the essence of

the Father and the Son" (*Tome* 5). And, in turn, those who spoke of "one *hypostasis*" did so taking the term to mean the same as "essence" (*Tome* 6). In this way, as we have seen when looking at the history of the fourth century, the ground was prepared for the eventual reconciliation of the majority of Eastern bishops and the resolution of the controversy at the Council of Constantinople. It was, of course, the Cappadocian Fathers—Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa—who provided a more developed technical vocabulary for speaking of the Trinity, which will be examined in Part Three. But before turning to that, we need to consider one more aspect of Athanasius' theology which anticipates the Cappadocians and in which he differs significantly from Marcellus of Ancyra, who struggled alongside Athanasius in the defense of Nicaea and the attempt to present a "Nicene theology." This is, that, for Athanasius, the difference between Father and Son is one that pertains to theology proper, rather than the economy. As Athanasius concisely states: "If the Son as offspring is other [than the Father], yet as God he is the same."[115] It is as his offspring that the Son is distinguished from the Father, as a concrete, truly existing being, rather than by virtue of having accepted to become human for our sake. For Marcellus, on the other hand, since the Word is the same as God, it is only in so far as he is human, enfleshed, that he can be spoken of as other than God: the Word, considered apart from the flesh, is held to be merely an "efficient energy," which becomes a concrete being, other than the Father, only in terms of the flesh assumed.[116] Another way of putting this would be to say that for Athanasius the title "Son," as applied to Jesus Christ, belongs to the realm of "theology" not only to the "economy," while for Marcellus it is an "economic" title, the only properly theological title being "Word." Or, in later Cappadocian terms, to which Athanasius' position once again seems to press, "sonship" is a hypostatic property, differentiating the one who is Son from the one who is Father. If Athanasius did indeed learn from Marcellus to refer the "created" of Prov 8.22 to Christ as human, his understanding of partitive exegesis was more

[115] Athanasius *Arians* 3.4.2: εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἕτερόν ἐστιν ὡς γέννημα ὁ υἱὸς, ἀλλὰ ταὐτόν ἐστιν ὡς θεός. That the difference between Father and Son pertains to theology proper and not simply the economy is developed further by Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 29.15; see below, pp. 347–48.

[116] For Marcellus, the Word, who was in the Father, came forth from the Father as a "creative energy" (ἐνέργεια δραστική) for the purpose of creation (Frag 110 V [60 K-H]), but even as such cannot be described as an *ousia* or a *hypostasis*; it is only in terms of the addition of the flesh, that he can be considered as other than God. Cf. Frags 72–75 V (70–74 K-H), 85–86 (63–64 K-H), 96 V (76 K-H); Lienhard, *Marcellus*, 51–64.

sophisticated than that of Marcellus, enabling him, by analyzing how Scripture speaks of the one Jesus Christ, to maintain not only his divinity, as the Word of God, but also his eternity as the Son of God.

The Letter to Marcellinus and *The Life of Antony*

The theological vision that Athanasius presents in *Against the Pagans* and *On the Incarnation*, the key points of which are treated more thoroughly in his anti-Arian writings, grounds, and in turn is embodied by means of, the fundamental Christian practice of meditating on the Scriptures, in particular the Psalms, as described for Marcellinus, and is completed by his iconic depiction of the true Christian believer in the person of Antony. Central to both these works is the encounter with the Word and the appropriation of, making one's own, what Christ has wrought. In *The Letter to Marcellinus*, we are invited to meditate on the Psalms in such a way that their perspective becomes our own, effecting a transformation which is portrayed dramatically in *The Life of Antony*. Though usually left aside in accounts of the theological debates of the fourth century, these elements are an intrinsic part of Athanasius' Nicene theology and help account for its persuasive power.

The Letter to Marcellinus

In response to a request from Marcellinus for guidance on how to understand the Psalms, Athanasius reports what he had learned "from a certain old man." He begins by stressing the unique place of the Psalms within Scripture and for the life of the believer. Although, he notes, "all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching" (2 Tim 3.16), and therefore there is a fundamental unity to Scripture,[117] nevertheless each book "supplies and announces its own promise" (*Marcell.* 2). Athanasius notes that the Pentateuch relates the beginning of the world and the deeds of the patriarchs, the exodus, and the legislation; the "Triteuch" (i.e., Joshua, Judges, and Ruth) describes the possession of the land, the exploits of the Judges and the line of David; Kings and Chronicles recount the stories of the rulers, and Esdras

[117]Cf. Athanasius *Marcell.* 9: "In each book of Scripture the same things are specially declared; this report exists in all of them, and the same agreement of the Holy Spirit. . . . Since it is one and the same Spirit, from whom are all distinctions, and it is indivisible by nature, because of this surely the whole is in each, and, as determined by utility, the revelations and distinctions of the Spirit pertain to all and to each severally."

tells of the return from captivity and the construction of the temple and the city; and the Prophets foretell the sojourn of the Savior and the inclusion of the Gentiles and also admonitions regarding the divine commands. Yet, he continues, "the Book of Psalsm is like a garden containing all of these kinds, and it sets them to music, but also exhibits things of its own that it gives in song along with them" (ibid.). The particular virtue of the Psalms, according to Athanasius, lies in the directness of their applicability:

> For in addition to the other things in which it enjoys an affinity and fellowship with the other books, it possesses, beyond that, this marvel of its own—namely, that it contains even the emotions of the soul, and it has the changes and rectifications of these delineated and regulated in itself (ὅτι καὶ τὰ ἑκάστης ψυχῆς κινήματα, τάς τε τούτων μεταβολὰς καὶ διορθώσεις ἔχει διαγεγραμμένας καὶ διατετυπωμένας ἐν ἑαυτῇ). Therefore anyone who wishes to receive boundlessly and understand from it, so as to mold himself, it is written there. For in the other books one hears only what one must do and what one must not do. And one listens to the Prophets solely so as to have knowledge of the coming of the Savior. One turns his attention to the histories, on the basis of which he can know the deeds of the kings and saints. But in the Book of Psalms, the one who hears, in addition to learning these things, also comprehends and is taught in it the emotions of the soul, and, consequently, on the basis of that which affects him and by which he is constrained, he also is enabled by this book to possess the image deriving from the words (δύναται πάλιν ἐκ ταύτης ἔχεσθαι τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν λόγων). Therefore, through hearing, it teaches not only to disregard passion, but also how one must heal passion through speaking and acting. (*Marcell.* 10)

While the other books of Scripture teach about other things, the advent of the Savior and the deeds of old, the Psalms teach Christians themselves, regulating their souls and enabling them to possess the image they present. More than that, however, the words of the Psalms become their own. The other books certainly present examples for Christians to emulate, but

> by contrast, however, he who takes up this book, the Psalter, goes through the prophecies about the Savior, as is customary in the other Scriptures, with admiration and adoration, but the other Psalms he reads as being his

> own words (ὡς ἰδίους ὄντας λόγους ἀναγινώσκει). And the one who hears is deeply moved, as though he were himself speaking (ὡς αὐτὸς λέγων), and is affected by the words of the Psalms, as if they were his own (ὡς ἰδίαν ὄντων αὐτου). . . . After the prophecies about the Savior and the nations, he who recites the Psalms is uttering the rest as his proper words, and sings them as if they were written concerning him (ὡς περὶ αὐτοῦ), and he accepts them and recites them not as if another were speaking, nor as if speaking about someone else. But he handles them as if he is speaking about himself (ἀλλ' ὡς αὐτὸς περὶ ἑαυτοῦ λαλῶν). And the things spoken are such that he lifts them up to God as himself acting and speaking them from himself (ταῦτα ὡς αὐτὸς πράξας καὶ ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ λαλῶν ἀναφέρει τῷ θεῷ). (*Marcell.* 11)

In their prayer and meditation, Christians, by using the Psalms, appropriate what is said in them. Being given the words to use, these words become their own, so that the Psalms become "like a mirror to those singing them" (*Marcell.* 12). Yet while being appropriated, the Psalms also transform the person whose words they now are, for along with the emotions, the Psalms contains their "changes and rectifications."

Athanasius, in the above quotation, specifically excludes the "Messianic Psalms" from such appropriation, preserving their specific testimony to Christ. Nevertheless, he continues by connecting the work of Christ himself to the particular characteristic of the Psalms, to make even the "Incarnation," the full scope of which we have seen when examining *On the Incarnation*, something that is to be appropriated:

> Again, the same grace is from the Savior, for when he became human for us he offered his own body in dying for our sake, in order that he might set all free from death. And desiring to show us his own heavenly and well-pleasing life, he typified it in himself (ἐν ἑαυτῷ ταύτην ἐτύπωσεν), to the end that some might no more easily be deceived by the enemy, having a pledge for protection—namely, the victory he won over the devil for our sake. For this reason, indeed, he not only taught, but also accomplished what he taught, so that everyone might hear when he spoke, and seeing as in an image, receive from him the model for acting (ὡς ἐν εἰκόνι δὲ βλέπων λαμβάνῃ παρ' αὐτοῦ τὸ παράδειγμα τοῦ ποιεῖν), hearing him say, "Learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Mt 11.29). A more perfect

> instruction in virtue one could not find than that which the Lord typified in himself. . . . Those legislators among the Greeks possess the grace as far as speaking goes, but the Lord, being true Lord of all and one concerned for all, performed righteous acts, and not only made laws but offered himself as a model for those who wish to know the power of acting (ἀλλὰ καὶ τύπον ἑαυτὸν δέδωκεν, εἰς τὸ εἰδέναι τοὺς βουλομένους τὴν τοῦ ποιεῖν δύναμιν). It was indeed for this reason that he made this resound in the Psalms before his sojourn in our midst, so that just as he showed, in himself, the model of the earthly and heavenly human, so also from the Psalms he who wants to do so can learn the emotions and dispositions of the souls, finding in them also the therapy and correction suited for each emotion. (*Marcell.* 13)

The model provided by Christ in his earthly sojourn is thus connected with the model for the disposition of the soul provided by the Psalms, for it is he who speaks through them. Moreover, both these examples are to be appropriated, yielding to the efficacious therapy for the soul provided by the Psalms and "receiving from him the model for acting." In this way, those "in Christ" come also to know "the power of acting."

The greater part of the rest of the letter is then given over to indicating which Psalms might be suitable for various occasions, such as when in oppression (*Marcell.* 17), when, having sinned, needing to express repentance (*Marcell.* 20), or when desiring to celebrate and give thanks to God (*Marcell.* 21). Having surveyed the field, Athanasius suggests that a particular reason for the effectiveness of the Psalms lies in the fact that they are sung. Besides the desire to praise God "not in compressed speech alone, but also in the voice that is richly broadened," the act of singing effects harmony in the soul "just as harmony unites flutes to effect a single sound" (*Marcell.* 27). As there are different movements in the soul—"the power of reason and eager appetite and high-spirited passion," by which the body is moved—there needs to be a proper order, lest the soul dissolve into chaos. So, Athanasius comments:

> In order that some such confusion not occur in us, the Word intends the soul that possesses the mind of Christ, as the Apostle said, to use this as a leader, and by it to be both a master of its passions and to govern the body's members, so as to comply with the Word. Thus, as in music there is a plectrum, so the human being becoming himself a stringed instrument and

> devoting himself completely to the Spirit may obey in all his members the emotions, and serve God. The harmonious reading of the Psalms is a figure and type of such undisturbed and calm equanimity of our thoughts. For just as we discover the ideas of the soul and communicate them through the words we utter, so also the Lord, wishing the melody of the words to be a symbol of the spiritual harmony in a soul, has ordered that the odes be chanted tunefully, and the Psalms recited with songs. (*Marcell.* 28)

By acquiring the mind of Christ, through a harmonious reading of the Psalms, enabling a truly virtuous life, the human being becomes the instrument of the Spirit, obedient to the Word. The paradigmatic human example of such a vessel of divine grace is Antony as he is portrayed by Athanasius.

The Life of Antony

The influence of *The Life of Antony* would be hard to gainsay. Even Harnack, calling it "probably the most disastrous book that has ever been written," testifies to its significance.[118] It is mentioned already in *The Life of Pachomius*, who had died while Antony was still alive; Jerome mentions the work several times, and that it had been translated into Latin; and it is also mentioned by Gregory of Nazianzus; though its greatest testimony comes from Augustine, who recalls how, at a decisive point in his life, he heard from his friend Ponticianus that two officers of the emperor were converted by reading the story of this Egyptian monk, and that one of them, indeed, was "so fascinated and thrilled by the story that even before he had finished reading he conceived the idea of taking upon himself the same kind of life and abandoning his career in the world . . . in order to become your servant."[119] Serious questions have been raised regarding the authorship of the *Life*, a problem complicated by the various versions in which the text exists, and also concerning its historical reliability. Various suggestions have been made regarding the relationship between the Syriac version and the Greek, and the possibility of an original Coptic text, but few would doubt that the Greek version is from

[118]A. von Harnack, *Das Leben Cyprians von Pontus. Die erste christliche Biographie*, TU 39.3 (Leipzig, 1913), 81, cited in S. Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 126.

[119]Jerome, *Illustrious Men* 87, 88, 125; the *First Greek Life of Pachomius* 99; Gregory Nazianzus *Or.* 21.5; Augustine *Confessions* 8.6

the hand of Athanasius himself.[120] Various positions have been advanced regarding the historical reliability of the *Life*,[121] and its role within the larger sphere of Athanasius' political and ecclesiastical activity has been scrutinized,[122] yet whatever position one takes on such matters, it is clear that Athanasius, writing an account of a celebrated figure shortly after his death, in 356, provided a description of Antony consistent with his own theology, and that is what is of interest here.[123] That Athanasius has portrayed Antony in his own distinctive manner does not make the work any less interesting but is, perhaps, the reason why it has continually had such a powerful impact.

The movement that Athanasius portrays in *On the Incarnation*, of the Word coming into our world by taking a body as his own in order to ensure victory over death for those who are in his body, is continued in *The Life of Antony* in terms of the appropriation of Christ's victory, with the intense struggle with the devil that such appropriation entails. In Athanasius' understanding of asceticism, there is no "flight from the body" but rather a concrete engagement in the body and for the body. Not only that, but the whole premise of Antony's efforts is based upon the dynamic of the Incarnation. Thus, at the very beginning of Antony's ascetic life, his struggle is placed directly in the context of the victory already won by Christ:

> All these were things that took place to the enemy's shame. For he who considered himself to be like God was now made a buffoon by a mere

[120]Cf. T. D. Barnes, "Angels of Light or Mystic Initiate: The Problem of the *Life of Antony*," *JTS* n.s. 37 (1986): 353–68; A. Louth, "St. Athanasius and the Greek *Life of Antony*," *JTS* n.s. 39 (1988): 504–9; D. Brakke, "The Greek and Syriac Versions of the *Life of Antony*," *Le Muséon* 107 (1994): 29–53; Rubenson, *Letters*, 127–29. T. D. Barnes, in his *Athanasius and Constantius* (p. 240, n. 64), "assumes that the *Life of Antony* is not by Athanasius," pointing to the earliest reference to the *Life* (by Serapion of Thmuis in 362–63) which seems to indicate that he did not think it by Athanasius.

[121]Most notoriously by H. Weingarten, *Der Ursprung des Mönchtums im nachkonstantinischen Zeitalter* (Gotha, 1887), who completely denied the historicity of the account. For more recent assessment, see H. Dörries, "Die Vita Antonii als Geschichtsquelle," in idem, *Wort und Stunde*, vol. 1, *Gesammelte Studien zur Kirchengeschichte des vierten Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 145–224; M. A. Williams, "*The Life of Antony* and the Domestication of Charismatic Wisdom," in M. A. Williams, ed., *Charisma and Sacred Biography*, JAAR Thematic Studies, 48 (Chambersburg, PA: 1982), 23–45.

[122]For which see D. Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[123]Cf. Rubenson (*Letters*, 144): "The teacher of *gnosis* has become a saint, In this process the major feature is not the rejection of anything authentic, but the transformation of it for a new purpose . . . the historical Antony is not eradicated in the biography, but made to serve the needs of the Church. In the *Vita* Antony is still the charismatic teacher, 'taught by God alone', but he has also become the defender of the Church and the adversary of the heretics."

> youth, and he who vaunted himself against flesh and blood was turned back by a flesh-bearing man. Working with Antony was the Lord, who bore flesh for us, and gave to the body the victory over the devil, so that each of those who truly struggle can say, It is not I, but the grace of God which is in me. (*Ant.* 5; 1 Cor 15.10)

Because the Lord has won the victory in and through the body, the victory is given to the body, so that it is indeed the Lord himself who fought with Antony, ensuring that the devil is defeated. This was Antony's first victory against the devil, or rather, as the *Life* repeatedly corrects itself, the success of the Savior in Antony.

That it is Christ who works in Antony is evident throughout the *Life*, even in one of the most striking trials undergone by Antony, when he felt that Christ had abandoned him. After having moved from his village to some tombs lying at some distance, not to pursue a life of contemplation but to engage more fully in this struggle with the devil, as the devil himself realized (*Ant.* 8), Antony underwent a particularly fierce battle. Antony was then visited by a certain beam of light descending towards him, which he took to be a luminous manifestation of Christ, for he could not help but ask, "Where were you? Why didn't you appear in the beginning, so that you could stop my distress?" To which the answer was, "I was here, Antony, but I waited to watch your struggle. And now since you persevered and were not defeated, I will be your helper forever" (*Ant.* 10). This exchange should not be taken as implying that Antony's own struggles have merited the reward of thereafter being helped by Christ, for it was, nevertheless, by keeping to his profession of faith in the Lord that he defeated the demons (*Ant.* 9). The test is not to see what Antony by himself can do, but whether he can keep control of his thoughts, standing firm in his faith in the one who has already worked the victory in the midst of the demonic cacophony.

The most notable and forceful depiction of Antony occurs when, after having spent twenty years barricaded in a deserted fortress battling with the demons, he is forced to emerge by those who, in their desire to emulate him, broke down the door of the fortress:

> Antony came forth as though from some shrine, having been led into divine mysteries and inspired by God (ὥσπερ ἔκ τινος ἀδύτου μεμυσταγωγημένος καὶ θεοφορούμενος). This was the first time he appeared from the

> fortress for those who came out to him. And when they beheld him, they were amazed to see that his body had maintained its former condition, neither fat from lack of exercise, nor emaciated from fasting and combat with demons, but was just as they had known him prior to his withdrawal. The state of his soul was one of purity, for it was not constricted by grief, nor relaxed by laughter or dejection. Moreover, when he saw the crowd, he was not annoyed any more than he was elated at being embraced by so many people. He maintained utter equilibrium, like one guided by the Word and steadfast in that which accords with nature (ὅλος ἦν ἴσος, ὡς ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου κυβερνώμενος καὶ ἐν τῷ κατὰ φύσιν ἑστώς). (*Ant.* 14)

Athanasius deliberately uses language redolent of the pagan mystery religions to provide an image by which we can see how the fortress had been for Antony as a sacred shrine, in which he so yielded to God, become perfectly responsive to his will, that he is filled with the power of God. The most arresting characteristic of this description, and the one that is most emphasized, is the stability in detachment of Antony: after his severe asceticism and violent struggle with demons, he is no longer moved by emotions such as pleasure or grief. Athanasius' ideal Christian is detached, interiorly and exteriorly, from things of this world, no longer subjected to the play of the emotions, but is rather free or delivered.[124] Thus, the ideal of a detachment, preserving the soul in the intended purity of its nature, corresponds to the working of God in the ascetic. Rather than being emaciated, Antony emerges in a properly natural state (κατὰ φύσιν), neither emaciated nor fat. The goal has not been to mortify the body itself, but to re-establish the body in its proper subjection to the soul.

But it would be a mistake to stop there. For while Antony's asceticism has resulted in a state "according to nature," the detachment thus achieved then opens out onto a new horizon: in all of this, he is "as one guided by the Word." This phrase is often translated as "according to reason," and this is indeed

[124]It is noteworthy that Athanasius does not use the word ἀπάθεια to describe the state reached by Antony, perhaps because for Athanasius there are natural passions or movements; the term πάθος is not restricted to such movements acting in disobedience to the soul and against nature. Rather, for Athanasius, the ideal state is characterized by its stability; it is this that distinguished Antony from all others, even in his physical appearance: "It was not his physical dimensions that distinguished him from the rest, but the stability of character and the purity of soul. His soul being free of confusion, he held his outer senses also undisturbed, so that from the soul's joy his face was cheerful as well, and from the movements of the body it was possible to sense and perceive the stable condition of the soul" (*Ant.* 67).

suggested by its juxtaposition with the description of Antony being "according to nature." However, as we have seen in *Against the Pagans* and *On the Incarnation*, the state of being "according to nature," that is, as intended by God rather than the inherent corruptibility of created beings, is linked with the presence of the Word of God. Moreover, the way in which the passage continues makes it clear that it is the very Word of God, Christ himself, that is intended. In fact, in the words which follow, the Lord himself is the subject of the verbs describing the actions which Christ did in and through Antony:

> Through him the Lord healed many of those present who suffered from bodily ailments; others he purged of demons, and to Antony he gave grace in speech. Thus he consoled many who mourned, and others hostile to each other he reconciled in friendship, urging everyone to prefer nothing in the world above the love of Christ. And when he spoke and urged them to keep in mind the future goods and the affection in which we are held by God, "who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all" [Rom 8.32], he persuaded many to take up the solitary life (τὸν μονήρη βίον). And so, from then on, there were monasteries in the mountains and the desert was made a city (ἡ ἔρημος ἐπολίσθη) by monks, who left their own people and registered themselves for the citizenship in the heavens. (*Ant.* 14)

Wholly inspired by the Word of God, Antony himself no longer remains in solitude, for this was never an end in itself. It had been pursued for the sake of subjecting himself completely to God and God alone. Now that victory has been achieved, he returns to the world, for the world can no longer harm him, since in him is the one who has overcome the world (1 Jn 4.4). Antony now finds himself in the position of helping others and guiding them to God. Rather than being unconcerned for others, Antony has become the archetypal spiritual father. Coming forth from the fortress, almost as Christ from the tomb, Antony is totally delivered from any subjection to worldly concerns; he has become totally detached, given over instead to the Word, himself "become word" (cf. *Arians* 3.33). He is now the instrument of Christ, by which the Lord effects his work: healing the sick, consoling, and reconciling others. The messianic prophecies of Isaiah are fulfilled in Antony, or, rather, Christ in Antony. Moreover, with Antony manifesting the presence of Christ and being the instrument of the Word, the desert, the world uninhabited by God and opposed to him, is also now conquered, civilized, populated by

monks giving praise to God, so bringing about the original goal of creation. The full content and sense of the equilibrium achieved by asceticism is shown to be the incarnation in Antony of the Lord and Word, Jesus Christ, and the consequent transformation of creation.

This manifestation of the salvation already won by Christ, revealing itself, in an anticipatory manner, is taken one step further in a report of one of Antony's visions. He relates how he saw himself led through the air by certain beings, until they then came to some foul figures standing in the air intent on holding him back and not letting him pass. Asking for an account of his life from the time of his birth, they were told by the guides that "the Lord has wiped clean the items dating from his birth, but from the time he became a monk, and devoted himself to God, you can take an account" (*Ant.* 93). The implication is clear, that having given himself to Christ, Antony was without sin. This living without sin, as with the other virtues of Antony, such as healing others and exorcising demons, is clearly a gift in the wake of the victory already won by Christ and, as such, an anticipation of the salvation made available in him.

Finally, this "eschatological" accomplishment of the original goal of creation is also anticipated in Antony's own body. The descriptions of Antony as he approached death are just as striking as those describing his emergence from the fortress:

> He never succumbed, due to old age, to extravagance in food, nor did he change his mode of dress because of frailty of the body, nor even bathe his feet with water, and yet in every way he remained free of injury. For he possessed eyes undimmed and sound, and he saw clearly. He lost none of his teeth—they simply had been worn to the gums because of the old man's great age. He also retained health in his feet and hands, and generally seemed brighter and of more energetic strength than those who make use of baths and a variety of foods and clothing. (*Ant.* 93)

The vitality of Antony in this passage is a sign, anticipation or foretaste, of the resurrectional incorruptibility. The body itself is the focus of Athanasius "incarnational" theology; it is to the body that the victory is given (cf. *Ant.* 5), as it is in and through the body, flesh and blood, that the spiritual forces of the devil are conquered. The body is not only involved in salvation, but is the locus of salvation, for it is the dwelling place of the Lord.

For Athanasius, the Incarnation, in all its dimensions as has been explored, is clearly the basis, and the basic model, for Christian life and activity, the appropriation of what has been wrought by Christ in his passion, in and through which we attain to the truly human status as intended for us by God. Christian asceticism is not simply a work of human beings upon themselves, who, by their own efforts, attempt to transcend their human nature to what they consider divine.[125] Rather, as understood by Athanasius, it reflects the possibility, opened by Christ in his Passion, to have communion with God, and embody the Word. This is a possibility which is only actualized by the free and unconstrained grace of God, but also, as we have seen, only through the free application and struggle of man; it is, on the one hand, totally the work of human beings, but, on the other, that which makes it fruitful is solely the work of God. The iconic depiction of Antony, whose very body anticipates its futural state, appropriating the victory already won by Christ, is a vivid portrayal of Athanasius' Nicene theology, a narrative exposition of his theology that contributed significantly to its widespread and enduring acceptance.

[125]For a stimulating discussion of this phenomenon, see M. C. Nussbaum, "Transcending Humanity," in idem, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 365–91; discussed in Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology*, 209–24.