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**The orthodox recovery of a heretical proof-text: Athanasius of
Alexandria's interpretation of Proverbs 8:22-30 in conflict with
the Arians**

Clayton, Allen Lee, Ph.D.

Southern Methodist University, 1988

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THE ORTHODOX RECOVERY OF A HERETICAL PROOF-TEXT:
ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA'S INTERPRETATION
OF PROVERBS 8:22-30 IN CONFLICT
WITH THE ARIANS

A Dissertation Presented to the Graduate Faculty of
Dedman College
of
Southern Methodist University
in
Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
with a
Major in Religious Studies
by

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May 21, 1988

THE ORTHODOX RECOVERY OF A HERETICAL PROOF-TEXT:
ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA'S INTERPRETATION
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WITH THE ARIANS

Approved by:

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To Ada Mae Clayton and Joseph Mark Gutel

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The Orthodox Recovery of a Heretical Proof-text:
Athanasius of Alexandria's Interpretation of
Proverbs 8:22-30 in Conflict with the Arians

Advisor: Associate Professor William S. Babcock

Doctor of Philosophy degree conferred May 21, 1988

Dissertation completed February 26, 1988

The purpose of this study is to examine how Athanasius "recovered" Prov 8:22ff for the life of the emerging Nicene church. What devices of interpretation and of argument did he employ that enabled him to show that Prov 8:22-25, which seemed to lend itself more naturally to Arianism, was not Arian in meaning at all?

The dissertation is divided into four parts. Part one details the theological preparation for Athanasius's interpretation of the passage. Beginning with Origen, the Alexandrian understanding of the Father-Son relationship is traced through the writings of Dionysius the Great, Theognostus, Pierius, Peter the Martyr, Alexander, and Athanasius. In part two the interpretation of Prov 8:22-30 in the Ante-Nicene church is examined, together with some significant developments in exegetical method during that time. Part three sets the context for Athanasius's reading of Prov 8:22-30 by looking at the interpretations of that

passage by Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, Asterius the Sophist, Eustathius of Antioch, and Marcellus of Ancyra. Part four examines Athanasius's interpretation of the passage itself.

Athanasius employed two rules of interpretation in his reading of Prov 8:22-30: the tripartite formula and the rule of one skopos. The formula insisted that the "time," "person," and "purpose" of a text must be determined to interpret it rightly. The rule of one skopos, which Athanasius borrowed from the Neoplatonists, viewed Scripture as a "double account of the savior," that the Son was ever God and became man. The two rules were not mutually exclusive, but complementary; the tripartite formula was the means by which the skopos could be discerned.

The interpretation of Prov 8:22ff in the Contra Arianos consists of two distinct exegeses which are the result of a redaction of the Orations. Exegesis 1 (CA 2.44-77) placed v. 22 within the context of the saving economy. The Son was "created" when he became incarnate. Exegesis 2 (CA 2.18-43, 78-82) was cosmologically oriented. The "creation" of Wisdom was actually the creation of Wisdom's image in the creatures as they were brought into being.

The dissertation concludes by discussing the interplay between theology and exegesis as it is revealed in Athanasius's discussion of Prov 8:22-30 in the CA.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

All biblical references, unless otherwise noted, are from the Revised Standard Version. Abbreviations of books of the Bible, as well as journal titles, are found in the "Instructions to Contributors" of the Journal of Biblical Literature.

EDITIONS AND COLLECTIONS

ANF	The Ante-Nicene Fathers
CCL	Corpus christianorum. Series latina
CSCO	Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum
GCS	Griechische christliche Schriftsteller
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series
Opitz	H. G. Opitz, ed. Athanasius' Werke
PG	J. Migne, Patrologia graeca
PL	J. Migne, Patrologia latina
PO	Patrologia orientalis
RAC	Reallexikon, für Antike und Christentum
SC	Sources chretiennes
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen

PRIMARY SOURCES

Abbreviations of primary sources, except those listed below, may be found in Lewis and Short (1879) and in Lampe (1961). The following list of abbreviations also lists the edition and translation used. Information regarding textual citation, edition, and/or translation will be given as follows: within parentheses will first appear the citation, then the page numbers of the edition (and where applicable, the line numbers), and finally the page numbers of the translation when used. These references will be separated by a slash (/). A reference to Contra Arianos 3.43, for example, would appear as follows: (CA 3.43 / 415A-416A / 417) and would mean that CA 3.43 is found in PG 26:415A-416A and is translated in NPNF 4:417. A reference to DI 14, line 10 would be: (DI 14 / 166,10).

- AEC De anima et corpore deque passione Domini
 Author: Alexander of Alexandria
 Edition: PG, vol. 18
 Translation: ANF, vol. 6
- AEL Epistula encylica ad episcopos Aegypti et Libyae
 Author: Athanasius
 Edition: PG, vol. 25
 Translation: NPNF, vol. 4
- ALX Letter to Alexander of Byzantium
 Author: Alexander of Alexandria
 Edition: Opitz, vol. 3
 Translation: Rusch 1980
- APL Refutation and Defense
 Author: Dionysius of Alexandria
 Edition: Feltoe 1904
 Translation: Feltoe 1918
- CA Orationes Contra Arianos
 Author: Athanasius
 Edition: PG, vol. 26
 Translation: NPNF, vol. 4
- CC Contra Celsum
 Author: Origen
 Edition: SC, vols. 132, 136, 147, 150, 227
 Translation: Chadwick 1965
- CG Contra Gentes
 Author: Athanasius
 Edition: Thomson 1971
 Translation: Thomson 1971
- COD Codices
 Author: Photius
 Edition: Routh 1846, vol. 3
- DE Demonstratio evangelica
 Author: Eusebius of Caesarea
 Edition: GCS, vol. 23
 Translation: Ferrar 1981
- DI De incarnatione
 Author: Athanasius
 Edition: Thomson 1971
 Translation: Thomson 1971

- DNS De decretis Nicaenae synodi
 Author: Athanasius
 Edition: Opitz, vol. 2
 Translation: NPNF, vol. 4
- DSD De sententii Dionysii
 Author: Athanasius
 Edition: Opitz, vol. 2
 Translation: NPNF, vol. 4
- EA Epistle to Alexander of Alexandria
 Author: Arius
 Edition: Opitz, vol. 3
 Translation: Rusch 1980
- ECL Encyclical Letter
 Author: Alexander of Alexandria
 Edition: Opitz, vol. 3
- EEN Epistle to Eusebius of Nicomedia
 Author: Arius
 Edition: Opitz, vol. 3
 Translation: Rusch 1980
- EMP Epistle to Marcellinus
 Author: Athanasius
 Edition: PG, vol. 27
 Translation: Gregg 1980
- EPT Epistle to Paulinus of Tyre
 Author: Eusebius of Nicomedia
 Edition: Opitz, vol. 3
 Translation: NPNF, vol. 3
- ES Epistolae ad Serapionem
 Author: Athanasius
 Edition: PG 25
 Translation: Shapland 1951
- ET De ecclesiastica theologia
 Author: Eusebius of Caesarea
 Edition: GCS, vol. 14
- Fr. Fragments
 Author: Asterius the Sophist
 Edition: Bardy 1936

- Author: Eustathius of Antioch
 Edition: Spanneut 1948
 Translation: NPNF, vol. 3
- Author: Marcellus of Ancyra
 Edition: GCS, vol. 14
- HE Historia Ecclesiastica
 Author: Eusebius of Caesarea
 Edition: SC, vols. 31, 41, 55
 Translation: Williams 1975
- Author: Socrates
 Edition: PG, vol. 67
 Translation: NPNF, vol. 2
- Author: Sozomen
 Edition: PG, vol. 67
 Translation: NPNF, vol. 2
- Author: Theodoret of Cyrus
 Edition: GCS, vol. 19
 Translation: NPNF, vol. 3
- HMG Adversus Hermogenem
 Author: Tertullian
 Edition: CCL, vol. 1
 Translation: ANF, vol. 3
- JER Commentary on Jeremiah
 Author: Origen
 Edition: SC, vol. 232
- JN Commentary on John
 Author: Origen
 Edition: SC, vols. 120, 222
 Translation: ANF, vol. 10
- LEG Legatio
 Author: Athanagoras
 Edition: Schoedel 1972
 Translation: Schoedel 1972
- ORA On Prayer
 Author: Origen
 Edition: GCS, vol. 3
 Translation: Greer 1979

- PA Peri Archon
Author: Origen
Edition: GCS, vol. 22
Translation: Butterworth 1973
- PRX Adversus Praxean
Author: Tertullian
Edition: CCL, vol. 2
Translation: ANF, vol. 3
- STR Stromata
Author: Clement of Alexandria
Edition: GCS, vols. 17, 22
Translation: ANF, vol. 2
- SYN De synodis
Author: Athanasius
Edition: Opitz, vol. 2
Translation: NPNF, vol. 4
- SX Epistle to Sixtus II
Author: Dionysius of Alexandria
Edition: Feltoe 1904
Translation: Feltoe 1918
- TTS Commentary on Titus
Author: Origen
Edition: PG, vol. 14

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find satisfaction in the work of one of their students.

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INTRODUCTION

Few centuries have been as important to the shaping of the Christian Church as the fourth. For the greater part of that century the Church was embroiled in controversy over the divinity of Christ. Repeatedly the issue of the quality of the Son's divinity was raised, and from consecrated altars to urban marketplaces throughout the empire various solutions to the problem were proposed.

Central to the theological debate was the matter of the interpretation of Scripture (Kannengiesser 1982c, 1). All sides in the controversy were careful to support their theological positions with appeals to Scripture. R. P. C. Hanson once characterized this exegetical conflict as resembling "two blindfolded men trying to hit each other" (Hanson 1970, 440). Nevertheless, if we try to view the situation in its own context, we will see that certain Scriptural passages seemed more naturally to favor one side or another in the dispute (Pelikan 1971, 191-200). To be victorious, the Nicenes had to establish and sustain a specific reading of Scripture with respect, at least, to the points at issue--a reading which would show that the Nicene theology alone could rightly claim to draw its life from the biblical text.

Pivotal to the Arians' Scriptural support for their contention that the Son was God's most exalted creature was Prov 8:22-25 (see chapter 4). The debate between Arius and Alexander quickly focused on the interpretation of this passage. Soon "the Lord created me" reverberated through every street and alleyway in Alexandria, and wherever else those sympathetic to Arius's notions wished to prove that the Son was a creature (DNS 13.1-2).

There could be no thought of a Nicene victory so long as Prov 8:22-25 seemed more naturally to make the case for Arianism than it did for the homoousion. The task of recovering Proverbs 8, however, was monumental. From the time of the Apologists Prov 8:22-30 had been understood as imparting information about the origin of the Son; and in Alexandria the Son had been unashamedly styled a "creature" on the basis of Prov 8:22 from the time of Clement (see chapter 3).

Eustathius of Antioch and Marcellus of Ancyra, two bishops supportive of the Nicene cause, initially suggested that Prov 8:22 was a prophecy of the incarnation; it was the man Jesus who was "created" not the Son. Marcellus, however, incorporated his interpretation into a theology that compromised the hypostatic distinctions of the Trinity, and Eustathius was accused of doing the same (see chapter 5). Both they and their interpretations fell into disfavor in the East. It was the young bishop of Alexandria, Athana-

sus, who salvaged Eustathius and Marcellus's basic insight about Prov 8:22 by weaving it into an exegesis of the passage that was sufficiently Nicene and Alexandrian in character to overcome the Arian interpretation and avoid the Sabellian one.

It is the goal of this dissertation to examine how Athanasius "recovered" Prov 8:22ff for the life of the emerging Nicene church. I will attempt to describe the devices of interpretation and of argument (including wherever possible their origin and transmission) that Athanasius used to show how Prov 8:22, which seemed to lend itself more naturally to Arianism, was not Arian in meaning at all.

Specifically, we will concentrate on the interpretation of Prov 8:22-30 in CA 2:18-82. The reason for focusing on the CA is that it contains the bulk of Athanasius's exegetical work on Proverbs 8. He referred to the passage in DNS 13-14, DSD 11, AEL 17, and ES 2.7-9. In very cursory fashion Athanasius explains in DNS 13-14 that "created" in Prov 8:22 cannot be applied to the Son because the Son, unlike created things, is not external to the Father. He is begotten not created by the Father. What is created in v. 22 is his human body in the incarnation. The section concludes with a catechesis on the deification now possible through the exchange of human and divine natures in the incarnate Son. DSD 11 also refers the "create" in Prov 8:22 to the incarnation, as does AEL 17. ES 2.7-9, while concur-

ring that Prov 8:22 refers to the incarnation, adds that this is the proper interpretation of the passage because it is in harmony with the "scope" (σκοπός) of Scripture. As we shall see in chapter 6, exegesis in conformity with the scope of Scripture was no different from exegesis in conformity with what we shall call the tripartite formula (i.e., the rule Athanasius used to interpret Scripture dogmatically in the CA). Consequently, the rather cursory discussions of Prov 8:22 in works other than the CA add nothing to the lengthy and detailed discussion of the text in CA 2. If anything, they depend heavily on that discussion.

The strategically important position that the CA occupy in Athanasius's works becomes clear when the date of their composition is determined. It has long been considered axiomatic that the central core of Athanasius's theology is contained in his first work, the double treatise CG-DI. When Athanasius arrived at the central core of his theology, however, is a matter of great debate. The fact that Arianism is not mentioned overtly in the double treatise has led some to date the work prior to the outbreak of the Arian controversy, between 318 and 323 (Quasten 1983, 3:25; Meijering 1968, 108-13). Now, however, a consensus seems to be emerging in favor of dating the CG-DI during Athanasius's first exile at Trier in 335-37 (Roldanus 1977, 12; Tetz 1979, 337, 345; Thomson 1971, xxi-xxii; Kannengies-

ser 1970a; Kannengiesser 1983b, 401-2).

There are good reasons for dating CG-DI in the first exile. First, it displays marked affinities with Eusebius of Caesarea's Theophania. If CG-DI was written before 323, the eminent bishop of Caesarea used the work of an unknown Alexandrian deacon. But if the CG-DI was composed after 335, it was Athanasius who borrowed from Eusebius--a more plausible sequence (Roldanus 1977, 19).¹ Second, in CG 1 Athanasius says he does not have the works of his teachers at hand. This would be a surprising statement for someone doing a school exercise in Alexandria--which is how partisans of the early date view the CG-DI--but not so surprising for someone in exile (Thomson 1971, xxii).² Third, the lack of explicit reference to Arianism in CG-DI is due either to there being no fitting place for a discussion of intra-church affairs in apologetic works, or to Athanasius's unwillingness to risk the further wrath of Constantine, who was supporting the Arians at the time (Tetz 1979, 345). It is not altogether certain, however, that Arianism is not

¹Meijering does not believe that the parallels between the two works are strong enough to support an argument for dependence of one upon the other (1968, 108-13).

²A. Pettersen recently proposed a synthesis of the two alternatives i.e., the double treatise is later than 318-23 but earlier than 335-37. He suggests that those who are mentioned in DI 24 as wishing to divide the Church are Melitians, not Arians. The CG-DI, therefore, was written between 328-35 as a catechetical piece that stayed clear of politics and Arianism (1982, 1031-36).

mentioned in CG-DI. The phrases "proper Logos" (CG 2, 40; DI 3, 11, 32) and "true Son" (CG 46; DI 20, 32, 55) are certainly capable of being understood as anti-Arian, especially because Athanasius would use them in just that way in the CA. Also, DI 24 speaks of "those who wish to divide the Church" (194,27-28 / 195), a phrase that always refers to the Arians in other Athanasian writings (Thomson 1971, xxi). Though these phrases are not explicit references to Arianism they can bear an anti-Arian meaning. Since Athanasius was reluctant to challenge his emperor openly during the first exile, we are not unjustified in seeing the above expressions as veiled attacks on the Arians.

The date of composition of the CA is also clouded in uncertainty. In a letter to the monks, which precedes the text of the Historia Arianorum ad monachos, Athanasius mentions the monks' request for a refutation of Arianism--a request he honored, though with difficulty:

For the more I desired to write, and endeavored to force myself to understand the Divinity of the Word, so much the more did the knowledge thereof withdraw itself from me; . . . I frequently designed to stop and to cease writing; believe me I did. But lest I should be found to disappoint you, or by my silence to lead into impiety those who have made inquiry of you, and are given to disputation, I constrained myself to write briefly, what I have now sent to your piety. (NPNF 4:563)

Many have assumed that Athanasius is here referring to the CA. Since the History can reasonably be dated in 358, it is presumed that the CA dates from this time also. This thesis, however, has not enjoyed complete support among

scholars.³ The objections to 358 as the date of the CA focus on the following facts. Toward the end of the 340's Athanasius began to insist that homooousion was the only orthodox theological formula for the Father-Son relationship. At the same time he rejected the use of homoion in creedal statements, due to the increasing favor of this term with Arian synods. In the CA, however, homooousion is rarely employed while homoion is frequently used. Again, opponents to 358 as the date of the CA point out that Asterius receives more attention in the CA than does Arius, yet after attending the Council of Antioch in 341 Asterius disappears from the scene. It seems unlikely that Athanasius would wait 17 years to refute Asterius, particularly given his importance to the Arian cause. In addition, J. Roldanus has shown that DNS and DSD (written in 350-51), display a clear dependence on CA. The exegesis of Heb 1:4 in DSD, for example, indicates that Athanasius had the CA at hand when he composed DSD 11 (Roldanus 1977, 386-89). Finally, Charles Kannengiesser has shown that the letter to the monks cited above does not in fact belong with the History. It was written about the same time as two letters to Serapion, one on the death of Arius and the other a private letter, which

³See the discussions in Quasten 1983, 3:28 and Tixeront (1920, 155) for a history of scholarly research on the question of the date of the CA. In recent works, Young (1983, 75-76) holds to 358, while Kopecek (1979), Roldanus (1977) and Kannengiesser (1982a, 1983b, 1984a) support 339.

replaces the twelfth Festal Letter in the corpus. These two documents can be dated easily in the early 340's (Kannengiesser 1982a, 988-94; Kannengiesser 1983b 374-403). Consequently, if the letter does indeed mention the CA, then the orations had to be written around 340.

Taken together, the objections to 358 as the date of the CA are convincing. It now seems certain that by the end of the first exile Athanasius had lost his timidity and resolved to fight the Arians openly both in deed and in word.⁴ When freed by Constantine II on 17 June 337 Athanasius chose to go back to Egypt by land through Asia Minor and Palestine and so did not return to Alexandria until 23 November. While returning to Alexandria, Athanasius fomented rebellion in every Eastern city he visited that had a bishop sympathetic to the Arian cause (Simonetti 1967, 519).⁵ It is doubtful that Athanasius decided to act in

⁴Simonetti believes that Athanasius's silence during the years between Nicea and the first exile was due in large measure to his preoccupation with the Meletian schism. Alexander's death had created a power vacuum in the East. Athanasius was very young when he became bishop, he had far less prestige than Alexander and precious little experience. These factors conspired to keep Athanasius tied up in local problems during the crucial years when the Eusebians were in the ascendancy (1967, 514-18).

⁵Athanasius raised such a tumult that, far from accomplishing his mission of putting the Eusebian party on the defensive, he succeeded in alienating most of the bishops in Asia Minor and Syria. These bishops, suggests Simonetti, sided with the Arians, not out of sympathy for their theology, but because they perceived Athanasius as an "arrogant thug" from whom it was better to maintain one's distance (1967, 521).

such a way on the spur of the moment. We surmise that during the first exile he concluded Arianism had to be combatted aggressively, and part of his strategy included a literary assault on his opponents. The CG-DI, though anti-Arian in character, did not fit Athanasius's new, more militant mood. So sometime between his return to Alexandria in 337 and his second exile from the city in 339, he composed the first draft of the CA, sent it to the monks.

It was the first draft of the CA, the one that is called "brief," that Athanasius referred to in the letter to the monks discussed above. Since the present CA is anything but brief, it can be assumed that the extant orations are the product of a series of expansions of an earlier treatise. Charles Kannengiesser has suggested that the first two orations were edited several times before achieving their present form and that CA 3 (which he believes was not written by Athanasius) was added to the work later (Kannengiesser 1983b). Stated briefly, Kannengiesser's reconstruction of the writing of the CA is as follows: (1) an original treatise against the Arians, the brief work mentioned in the letter to the monks, was written shortly after the first exile (Kannengiesser 1982a, 994; Kannengiesser 1983b, 401-2; Kannengiesser 1984a, 309). The original work cannot be reconstructed, but parts of it may be found in CA 1.11-29, 35-64; 2.2-18a, 44-72 (Kannengiesser 1983b, 373-74). (2) During the second exile, with Serapion acting as intermediary

between the monks and Athanasius, Athanasius began redacting CA 1 and 2 to implement the suggestions made by the monks and to include documentary proof for his anti-Arian case. This expanded version, completed between 340 and 342, added extracts from Arius's *Thalia* and from Asterius's works. It also included the three famous Arian slogans and their refutation.⁶ The exegetical section (CA 1.53-2.82) was also rearranged and the section on Prov 8:22 was expanded in order to place the focus of the work on this passage (Kannengiesser 1982a, 987, 994; Kannengiesser 1983b, 400-2).

If we are correct to date CG-DI and proto-CA within a few years of each other, some far-reaching implications for the study of St. Athanasius come to light. The CG-DI is no longer to be viewed as a youthful work done before the outbreak of the Arian controversy. Rather, it was written several years after the council of Nicea and contained a theology (and as we shall see in chapter 2, a particular soteriology) that was influenced by both the Alexandrian tradition and the debates with the Arians. Although the double treatise is careful not to oppose Arianism openly, it contains oblique references to it, and its theology as a whole is decidedly anti-Arian. Shortly after publishing the CG-DI Athanasius began work on a more forceful and open

⁶"There once was when he was not," "he was not before he was begotten" and "he was begotten out of nothing" (CA 1.11-12).

refutation of Arianism that was initially planned for private reading among the Egyptian monks. But the turbulent years 337-39 convinced him that his brief tractate could and should be expanded into a complete confutation of the Arians. CA 1 and 2, therefore, are to be included with CG-DI as the central core of Athanasius's theological literature. By dating CG-DI and the first draft of CA 1 and 2 in the first exile, we see that Athanasius's thought was elliptical in nature. It revolved around the two foci of an exchange-type soteriology and an anti-Arian polemic. The two aspects are mutually dependent, and neither of them can be understood properly apart from the other. Thus, Athanasius's interpretation of Scripture also displays the same amalgam of soteriology and anti-Arianism. Second, by establishing that the core of Athanasius's theology includes CA 1 and 2, we have set the terminus ad quem of our study. CA 1 and 2 appeared in their final form during the early part of the 340's. The focus of our attention, therefore, will be on writings that appeared prior to 345.

A word must be said about CA 3. Until recently it has been unanimously assumed that CA 3 was the work of Athanasius. Charles Kannengiesser, however, carefully analyzed the thought and lexicon of CA 3 and concluded it did not belong either to the Orationes or to the genuine corpus Athanasium (1983b). He suggests that a young Apollinarius

was the author (1983b, 416).⁷ It is beyond the scope of this study (since the interpretation of Prov 8:22ff is in CA 2) to enter into the question of the authorship of CA 3. However, we do plan to discuss skopos as an exegetical device, and there are several references to skopos in CA 3 (28, 29, 35, 58). While I am not ready at this time to cede the Athanasian authorship of CA 3, I think the third oration must be used circumspectly. I have discussed only section 29 in this study since it specifically refers to "the scope and character of Holy Scripture."⁸ As I show in that discussion (pp. 234-36), the issue of Athanasian authorship of CA 3 is immaterial to the consideration of his concept of the skopos of Scripture.

The dissertation will be divided into four sections. In part one (chapters 1 and 2) we will discuss the theological preparation for Athanasius's interpretation of Prov

⁷Kannengiesser has amassed a sizable amount of circumstantial evidence that disproves CA 3's Athanasian authorship. Perhaps a confirmation of Apollinarius's authorship can be found in the work of George Dragas (1980 1:33), though Dragas himself would not draw such a conclusion. Dragas shows that CA 1 and 2 prefer "man" (106 and 108 times) to "flesh" (34, 56) and "body" (19, 36) when speaking of the incarnate Christ, but CA 3 prefers "flesh" (109 times as opposed to 36 for "man" and 52 for "body").

⁸CA 3.28 speaks of a "scope of the Christian faith," 3.35 of a "scope of faith," and 3.58 of an "ecclesiastical scope." All three instances, as well as that in section 29, refer to the economy and to the fact that Christ was both divine and human. See the essays of Pollard (1958) and Torrance (1970-71) for more detailed discussions of these passages

8:22-30. The task of this first section of our study is to prepare the way for an understanding of Athanasius as an interpreter of Scripture by explaining some of the key developments in the Alexandrian understanding of the relationship between God the Father and the Son or Word of God. In chapter 1 we will look at those developments in Origen, Dionysius the Great, Theognostus, and Pierius. Chapter 2 will continue the narrative through Peter the Martyr, Alexander, and Athanasius.⁹

⁹My thesis was all but completed when Rowan Williams's most valuable study of Arius was published. I was therefore unable to incorporate his insights into this study and have, instead, cited his work occasionally in relevant places. Williams devotes a good deal of his book to the understanding of the Father-Son relationship in Alexandria. He grounds his discussion in the context of what he calls a typically Alexandrian approach to theology that is "ultimately apophatic," and produces the paradox that "the means by which God becomes known both is and is not God" (1987, 123-24). He believes this tradition begins with Philo and traces it through Clement, Origen, Dionysius, Theognostus, Pierius, and Alexander.

His discussion of Origen essentially parallels mine except that I have focused on the tension between Origen's notions of the Son as the image of the invisible God and as the firstborn of all creation. Williams does make the interesting observation that it might be more accurate to view Origen's legacy to Arius as having to do with exegetical method than with theology. Origen was the first Christian to write extensive commentaries on Scripture, and in them he allowed exegesis "to take note of and to resolve apparent contradictions: exegesis can, and indeed must, be a problem-solving exercise. . . . But once the element of problem-solving is admitted, and the need for tight theological consistency in exegesis is recognized, exegesis becomes more and more the primary field of doctrinal conflict. . . ." (1987, 148).

Though a fascinating notion, it would perhaps be more accurate to say that Origen bequeathed to the Alexandrian tradition, and not just to Arius, an attitude about the exegetical task and not an exegetical method per se. Athanasius's exegetical method was very interested in problem-

Such a preparatory section is necessary because, in the words of Rowan Greer, "theological principles largely explain exegetical results in the patristic period" (Greer 1973, 5). One cannot speak of patristic exegesis apart from patristic theology. Indeed, Athanasius's disagreement with the Arians over the interpretation of Prov. 8:22 was as much a clash between significantly different understandings of Scripture's revelation of the being of God and of his activity in history as it was a debate about exegetical method.

solving and assumed that apparent contradictions between theology and text could be resolved by the application of the proper method. Arius viewed the exegetical task similarly, but his method hardly resembled Origen's.

Williams's interpretation of Dionysius emphasizes, perhaps too much, his continuity with Origen's theology (though he does notice Dionysius's critical attitude toward Origen's notion of the pre-existence of the soul). Thus he misses Dionysius's contribution to the struggle to clarify the Son's ontological status by calling him a "work" (ποίημα), but not a "creature." He also believes that Athanasius was right in seeing Dionysius as a precursor, but neither Athanasius nor the Arians read him very intelligently at times.

Williams agrees with my contention that Peter's reforms at the beginning of the fourth century did not constitute a repudiation of Origen or of allegorical exegesis. Rather, they were symptomatic of a widespread dissatisfaction (which was also expressed by Methodius) with Origen's cosmology and anthropology. Williams concludes by suggesting that "it is not wrong to think of an 'Origenian' consensus in Alexandria among both bishops and teachers, on the doctrine of the Trinity--not precisely an 'Origenist tradition', since it could co-exist with sharp criticisms of other features of Origen's thought, but a general contentment with certain images and arguments, and an agreement about the exegesis of Wisdom 7 in connection with Hebrews 1" (1987, 154-55).

Greer has been quick to point out, and rightly so, that to say theological principles largely explain exegetical results in no way means that interpretations simply could be imposed upon Scripture to meet particular theological exigencies. Any reading of Scripture, even an "orthodox" one, had to make a certain kind of biblical sense before it could be deemed proper. Athanasius argued repeatedly that the Arians disregarded the general thrust of Scriptural truth in the attempt to found their dogmatics on Scripture. He was also very careful, as we shall see, to align his interpretation of Prov 8:22-30 with what he perceived to be the teaching of Scripture as a whole (what he would later call its scope).

Part two (chapter 3) will examine the exegetical preparation for Athanasius's interpretation of Prov 8:22ff. Our purpose is to provide a backdrop against which Arian and Nicene understandings of the text can be highlighted with respect both to their traditional aspects and to any innovations that appear in their interpretations. Thus, we will look for evidence of a "traditional" interpretation of our passage in the history of the early church. We will compare and contrast Western and Eastern readings of Proverbs 8 in the ante-Nicene era, and be sensitive to the use of particular exegetical techniques, both in regard to the interpretation of Prov 8:22-30 and to Scripture in general, which would prove useful to Athanasius's own exegetical practice.

Part three (chapters 4 and 5) will establish the fourth century context of Athanasius's interpretation of Proverbs 8. In chapter 4 we will examine the exegesis of his opponents, the early Arians (Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Asterius the Sophist). We will see that the early Arians read Prov 8:22-25 in a fairly traditional manner, but diverged from that tradition when they insisted that the key word in the passage was "create" and not "beget." Thus, they avoided the well-established Alexandrian use of v. 25 as a proof for the eternal hypostatic existence of the Son.

The study of the Arian understanding of Prov 8:22-30 is complicated by a number of factors, foremost being the almost complete lack of primary materials. What does survive is, for the most part, fragmentary and is preserved only in the writings of the Arians' opponents.¹⁰ Another problem for research in this area is the contemporary upheaval in Arian studies.¹¹ Over the last twenty-five years several important monographs and articles have appeared that have successfully challenged the perception of Arianism common at the beginning of this century, that it was, in the words of Henry Gwatkin,

a mass of presumptuous theorizing, supported by alter-

¹⁰For a discussion of the documentary sources for the study of Arianism, see Quasten (1968, 2:10-16, or 1983, 3:7-13).

¹¹See Williams for the history of the discussion of Arianism (1987, 1-25).

nate scraps of obsolete traditionalism and uncritical text-mongering . . . a lifeless system of unspiritual pride and hard unlovingness. (1900, 274)

Unfortunately, all the activity has failed to produce a consensus. Our understanding of Arianism might be more sophisticated than it was at the beginning of the century, but we are still not much closer to deciphering what it was that Arius and his followers actually taught apart from "the rejection of any suggestion of two self-subsistent deities, and of any emanationist view of the Son's origin," coupled with "a firm profession of the Son's generation as a free act of the Father's will" (Williams 1985, 23-24).¹²

Neither has our new sophistication shed any light on the bedeviling questions that surround the history of the controversy. Telfer (1946; 1949b) and Baynes (1948) each still have their followers with regard to the early chronology of the heresy.¹³ The figure of Arius remains as shadowy as ever.¹⁴ Kannengiesser has taught us to read the

¹²Although Williams would not include it as part of Arianism's basic definition, several scholars would also want to add a soteriology based on promotion for ethical achievement (Gregg and Groh 1977; Gregg and Groh 1981; Kopecek 1979; Wiles and Gregg 1985). For the arguments against including soteriology in Arianism's basic definition see Williams (1983), Hanson (1982a), and Kannengiesser (1983a). Hanson later agreed that Arianism did have a soteriology (1985a).

¹³Bouларанд (1972) and Kopecek (1979), for example, accept 322, while Young (1983) opts for 318 as the year the controversy began.

¹⁴Arius's reference to Eusebius of Nicomedia as a "co-Lucianist" has posed a riddle to scholars about Arius's intellectual patrimony. Depending on how much importance

source material with greater care by taking into account the apologetic motive of an orthodox writer for including fragments from the works of his opponents (1983b). But this technique has tended to widen the gulf between ourselves and Arius by throwing suspicion on the only sources we have for his life and teaching.

It would be well beyond the task of this thesis to enter into a discussion of all the contemporary currents in Arian research. Our more modest goal is to examine the Arian understanding of Prov 8:22-30 so as to prepare the way for our study of Athanasius's reading of the passage. Nevertheless, since this text was so fundamental for Arianism, some choices about the features of Arianism will have to be made from contemporary interpretive options. When such choices are made I will try to alert the reader in the notes to some of the alternative views.

In chapter 5 we will look at the attempts to interpret Prov 8:22ff from the perspective of Athanasius's early Nicene contemporaries, Eustathius of Antioch and Marcellus of Ancyra. As best we can with such fragmentary evidence, we

they are willing to give this statement, scholars tend to see Arius either as an Alexandrian or as an Antiochene. Among those who favor Antioch are Bardy (1936), Pollard (1958), Sample (1977), Sellers (1928), Stead (with reference to Paul of Samosata, 1964), Simonetti (1975), and Chidester (1985); while those who favor Alexandria are Kannengiesser, Abramowski (1982b), Lorenz (1979a), Patterson (1982a), Stead (with reference to Origen, 1964), and Williams (1985, 1987). I support the Alexandrian view.

will try to delineate the features of each man's interpretation. In the case of Eustathius, we will see that 1 Cor 2:6-8 provided the key to interpreting Prov 8:22 as a prophecy of the incarnation. A crucified Lord of Glory and a created Wisdom could not be the divine Son. They could only be the man assumed by the Word. Marcellus, on the other hand, began with an economic Trinitarianism that identified the Son with the incarnate Jesus. Prov 8:22 spoke of the inauguration of the second economy when the immanent Word took flesh and became the Son.

Finally in part four (chapters 6 and 7) we will examine the interpretation of our passage by Athanasius himself. In chapter 6 we will discuss the exegetical principles Athanasius used in his interpretation of Prov 8:22-30. These were what we call the tripartite formula (the "time," "person," and "purpose" of a text must be fixed to interpret it properly) and the principle of one skopos (every passage must be read in the light of the "person" of Christ pre-existent or Christ incarnate). Chapter 7, then, will examine the two interpretations of our passage (what I have labelled Exegesis 1 and Exegesis 2) presented in CA 2.

This dissertation is offered as a study in the history of exegesis. It is hoped that the examination of Athanasius's dogmatic interpretation of a highly controversial biblical text during a time of intense doctrinal dispute will prove beneficial to further studies of the redoubtable

bishop of Alexandria as well as to the field of the history of biblical interpretation.

CHAPTER 1
THE ALEXANDRIAN UNDERSTANDING OF THE FATHER-SON
RELATIONSHIP FROM ORIGEN TO PIERIUS

Introduction

Jaroslav Pelikan defines Christian doctrine as something believed, taught and confessed by the church on the basis of the word of God (1971, 1). Without establishing rigid boundaries between belief, teaching and confession, Pelikan identifies the church's belief with its "modalities of devotion, spirituality, and worship"; its teaching with

the content of the word of God extracted by exegesis from the witness of the Bible and communicated to the people of the church through proclamation, instruction, and churchly theology;

and its confession with the

testimony of the church both against false teaching from within and against attacks from without, articulated in polemics and in apologetics, in creed and in dogma.
(Pelikan 1971, 4)

According to Pelikan these three elements of doctrine are to be understood as developmentally related: a doctrine becomes part of "the authorized deposit of the faith" by moving from belief to teaching, and perhaps from teaching to confession. In other words, the church confesses what it has believed and taught in its past--at least what a part of it has believed and taught (Pelikan 1971, 4-5).

No doubt when bishop Alexander of Alexandria signed the Nicene Creed he believed that its confession coincided with the received tradition of his see. Yet the Nicene expression "consubstantial with the Father" certainly was not a commonplace Alexandrian affirmation. Homoousios appears to have been introduced into the Christian vocabulary by the Gnostics (Stead 1977, 190), but its use by the orthodox in Alexandria was limited. Indeed, it had had an almost insignificant place in Alexandrian doctrinal development: Dionysius grudgingly accepted its use; Athanasius appears to have employed it as though he had only learned to do so through his defense of Nicea (Stead 1977, 260-61).¹

Again, the Creed's anathema of those who asserted that the Son came from "another hypostasis or ousia" than that of the Father might even have been problematical prima facie for guardians of the Alexandrian tradition themselves. When coupled with the confession that the Son is homoousios with the Father, the anathema could allow the creed to be construed in such a way as to deny the separate hypostasis of the Son--something that no true Alexandrian theologian since Origen would have been willing to do.

Furthermore, the Nicene phrase "from the Father's substance" was an unfit expression of the Son's generation

¹Stead estimates that Athanasius used homoousios "perhaps 150 times in his genuine works," and of these less than half bear upon his own usage.

according to Origen. In commenting on John 8:42 ("for I proceeded and came forth from God"), Origen had noted that some understood this verse as a reference to the Son's generation from the Father (γεγέννημαι ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ) and defined that generation as having been "from the Father's substance" (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας . . . τοῦ πατρὸς; JN 20. 18 / 290:232, sec. 157). Although Origen thrice used the phrase himself in reference to the Son (JN fr. 9; Comm. in Rom. 4.10; Comm. in Heb.),² he believed that such an understanding required a physical conception of both the Father and the Son--so much so that the Son's generation could be likened to physical birth (JN 20.18). Origen preferred a less corporeal image. He likened the Son's generation to "an act of will proceeding from the mind"--but this turned out to be an analogy that Arius, not the orthodox, would employ. Thus Origen's theology tended to work against, not for, the Nicene phraseology.

The incompatibility of certain tenets of Origen's theology with Nicene terminology militates against a view of ante-Nicene doctrinal development in Alexandria as a smooth progression that culminated in the creedal formula of 325. Two modern scholars who asserted the existence of a good deal of discontinuity in Alexandrian doctrinal development between its ante-Nicene and Nicene expressions are L. B.

²Fr. 9 is in Brooke (1896 2:219). For a discussion of these three uses see Stead (1977, 230).

Radford and T. E. Pollard.

Radford suggested that the development of the Alexandrian tradition took place in two stages: (1) a growing ascendancy of Origenist thought followed by (2) a reaction against that thought during the episcopal reign of Peter the Martyr (1908). This reaction turned against Origenist thought at three points: (1) it denied the pre-existence of souls, (2) it asserted the identity of the resurrection body with the earthly one, and (3) it discarded allegory as an exegetical method (1908, 72-86). We will have more to say about Radford's thesis below. What is important here is his contention that the Alexandrian tradition did not follow a straight course but underwent a significant change of direction during Peter's tenure on the throne of St. Mark.

T. E. Pollard concurred with Radford about the existence of a course-change in Alexandrian doctrinal development, but believed that the change was so drastic that Athanasius developed a theology which was essentially discontinuous with third-century Alexandrian thought. According to Pollard, there were four distinct theological traditions in existence at the beginning of the fourth century: an "Antiochene," an "Alexandrian," a "Neo-Alexandrian," and a "Western" (1970, 117). The "Antiochene" tradition, which was represented by Eustathius of Antioch, insisted on the oneness of God and the complete manhood of Christ. At the beginning of the fourth century, however, "Antiochene"

thought was shifting from a theology based on a God-Word relationship to one centered on the image of Father-Son (1970, 117-121). In Eustathius's case this transition was not smooth and he flirted dangerously with Sabellianism (see chapter 5). Eusebius of Caesarea's thought was characteristic of the Alexandrian tradition at the dawn of the century. "Alexandrianism," as Pollard defined it, was Origenism as it had been transmitted from the master through Pierius and Pamphilus. "Alexandrians" schematized the Trinity hierarchically and distinguished between the transcendent God and a second God, the Logos, who was subordinate to him (1970, 117, 122-130). The "Neo-Alexandrians" were led by Alexander and Athanasius, "who carried on the anti-Origenist reaction of Peter the Martyr" (1970, 117). This group assumed the Son's unity and co-eternity with the Father, on the one hand, and his hypostatic distinction from the Father, on the other (1970, 130-136). The assumption of unity and distinction in the Godhead became the basis of an alliance during the Arian controversy between the "Neo-Alexandrians" and the "Western" theologians, particularly Hilary of Poitiers, who had been schooled in the thought of Tertullian and Novatian (1970, 117).

Radford and Pollard agree that the episcopacy of Peter the Martyr was the turning point in Alexandrian thought. Prior to Peter Origen's theology had undisputed control of the Alexandrian Christian mind. Both Radford and

Pollard insist that the influence of Origenism crested at the beginning of the fourth century and that then, under Peter's guidance, a new, decidedly anti-Origenist theology began to emerge. Clearly, in the view of Pollard and Radford, Origen is the key to understanding Alexandrian theology both before and after Peter. But the portrait of Origen as the focal point of the Alexandrian tradition derives its inspiration from the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea.

According to Eusebius's HE, the primary source of information on events at Alexandria at this time, both of Demetrius's successors as archbishop, Heraclas and Dionysius, were pupils and devotees of Origen (6.15, 29). Thus Origen's influence at the catechetical school, and by extension on the thought of Alexandrian Christianity as a whole, remained unchallenged long after he had departed Alexandria.

While it is true that Peter's reforms marked a significant change in the intellectual climate of the Egyptian see, they were not generated spontaneously. Origen's thought had not held undisputed control over the Alexandrian Christian mind until 300 C.E. During his own lifetime Origen was a controversial figure in his home city. His relationship with Bishop Demetrius was, at best, tense; and it ultimately erupted into open hostility and broken fellowship (Hanson 1982c; Trigg 1983, 130-40). Whatever the motives for Demetrius's displeasure with Origen--and his motives are

disputed--he charged the illustrious head of the catechetical school with heresy and was sustained by a synod.

This rupture between the Alexandrian episcopal hierarchy and Origen necessitates a re-evaluation, not only of modern scholarly assessments of the situation, but also of Eusebius of Caesarea's contention that an unbroken Origenist tradition continued to exist in Alexandria after Origen's departure for Palestine. Eusebius would go so far as to have us believe that when Origen quit Alexandria after his censure by the synod, he, not Demetrius, chose his teaching assistant, Heraclas, to head the catechetical school (HE 6.26, cf. 6.15).

However, as we have seen, Origen and Demetrius maintained anything but a smooth relationship, certainly not one that would allow Origen to pick his successor at the school. The chapters on the life of Origen in the HE are drawn mainly from Pamphilus's Apology and clearly have apologetic purposes, as R. M. Grant has shown (1980, 77-83). Eusebius's notion that the leadership of the catechetical school passed from Pantanaeus through Clement to Origen (we should also add Heraclas and Dionysius) borrows from an ancient tradition in which a pupil takes over a school when the teacher is no longer able to instruct (Tuilier 1982, 740).³

³Tuilier, nevertheless, believes Eusebius's assertion that the leadership of the school passed from Pantanaeus to Clement to Origen is accurate.

It would be more realistic to assume that Origen and Heraclas were rivals rather than friends (Bienert 1978, 102). Since Heraclas was a year older than Origen and was also, like Origen, a pupil of Ammonius Saccas, one can imagine that a rivalry would naturally develop between the two (Bienert 1978, 100, 102). He probably favored the condemnation of Origen for heresy by the Alexandrian synod; it certainly provided him with a powerful weapon with which to attack his rival (Bienert 1978, 98-100).

By seeing Heraclas as Origen's rival instead of as his disciple, we gain new insight into Dionysius's attitude toward his old teacher. Since it was Heraclas who appointed Dionysius as head of the school when the former acquired the bishop's mantle, it is unlikely that Dionysius was firmly or unequivocally an Origenist. We could hardly expect Heraclas to appoint one of Origen's disciples to such an important position. Any debt Dionysius might have felt toward his old master--out of either friendship or discipleship--was now unilaterally cancelled (Bienert 1978, 106).

In place of Eusebius's account, the following interpretation of the events surrounding Origen's departure for Caesarea may be substituted. On the death of Demetrius, Origen returned to Alexandria, probably in hopes of a pardon from the new bishop. Heraclas, however, reaffirmed Origen's condemnation. Sensing that he was still unwelcome in his home city, Origen returned to his self-imposed exile in

Caesarea. Had Heraclas been the friend and disciple of Origen that Eusebius pictured him to be, he would have worked to reinstate Origen in the Alexandrian church. But by upholding Origen's proscription from teaching in Alexandria, Heraclas showed that he was neither a friend nor follower of Origen (Bienert 1973, 100).⁴

Since it must be assumed that neither Heraclas nor Dionysius were devoted disciples of Origen, to what extent is it proper to characterize the Alexandrian tradition as "Origenist"? "Origenism," generally speaking, has cast a very large shadow over discussions of patristic theology. Any theology that used philosophy as its servant, allegorical exegesis, and speculation on an ideal basis to penetrate the supernatural content of revelation has been called "Origenist" (Baus 1980, 231). Many scholars, however, simply equate subordinationism with Origenism. Any third-century theology, in this view, is "Origenist" if its doctrine of God has a subordinationist flavor (Kelly 1978, 133; Pollard 1970, 106; Lampe 1980, 86).

Definitions of such broad scope allow "Origenism" to mean anything from Origen's teaching itself to everything else in the course of history that was understood as a further development or valuable interpretation of that teaching

⁴Arthur McGiffert speculates that since "the greater part of the clergy of Alexandria and Egypt were unfavorable to Origen," Heraclas upheld his ouster unwillingly (NPNF 1:251, n. 2).

(Bienert 1978, 6-9). Strictly speaking, after Origen's death there was no "Origenism" because no one taught Origen's complete system. Although some of Origen's beliefs and practices--such as the use of allegorical exegesis, the doctrine of the eternal hypostatic existence of the Son, or the notion of a resurrected body being constituted from a seminal principle--were employed by other theologians, it would be misleading to classify these theologians as "Origenists" since they did not adopt Origen's entire system (Bienert 1978, 19).

Subordinationism, moreover, is not the terminological equivalent of "Origenism." From the standpoint of Nicea, ante-Nicene theology in general was subordinationist (Simionetti 1967, 534 n. 78). The use of the Logos-idea as a model for Christology had been present in the church from the time of the New Testament and the Apologists. Several expressions of it developed, and some of them competed with Origen's system and received his censure (JN 1.21 (23)). The fact that in Origen's time there were alternative Christological expressions that were subordinationist in character undermines the assertion that ante-Nicene Greek theology was "Origenist" simply because it was subordinationist.

It would be foolish to deny the fact that Origen occupied a significant, and, to a degree, determinative place in the Alexandrian tradition. Many of the ways in which he understood the rule of faith went unchallenged by

his successors in Alexandria; his insistence on the eternal, hypostatic existence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, immediately comes to mind. Some of his teachings--the soul's pre-existence and pre-mundane fall, for example--quickly fell by the wayside (Bienert 1978, 116), while others remained in vogue for many years before succumbing to pressures for fresh understandings of Christian belief. Among the latter was Origen's methodological ambiguity with regard to the relationship of the Father and Son--and perhaps even the subordinationism that was a by-product of his inability to resolve the problem of the Son's equality-inequality with the Father. As we shall see, this methodological ambiguity continued in the Alexandrian tradition until, early in the fourth century, Arius tried to cut the Gordian knot.

Our point here is that, while not wishing to depreciate Origen's importance for the development of the Alexandrian Christian mind, we do not want to overestimate it either. Around the middle of the third century, we find many Origenistic characteristics in the theology of Dionysius, for example, but not to the exclusion of Dionysius's own original contributions to the Alexandrian understanding of the rule of faith. There was, in short, no Origenist hegemony over Alexandrian theology. Origen's brilliance had lighted the way, but his successors used other sources of light as well to achieve a doctrine that was true to Scrip-

ture and tradition as they understood it. Alexandrian theology, in other words, was a more vibrant and dynamic enterprise than has often been depicted.

With this perspective in mind, we now turn to an examination of the development of the Alexandrian understanding of the Father-Son relationship. In this particular sphere Origen's theological speculation was foundational for Alexandrian Trinitarian dogma. Yet we are not saying here that, with reference to the development of the doctrine of the Trinity, the Alexandrian tradition was "Origenist" in the sense that it paralleled Origen's views on the subject. Succeeding generations came to see Origen more as a guide than as a governor in Trinitarian matters. As we have already seen, Alexander had to lay aside several Origenist maxims at Nicea in order to gain a definition of the Godhead which he believed was still true to the Alexandrian tradition. Since one cannot, however, understand the development of a tradition without first of all examining its source, we will now examine Origen's concept of the Father-Son relationship.

Origen

A thorough treatment of Origen's theology lies well beyond the scope of this study. Our goal in this section is to highlight Origen's characteristic two-sided approach to the being of God. He spoke of the Son as both equal with and subordinate to God: God's invisible image and the first-

born of all creation. On the one hand Origen insisted on the true, real and eternal subsistence of the Son, and also on his full divinity. On the other hand, giving full weight to Jesus' assertion that the Father who sent him was greater than he (John 14:28), Origen represented the Trinity in hierarchical fashion. The Son was labeled a "second God" in contrast to the Father who was the "greatest and supreme God" (CC 5.39; 6.61; 7.57; 8.14, 15).⁵

Origen appeared to hold these two apparently conflicting perspectives together in tension in his theology by placing them on different levels. "Image" was primarily, though not exclusively, a revelatory metaphor. The Son was the divine representative sent to reveal the Father to his children. In order to represent the Father fully, the Son had to be fully like the Father; he had to "image" the Father as completely as possible. From this standpoint great emphasis was placed on the Son's likeness to and identity with the Father. "Firstborn," on the other hand,

⁵As is so often the case with Origen, it is hard to distinguish here between Christian and non-Christian influences on his thinking. For a discussion of the early Christian references to the Son as second in rank to the Father see Butterworth (1973, 33-34 n. 6). To references found there should be added the fragment of a second or third century prayer which address Christ as "the second grandeur (δευτέρα μεγαλιότης) that stems from the grandeur of the Father" (PO 18:444,14 (recto 19896)). For the Greek philosophical tradition see Dillon (1977, 48, 366-72). The second century Neopythagorean, Numenius of Apamea arranged the divinities hierarchically. Numenius's work was known to Clement of Alexandria and has been shown to have greatly influenced Origen (Dillon 1977, 362; Trigg 1983, 69-70).

was primarily, though not exclusively, an ontological metaphor. It denoted the distinction in mode of being between the Father and the Son. The Father was unbegottenly eternal. The Son, though eternal, was not unbegottenly so. He was the first and onlybegotten of the Father, essentially distinct from the Father and subordinate to him.

In Origen's mind, however, the Son's two aspects of "image" and "firstborn" were inseparable, just as they were also inseparable in Col 1:15. Thus "image" was not divorced from discussions of ontology. Rather it softened Origen's subordinationism, and forced him to admit ontological similarities as well as differences in the Godhead. Likewise, "firstborn" acted as a check on a too close identification of the Father and Son; it qualified the Son's equality by reminding that the unbegotten Father was the source of the Son's existence and being. Consequently, Origen's theology failed to fall neatly into either an "emanationist" or a "subordinationist" category (Lyons 1982, 118-123).

The balance between likeness and difference, equality and inequality, in Origen's thought was very delicate and often misunderstood. From the standpoint of the theological controversy of the fourth century, Origen appeared to theologize ex utraque parte. On the one hand, it was his vision of the Godhead that nurtured the episcopal response to Arianism in Egypt. On the other hand, it was that same vision that gave support to the aberrations of Arius. At

times even those sympathetic to him found his pronouncements embarrassing. Basil of Caesarea, for example, openly speculated that Origen's orthodox pronouncements, in particular those on the divinity of the Holy Spirit, were the result of tradition impelling him to say things contrary to his own opinions (Spir. 73). Although the dust of controversy has settled, a consensus about Origen's place in the Christian tradition has yet to emerge. In our own time Charles Lowry all but called Origen the father of Arianism (1936; 1938) while Henri Crouzel has maintained that Origen taught the equivalent of the Nicene homoousion (1985, 244).

In the following examination of Origen's theology I have tried to steer a middle course between the Alexandrian master's admirers and his detractors. Origen was neither an ante-Nicene Nicean nor a third-century Arian. I believe he meant to attribute real divinity to the Son and to place him on the side of the divinity over against the creation. In that sense he belonged to the orthodox and not to the heretical tradition. Nevertheless, if the subordinationist strand in his system were isolated, his theology would disintegrate and Christ would be reduced to a superman (Greer 1973, 44).

The Image of the Invisible God

Calling the Son the image of the Father was Origen's most characteristic way of expressing the equality of the Father-Son relationship. The Son revealed the Father by

imaging him perfectly both in nature and in activity. Explaining the meaning of the phrase "image of his substance" in Heb 1:3, Origen says that the Son is such an image because he "makes God understood and known" (PA 1.2.8). He then shows that it is through the absolute likeness of image and archetype that God is revealed. The Son, says Origen, is like an exact small-scale replica of a statue so immense that no one is able to behold it in its entirety. Everyone, he maintains, who looks at the small statue will be confident of seeing the large one for the small one preserves "every line of limbs and features and the very form and material (of the large statue) with an absolutely indistinguishable similarity" (PA 1.2.8 / 38,23-25 / 22).

As the perfect image of the Father's substance the Son reflects the divine attributes. He too is incorporeal (PA 1.1.8) and uncircumscribable (CC 2.9). The Son is properly called "Almighty" because as God's Wisdom he is the means by which God exercises his omnipotence over creation (PA 1.2.10). As the image of αὐτοθεός the Son can be described with similar superlatives. Common among these descriptions are "very wisdom" (αὐτοσοψία ; CC 3.41; 5.39; 6.47, 63; 7.17; JN 32.28 (18)), "very truth" (αὐτοαλήθεια; CC 3.41; 5.39; 6.47, 63; JN 1.16; JER 17.4), and "absolute holiness" (αὐταγιασμός ; JER 17.4; JN 1.9 (11)).

One attribute of the Father mirrored in the Son that had immense significance for the subsequent doctrinal development of the Christian faith was eternal, hypostatic existence.⁶ He emphasized that there was no time when the hypostasis of Wisdom did not exist. It was an affront to pious sensitivities, Origen declared, to believe that the Father "ever existed, even for a single moment," without begetting his Son and Wisdom (PA 1.2.2 / 29,4-6 / 15). Since God always had the power and the will, he reasoned, "there never was the slightest reason or possibility" that God went without what he desired (PA 1.2.9 / 41,1-2 / 23).

Origen employed the metaphor of ἀπαύγασμα in Heb 1:3 and Wis 7:25-26 to illustrate the eternal generation of the Son. Understanding this word actively as "brightness" instead of passively as "reflection," Origen conceived of eternal generation, not as a one-time action of the Father

⁶Origen distinguished the three Persons of the Trinity not only in terms of hypostasis, but also in terms of ousia and subsistence (ὑποκείμενον; JN 2.10 (6); 2.23 (18); CC 8.12; ORA 15.1). Hypostasis indicated the individual reality of an ordinary being; ousia and hypokeimenon were capable of various meanings. For Aristotle, ousia could mean an individual essence or substance, or the common essence of all beings of the same species. Hypokeimenon, analogously, was the characterizing subsisting quality of every particular individual in contrast to the characterizing subsisting quality of beings in the same genus. In his attempt to distinguish the Father and the Son, Origen always used ousia and hypokeimenon as synonyms for hypostasis, i.e., in their individual sense. He also used οὐς in the same way. Thus resulted a Trinity in which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were characterized by their own distinct hypostases (Simonetti 1975, 11-12). Also see Crouzel (1955, 102-6).

in eternity, but as a continual and timeless act.⁷ The Son was being generated by the Father at each and every moment.

Three biblical passages were employed in the ninth homily on Jeremiah to make the case for the continual begetting of the Son: Heb 1:3; Wis 7:26; and Prov 8:25. The Hebrews text established that Christ was the brightness of divine glory ("He reflects the glory of God. . ."). Wisdom showed that the light of which Christ was the brightness was eternal ("For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God"). Finally, the verb tense in Prov 8:25, by being present rather than perfect, demonstrated that the generation of the Son was an on-going divine act ("Before the hills he begets me"; JER 9.4).

The constant hypostatic engendering of the Son by the Father from before the ages was Origen's way of maintaining

⁷It is difficult to use a more precise term than "timeless" because of the ambiguity that is inherent in the meaning of αἰών and its derivatives. Aiōn can mean, among other things and with various shades of meaning, a long, but definite, period of time--such as an age, era, or epoch--or it can signify a period of indefinite duration (Lampe 1961, 55-57). Origen uses aiōn and its derivatives in both of the ways described above and often in the same context. For example, in JN 2.1 he says that before all χρόνου καὶ αἰῶνος the Word was with God, and yet a few lines above this assertion he describes the Word as τὸ ἐκὶ συνεῖναι (with the Father). If Rufinus's translation of PA 1.2.11 is accurate, then it appears that when Origen used aiōn and its family in matters involving God's being, he was speaking of eternal timelessness and not of definite periods of time. It is therefore impossible to agree with Crouzel that when Origen spoke of the eternal generation of the Son he was unclear about the meaning of aiōn and aiōnios, that sometimes he meant a very long time and sometimes he meant a time without beginning or end (1985, 244).

a distinction between the Father and Son without completely dividing them from each other. Had the constitutive act been a single once and for all occurrence, the Son could have existed as a separate and distinct being. By making generation an eternal activity, Origen intimately bound the Son to the Father. The mode of the Father's relationship to the Son is eternal generation. Correspondingly, the mode of the Son's relationship with the Father is eternal contemplation. By staying in uninterrupted contemplation of the Father's depths (JN 2.2.18), the Son is constantly nourished by the Father and at each moment has the Father's proper divinity communicated to him (Crouzel 1985, 244). Thus, the Son is continually dependent on the Father for his subsistence and for his sustenance.

This relationship of eternal generation and contemplation is what makes the Son God's image; all that is in the Father is in the Son (Crouzel 1985, 244). The Father and Son, though distinct in terms of hypostasis, interpenetrate one another. Thus to love both Father and Son is not to love two masters. Rather it is a love for both at the same time for the Father is loved in Christ and Christ in the Father (Hom. in Lc. 25.8 / SC 87:334).

The incorporation of the doctrine of eternal generation into Origen's concept of the Son as the Father's image led to questions about the mode of the Son's generation. "Image" suggested that the mode of generation could be com-

parable either to painting or sculpting an object; or it could refer to procreating a child who is a faithful reproduction of its parent (PA 1.2.6). The first mode, that of painting or sculpting, is an appropriate description of the making of humanity in the image and likeness of God. The second mode, that of procreation, was closer to correctly expressing the Father-Son relationship, for as the Father's image, the Son preserved the unity of nature and substance common to them both.

But procreation was not an apt description of the Son's generation from the Father. It could imply that there was a division or diminution of the parental substance when procreation of the offspring took place. If the Father were divided or diminished when generating the Son, it would be reasonable to assume that God was corporeal in nature (PA 1.2.4; 4.4.1).

In order to separate as far as possible the divine being from any notion of corporeality, Origen chose a mental model to explain the begetting of the Son; the Son's origin was like an act of the Father's will proceeding from his mind. (PA 1.2.6).⁸ The model protected the incorporeal nature of the divinity for

an act of will proceeds from the mind without either cutting off any part of the mind or being separated or divided from it. (PA 1.2.6 / 35,15-36,1 / 19)

⁸On the question of whether or not it was necessary for God to generate the Son see Crouzel (1955, 92 n. 89).

Hence the indivisible and spiritual substance of the Father was not compromised by generating the Son.

With regard to the understanding of the Son as the Father's image, generation by the Father's will meant that the Son is the "spotless mirror of the working of God" (Wis 7:26). As the hypostatic expression of the divine will, the will of the Son is in complete harmony with that of the Father. Indeed, so unchangeably linked are their wills that two wills can no longer be distinguished between them; there is only one divine will (CC 8.12). When Jesus said that his food was to do the will of the one who sent him and to accomplish his work (John 4:34), Origen believed that the Son accomplished in himself the Father's will to such an extent that God's will was in the Son's will and the Son's will was indistinguishable (ἀπαράλλακτον) from that of the Father (SC 222, sec. 228).⁹

We are now faced with determining how this union of wills, and by extension the union of activity (since in God will and act are simultaneous), takes place. Is it simply a moral union in which the Son is an image of the Father by voluntary imitation--an imitation that exceeds in extent and perfection, but not in essence, the imitation of God by the saints?¹⁰ Or is the union of wills a more intimate one--one

⁹He goes on to argue that this conjunction of wills is the meaning of both John 10:30 and 12:45.

¹⁰According to Crouzel, J. J. Maydiou understood Ori-

that reflects the intimate relationship of image and prototype envisaged by Origen? It seems obvious in several passages from Origen's works that he understood the union of wills and activity to be more than simply the Son's imitation of the Father. To those who might compare the Son's activity to the imitation of a master by a pupil or who declare that things were first formed by the Father in their spiritual essence and then were made corporeal by the Son, Origen insisted that John 5:19 ("whatever (the Father) does, that the Son does likewise") taught that the Son did not do things that are "like" (similia) what the Father does. He did not, in other words, merely imitate the Father. Rather, the Gospel taught that the Son did "in like manner" (similiter) all the things that the Father accomplished (PA 1.2.12 / 46,9-10).

The Son does things "in like manner" to the Father because he is the hypostatic expression of the Father's will. His generation is comparable to an act of will proceeding from the Father's mind. The Father's will, in Crouzel's terms, "intrinsically constitutes the Son 'existentially'" (1955, 93). As the hypostatic image of the divine will, the Son does not--indeed cannot--operate outside of that will. For biblical support Origen adduced two of the three passages he employed to make his case for eternal

gen's notion of the union of the wills this way (Crouzel 1955, 92)

generation. This fact further confirms our contention that the harmony of wills is more than imitation for the Scriptural proofs for divine eternal generation--a doctrine which in Origen's system provided the foundation for his concept of "image"--also serve to reveal the intimate union of will and act in the Father and Son. In that the divine Persons are "one in mental unity, in agreement, and in identity of will," Origen asserted that

he who has seen the Son, who is an effulgence of the glory and express image of the Person of God, has seen God in him who is God's image. (CC 8.12 / 150:200,25-29 / 461)

To prove the unity of will, Origen simply shifted the emphasis in Heb 1:3 from "effulgence" to "express image." And here, the intimate relation implied in the notion of "image" requires that the phrases "mental unity," "agreement," and "identity of will" be understood in a most intimate way. Just as Origen's doctrine of the Son as the Father's image does not take as its point of departure the distinctions of the divine Persons--they are not "two" who have become "one," but rather are "one" expressed in "two"--his concept of the union of will and act in the Father and Son does not begin with two moral agents willing and acting in harmony, but with the one, divine will as it is expressed in the congruent activity of the Father and the Son. Our contention that the union of will in the Father and Son is based on the intimate union implied in the metaphor of "image" and represents more than mimesis, is further proved by Origen's

use of Wis 7:26. Here Wisdom is defined as "a spotless mirror of the working of God." To Origen this means that God's "working" (ἐνέργεια) is a "kind of strength" whereby the Father works either in creation, providence, judgment, "or in the ordering and superintendence of every detail of the universe at his own appointed time." As the "spotless mirror" of this energy, Wisdom "moves and acts in correspondence with the movements and actions of him who looks into the mirror, not deviating from them in any way whatever" (PA 1.2.12 / 45,15-19 / 26). We note here that the passage does not allow for two agents acting in harmony. There is one agent, the Father, whose acts are "reflected" by the "spotless mirror." The mirror does not choose to reflect the subject. By definition it can do nothing else than reflect the movement of its subject. As the Father's perfect image--the hypostatic expression of his will--the Son is naturally united to the Father. In essence or in action he remains the perfect expression of the divine nature.

To summarize, guided by his understanding of the biblical characterization of the Son as the image of the Father, Origen obviously intended to attribute real and not figurative divinity to the Son (Dorner 1870, 2:116-18). The Son is eternally and continually begotten by the divine will. From the Father he draws his subsistence and divinity, and all the divine attributes are reflected perfectly in him. As the expression of the Father's will his thoughts

and actions are those of the Father. Because of the intimate relationship that exists between the Father and Son, Origen can maintain that the Father is "worshipped" when the Son, who is his image and offspring, is "adored" (CC 8.13 / 150:202,18-30).

As we said at the beginning of this section, Origen's concept of the Son as the image of God was not strictly confined to the revelatory function of the Logos. To reveal God, the Son had to be like God, and this included a likeness of substance. Thus "image of the invisible God" also informed Origen's notions about the person of the Son and his ontological relationship with the Father. Origen took care, however, not to turn this intimacy and equality into identity when speaking of the Father-Son relationship. Christians in the past, he said, had been guilty of committing one of two errors: they either failed to express the distinct nature of the Son or, in doing so, they failed to characterize it as divine. "Image" had managed to avoid the second error, but at the expense of heightening the Son's likeness to the Father to such a degree that the distinctions began to disappear. From the perspective of revelatory function, this emphasis on likeness was as it should be if the Father were to be made known in the Son. The little statue had to be an exact scale replica of the immense one if people were to comprehend the latter. But when approaching the Father-Son relationship from the side of

ontology it was necessary to begin with the second descriptive phrase of Col 1:15. Christ was the "firstborn of all creation."

The Firstborn of All Creation

For Origen, the Logos, whom he at times called the demiurge (JN 1.19 (22); 2.14), represents the first stage in the movement from the simplicity of the supreme and transcendent God to the multiplicity of the created realm (Tripolitis 1985, 18). "Now God is altogether one and simple," Origen argued, but Christ is "many things" (JN 1.20 / 120:122, sec. 119 / 308). These "many things" are typified by the numerous names of Christ, which "represent the simple oneness of God reflected fully into the fullness of the realm of souls" (Cox 1980, 327).

Origen insisted that it was by the free act of God that the Son was willed into hypostatic existence from all eternity. We have already seen how Origen used the notion of the Son as the product of the Father's will to illustrate the oneness of their desires and activities. However, generation by divine will also served to distinguish the Son from the Father ontologically. The Father is alone unbegotten. Nothing is the cause of his being; he is the beginning, the archē, of everything else, including the Son. Properly speaking prayer should be addressed to him alone, even though the Son is God: "we should not pray to anyone begotten, not even to Christ Himself, but only to the God

and Father of All" (ORA 15.1 / 333,26-28 / 112). One could and should pray through Christ, who is the High Priest and Advocate, to the Father, but never to Christ alone (ORA 15.4).¹¹

Clearly the derived nature of the Son compromised his equality with the Father on the ontological level. John 1:1's omission of the definite article with θεός in the phrase "the Word was God" was seen by Origen as not merely a matter of good grammar; the omission had theological import as well. The Gospel, Origen maintained, used the definite article when referring to the uncreated cause of all things, and omitted it when the Logos was called God. (JN 2.2)

The mode of the Son's generation seemed to compromise his standing even further vis-à-vis the Father. As we saw above, that mode was depicted as a procession from the divine mind by an act of the Father's will, which resulted in hypostatic existence for the Son. Ontologically, this put the Son in an ambiguous position for all of creation, too, came into existence by a direct act of the divine will (PA 1.3.3; 2.1.4; Florovsky 1962, 42). Indeed, Origen,

¹¹In his Scholia on the Psalms, Origen said that we worship the savior's flesh, not because of its nature, but because of the divine Word that dwells in it (131.7 / Pitra 1966, 3:330). Marcus believes that this passage is a parallel to the one in ORA 15. One should not really worship the man Jesus in contrast to the unbegotten Father (Marcus 1963, 158). His case for a parallel, however, is unsustainable. The ORA 15 passage is clearly talking about the Son, not the man.

called the Son a "creature" (κτίσμα) on the authority of Prov 8:22 (see below, pp. 146-48). The situation was even further complicated by the fact that Origen's system required an eternal creation. To be "almighty" belonged to God's self-definition, hence he always had to be "almighty" (PA 1.4.3). But to be "almighty" required the existence of creatures over which God could exercise his absolute power. "Accordingly," Origen asserted, "to prove that God is almighty we must assume the existence of the universe" (PA 1.2.10 / 42,2-3 / 23). If both the Son and the creatures had been present with God from eternity, and if the Father alone was unbegotten, would not the Son, in some way, belong to the created order?

Origen refused to place the Son among the creatures. Although the begetting of the Son and the creation of the world seemed to take place simultaneously, the appearance of the Son was logically prior to creation. Ps 104:24 identified Wisdom as the agent in whom God made all things. For Origen this meant that in the Son, who is Wisdom, all things potentially existed that later existed in reality (PA 1.2.2; 1.4.4; 1.2.1). By identifying two stages in created existence Origen was able to reconcile his idea of an eternal creation with the Christian confession that the world was created in time. The Father was eternally Almighty because in the eternal Son and Wisdom, who was the firstborn of all creation, there existed "by a pre-figuration and pre-

formation, those things which afterwards have received substantial existence" (PA 1.4.5 / 68,1-3 / 42).¹² The Son was distinguished from the creatures because he was μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός and was "from the Father's substance" (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός), whereas nothing in creation was para patros. Instead, created beings derived their existence "from God through the Word" (JN fr. 9 / Brooke 1896, 2:219,7-10).¹³

Origen was unwilling to make the Son either a creature or the ontological equal of the Father. He chose instead to make him a lesser God. Earlier we saw how Origen spoke of the unity of the wills of the Father and Son in terms that came close to affirming Nicene consubstantiality. Such language, however, came from the perspective of the Son as the Father's image. From the side of the metaphor of the

¹²Origen's concept of a two-stage existence of creation is logically similar to Tertullian's argument for a two-stage existence of the Logos (see below, chapter 3). Though Tertullian's economic Trinity would have been repugnant to Origen, could it be possible that he applied the distinction between immanent and substantial existence to the creation, thereby obtaining an eternal creation much the same way that Tertullian obtained an eternal Logos? Or perhaps it is the case that both men believed the movement from transcendent God to temporal creation required that the distinction between immanent and substantial existence be used somewhere and simply located it at different points.

¹³It should be noted that although Origen refers here to the Son as "from" (ἐκ) the Father's substance, he qualifies this expression with the phrase para patros, which is his preferred description of the Son's relation to the Father. Origen refers to the Son as being from God's substance in only two other places, Comm. in Rom. 4.10 and Comm. in Heb.

Firstborn of all creation the Son more closely resembles the Arian underworker than he does the hypostatic expression of the Father's will. In his explanation of how all things were made by the Logos, Origen uses Ps 148:5 ("For he commanded and they were created"). The verbs εἶπεν and ἐνετείλατο in the Psalm are transitives: God did not simply speak and command, he addressed his speech and orders to someone. Paraphrasing the passage Origen says,

For the unbegotten God commanded the firstborn of all creation and they were created. (JN 2.14 / 120:274, sec. 104 / 331)

Here we get the impression, not that the Father and Son conjointly will and act, but that the Father alone wills and the Son executes that will.

Again, we saw earlier how as image the Son rightfully was described with superlatives. There were divine attributes, however, that the Son could not possess absolutely. In John 17:3 Jesus had called the Father "the only true God" and in the Synoptic accounts of the rich young man (Matt 19:16; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30) he avoided being called good.¹⁴ Origen took these as clues to the essential nature of the Son vis-à-vis the Father. Since philosophers had long identified the one transcendent God with the Good, these biblical passages told Origen that the Son could not

¹⁴The accounts in Mark and Luke state the case more plainly. Not only is Jesus not to be called "good," that particular title belongs to God alone.

be identified as αὐταγαθός; this was an attribute reserved for the Father alone. As "image" he could mirror the Father's absolute goodness, but he could not be said to be supremely good in himself (PA 1.2.13).¹⁵

Finally, Origen's illustration of the large and small statues, though used to express the likeness of substance between the Father and Son on the basis of the image metaphor also implicitly showed their distinction and, in the Son's case, inferiority. The Son is divine, but on a smaller scale than the Father. The Father is so immense that without the assistance of a miniature replica his being is beyond the comprehension of the creatures. The Son, however, is on such a scale that he can be easily comprehended by them.

To summarize, we have noticed how Origen's thought about the Father-Son relationship tended to oscillate between the two seemingly contradictory poles of equality and inequality. The Son was eternal and yet derived; fully God, but only in a secondary sense, image of the invisible God and yet firstborn of all creation. This tension in his theology was due to his two different approaches to the divine relationship. As the revealer of the Father, the Son was a perfect image and likeness. But on the ontological level the Son was "second God" in a Trinitarian hierarchy.

¹⁵A similar case is made with regard to the Son not being righteousness in an absolute sense in JN 1.35 (40).

Although the two perspectives did not remain isolated from each other, rather each informed and helped shape the articulation of the other, no unified vision of God resulted; the two merely continued to exist together in tension.

Despite this tension and the questions it engendered about the nature of the Father-Son relationship, Origen became the lighthouse of Pharos for all subsequent Alexandrians venturing out into the theological sea. Eventually the Arians would break his tension by freeing "firstborn" from the counterbalancing effects of "image," thereby radically subordinating the Son to the Father and reducing him to the level of the best and highest of the creatures. The eventual triumph of the Nicenes, on the other hand, would entail the transformation of "image" from a metaphor of revelation into an assertion of ontological identity.

Dionysius of Alexandria

Dionysius succeeded Heraclas on the throne of St. Mark in 247.¹⁶ His eighteen year episcopate was an important one

¹⁶Although Dionysius was a prolific author, only fragments of his works remain extant. Most of these were preserved by Eusebius of Caesarea who dedicated book seven of the HE to him. In 1904 C. L. Feltoe published a critical text of all the fragments in his DIONYSIOU LEIPSANA: The Letters and Other Remains of Dionysius of Alexandria. Six years later F. C. Conybeare published a translation of two letters of Dionysius contained in an Armenian manuscript of some writings by Timothy Aelurus, the fifth-century monophysite patriarch of Alexandria.

Recently, Luise Abramowski has challenged the authenticity of the quotations of the two Dionysii by Athanasius,

in Alexandrian history for it was during this time that bishops of that see began to occupy what E. R. Hardy called a "double position," that is to say, they were both recognized as great prelates of the church and also as national leaders in Egypt (1952, 18-19). In Dioscorus, the mid-fifth century patriarch, would be realized the unhappy outcome of this development.

Scholars have accorded Dionysius little respect for his intellectual acumen. Hanson lists him as one of the second- or third-rate theologians of the period (1981, 49). His overzealous response to the Sabellians--a response that necessitated an embarrassing defense against charges of heresy might be partly responsible for his lack of acclaim as a theologian. More likely it is due to the assumption that Dionysius was an Origenist who contented himself with carrying on his master's teachings without making any significant contribution to them.

Strictly speaking, however, Dionysius, was not an Origenist. He did not simply parrot Origen's theology as his own. Neither did he give himself completely to Origen's allegorical method of interpretation. Dionysius's formal education in rhetoric had probably been completed before he

Basil and John of Damascus. Her thesis is that these citations represent an attempt to combine the trinitarian doctrines of Eusebius of Caesarea and Marcellus of Ancyra and date from 339/40 (1982a). Her case, however, is circumstantial and unconvincing.

came to Alexandria's catechetical school as a pupil of Origen (Miller 1933, 59). Consequently, Dionysius tended to avoid allegorical interpretation. As a rhetorician he displayed a great deal of interest in the language of Scripture; he was not driven to pierce through to the realm of ideas that lay beyond the literal level of the text (Miller 1933, 34-36; Feltoe 1918, 28-31).

Dionysius appropriated Origen's tension between the equality and inequality of the Father and Son, but differed from him in the expression of that tension. Origen focused mainly on the biblical iconography of Col 1:15: the Son was both the image of the invisible God and the firstborn of all creation. Dionysius, on the other hand, employed a variety of illustrations to describe the abstruse relationship of the Father and the Son (Barnard 1970, 178-79).¹⁷ He believed that the images of husbandman and vine, shipwright and boat, father and child, light and brightness, wellspring and river, seed and plant, maker and creation, intelligence and word were all equally illustrative of the relationship between the Father and Son.

¹⁷Grillmeier believes Dionysius's thought went through a progression and that his defense to Rome marked a turning point in his theology (1975, 159). Barnard is correct, however, in insisting that all of the illustrations employed by Dionysius belonged to the same cloth. In his defense of his use of poiēma, Barnard notes, Dionysius did not withdraw γεωργός and ναυπηγός (1970, 178-79).

Images of Equality

The Image of Light-Brightness

Dionysius's writings testify to how quickly Origen's doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son established itself as a permanent fixture in the Alexandrian tradition. Dionysius adopted both Origen's doctrine and two of his illustrations of it. As we saw above, Origen had used Heb 1:3 and Wis 7:26 as evidence for the Son's eternal generation. Since God is light eternal, he had reasoned, the brightness of his light must also be eternal. Dionysius left Origen's logic undisturbed (APL fr. 3 / 187,6-11).¹⁸ Indeed, Origen's doctrine of the eternal hypostatic existence of the Son and his use of the illustration of light-brightness to demonstrate this axiom had become so ingrained in the Alexandrian tradition by Dionysius's time that Dionysius appeared to use the phrase "light from light" (φῶς ἐκ φωτός) as a fixed formula (APL fr. 3 / 187,14; Bierne 1978, 218-19).

The Image of Father-Child

Dionysius also accepted Origen's conclusion that the existence of the Father implied the existence of the Son. Echoing the logic of PA 1.2.10, Dionysius affirmed that

¹⁸See also Athanasius, DSD 18.5 / 60,9-10; 22.2 / 62,21-23. Compare this with Irenaeus's citation of Prov 8:30, adv. Haer. 4.20.3.

"there was no time when God was not Father" (APL fr. 3 / 186-87). Unlike Origen, Dionysius sought to discover if the titles "Father" and "Son" provided any clue about the type of the relationship of the divine persons. To Dionysius the Father could not be separated from the Son and still be Father, "for the name carries the relationship with it." There could be no "Father" without there also being a "Son," and the name "Father" denoted the "common bond" ($\kappa\omicron\iota\nu\omega\nu\iota\alpha$) between them (APL fr. 7 / 192,5-9 / 182). The fact that the mention of either "Father" or "Son" immediately implied the mention of the other clearly illustrated to Dionysius how the Father and Son interpenetrated one another and were inseparable. "How can I who use these names," Dionysius wondered, "imagine that they are sundered and utterly separated from one another?" (APL fr. 7 / 192,11-14 / 182).¹⁹ If God is therefore defined as Father and Son, the divine Persons cannot be distinguished in such a way that they can be separated.

¹⁹Pollard argues that Dionysius's focus on the Father-Son relationship pointed the way, "to the ascription to the Son of co-eternity with the Father on a foundation other than that of Origen's cosmology" (1970, 110). Origen, however, based the co-eternity of the Father and the Son on more than cosmology. His identification of Christ with God's Wisdom in Prov 8:22, for example, led to a conclusion that God must always have been the Father of the Son or he would at some point have existed without his most fundamental attribute, Wisdom (PA 1.2.2). Here, at least, co-eternity is predicated of God's self-definition.

The Image of Intelligence-Word

Dionysius also used the relationship of intelligence and word to illustrate the relationship of the Father and Son. In JN Origen displayed misgivings about the use of Ps 45:1 (44:2 LXX; "My heart has uttered a good word") as a Christological text (JN 1.23, 39 (42)). He objected mainly to those who understood "word" (logos) as a name for, rather than a description of, the Son. Taking logos substantively, he insisted, would deny an independent hypostasis to the Son. The Son would merely be an extension of the Father, much the same as a word is an extension of the mind's thoughts. Also left unclear would be the matter of the Son's essence, not so much with regard to the qualities of that essence, but with regard to the existence of a filial ousia. It was impossible, Origen said, to "understand how that which is said to be Word can be a Son.

And such an animated Word, not being a separate entity from the Father, and accordingly as it, having no subsistence, is not a Son, or if he is a Son, let them say that God the Word is a separate being and has an essence of His own. (JN 1.24 (23) / 120:136, 138, sec. 151-52 / 310)

Ps 45:1 was not a Christological definition. It was simply another biblical metaphor for the Father-Son relationship. Since "heart" represented the Father's rational power (τὴν νοητικὴν αὐτοῦ; JN 1.38 (42) / 120:200, sec. 282), by which he disposed all things, "Word" was to be understood as an expression of the Father's reason. For

Origen Ps 45:1 was a statement about the functional relationship of the Father and Son--the Son announced and revealed the mind of the Father (JN 1.38 (42)).

Dionysius, on the other hand, believed Ps. 45:1 was illustrative of both the functional and the ontological relationship of the Father and Son. While following Origen's interpretation of "heart" as God's rational power, Dionysius focused more closely on the relationship between the mind, nous, and its verbal expression, the word, logos:

Each of the two is distinct the one from the other, and maintaining a peculiar place and one that is distinguished from the other; And yet they are not apart from one another, nor deprived of one another; neither is the mind without the word, nor is the word without the mind; but the mind makes the word and appears in the word, and the word exhibits the mind wherein it was made. (APL fr. 13 / 197,2-9 / ANF 6:93-94)

Origen believed that logos could not be applied to the Son ontologically because one could not attribute a hypostasis to logos--it was merely an extension of nous. Dionysius, however, contended that the relationship between nous and logos encompassed both unity and distinction. Each was in the other, he said, "and each distinct from the other: and they are one, and at the same time two" (APL fr. 5 / 191,6-7 / NPNF 4:185). Nous and logos, therefore, constituted a fitting example of the ontological relationship between the Father and the Son for it preserved the unity of distinct hypostases in the Godhead--a point Dionysius made more explicit by demonstrating how a "word" could also be a

"son."

And indeed the mind is, as it were, the father of the word, existing in itself; but the word is as the son of the mind, and cannot be made before it nor without it, but exists with it, whence it has taken its seed and origin. In the same manner, also, the Almighty Father and Universal Mind has before all things the Son, the Word, and the discourse, as the interpreter and messenger of Himself. (APL fr. 13 / 197,13-19 / ANF 6:94)

Although we have less textual evidence for Dionysius's theology than we do for Origen's, it is clear that the bishop intended to attribute real divinity to the Son and to connect him in an intimate way with the Father. He maintained Origen's doctrine of eternal generation and stated more clearly than the master the interdependent nature of the Father-Son relationship. "Father" implies the existence of "Son" and "Son," "Father." He failed to follow Origen's understanding of Ps 45:1, however, and thereby allowed the more traditional understanding of this passage, that it referred to the generation of the Logos, to either enter into or remain in the Alexandrian tradition.²⁰

Dionysius's interpretation of Ps 45:1 was a fateful step for a tradition that emphasized the hypostatic distinc-

²⁰It is unclear whether Origen was debating Caesareans or Alexandrians with his interpretation of Ps 45:1 since the section in JN in which the interpretation occurs was written at Caesarea. The reading of the text as a reference to the generation of the Son had ancient precedence in Antioch, as Autol. 10 attests. Tertullian (HMG 18; PRX 7, 11) and Novatian (Trin. 13, 15, 17) also read the verse as a statement about the divine begetting of the Word. There is, however, no extant interpretation of the text in that manner by an Alexandrian before Dionysius.

tion of the divine Persons while perceiving their relationship in a subordinationist framework. When Ps 45:1 was understood within the Alexandrian theological context as a statement about the Son's generation, it was only a matter of time before Arius would read v. 7 ("you love righteousness and hate wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows") as a reference to the promotion of the creature-Son to divinity for his free choice to be righteous. Had Dionysius resolved the Origenist tension between equality and inequality, Arius might have been prevented from reading v. 7 in this manner. But Dionysius, as we are about to see, preserved the tension in a way that provided Arius some justification for his ideas.

Images of Inequality

An outbreak of Sabellianism occurred in the Libyan Pentapolis around 257. Writing to Pope Sixtus II in that year Dionysius complained about the presence of an impious teaching in Ptolemais and described it to his Roman counterpart as being

full of blasphemy about the Almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and full of unbelief about His only begotten Son, the First-born of all creation, the Incarnate Word. (SX 2.3 / 51,6-52,1 / 55-56)

The doctrines both of God the creator and of the incarnate Son were of particular importance to Dionysius. Earlier he had written to Sixtus's predecessor, Pope Stephen

I, that there were two points of doctrine with respect to which the church must insist upon complete agreement. One was that God was merciful (and, by implication, that he was both creator and redeemer). The other point of doctrine dealt with Christology. Those outside the faith, claimed Dionysius, taught that Christ was either not God, or that He did not become man (Fr. A.5.1 / Feltoe 1904, 46-47).

Similar sentiments were expressed in SX. Some would separate the Creator from the All Good, thereby either declaring the former inferior to the latter or refusing to believe that Christ was sent from the creator:

breaking up the marvelous economy and mighty mystery, they believe some of them that he is not God nor Son of God, but others, that he never became man nor came in the flesh, but say that he was a phantasm and shadow. (SX 3 / Trans., Conybeare 1910, 114).

These statements are important for they indicate the direction Alexandrian theology would take in the future. In the letter to Stephen God is both creator and redeemer, but the lion's share of the emphasis is on God as redeemer. Christ is the incarnate God who died, rose from the dead and is returning in judgment. The accent in both letters is on divine activity more than it is on divine being. The letter to Stephen defines God as merciful. From this assertion Dionysius is immediately led into the doctrines of creation and redemption and not into a discussion of three eternal hypostaseis. Likewise, the interest in Christ derives not so much from his relationship with the Father as it does

from the fact that God has become man, and has done so for our salvation. Dionysius has here anticipated the priority that would be given to soteriology in Alexandrian thought. As we shall see, it was Athanasius's biggest weapon against the Arians.

Dionysius, however, stood at the beginning of the development of Alexandrian soteriology. He did not realize what Athanasius realized, that an effective Alexandrian soteriology demanded a redeemer who was fully God, a redeemer who clearly and without equivocation occupied an ontological status equal to the Father. Dionysius, in contrast, had inherited a hierarchical Trinity from Origen. In his attack on the Sabellians he thought it paramount to protect the distinct, hypostatic existence of the Son even if it jeopardized the divine unity. His only weapons were subordinationist distinctions between the divine persons.

Dionysius took action against the Sabellians when word spread to Alexandria of their presence in the Libyan churches. Initially, the patriarch sent emissaries to the Pentapolis to quell the debate that had erupted there between the Sabellians and their opponents. When the mission proved unsuccessful, he intervened personally through a series of letters (DSD 5.1).

Athanasius maintained that Dionysius intended to demonstrate the distinction between the Father and the Son by showing that the human attributes of Jesus ought to be

ascribed to the Son and not to the Father (DSD 5.2). Dionysius apparently believed that such a method would ultimately convince any gainsayers of the "true divinity of the Son" (DSD 5.2 / 49,23).

Actually, Athanasius has told us more about how he would have combatted the Sabellians than about how Dionysius did combat them. Dionysius did not distinguish between the Son and the human Jesus. Instead, he demonstrated that the Father and Son were not equal, and overreached orthodoxy in so doing. He not only distinguished the hypostases of the Father and Son, he went on to assert a "difference of substance, diminution of power, and variableness of glory" between them--an argument that Basil of Caesarea believed planted the seeds of Anomoeanism, an extreme form of Arianism (Epistle 9.2 / PG 32:269 / NPNF 8:122-23). Sixtus's successor in Rome, Dionysius, also was alarmed by the tone of his colleague's attack and condemned him for (1) substantially separating the Father and the Son and, (2) denying the Son's eternity and likening him to a creature.²¹

²¹The stock list found in several sources includes five specific charges: (1) making a sharp division, amounting to a separation, between the Father and the Son; (2) denying the Son's eternity, hence implying that the Father was not always the Father and the Son was not before he came into existence; (3) naming the Father without the Son and vice versa as though they were separable in their very being; (4) failing to call the Son homousios with the Father; and (5) calling the Son a creature and very different in substance from the Father (Kelly 1978, 134).

Dionysius's most troublesome analogies for the Father-Son relationship were ones he developed for use against the modalists: husbandman-vine, shipwright-boat, and maker-creation. These images, however, were so extreme that the Arians were legitimately able to cite him as one who taught that the Son was "a thing made" (poiēma) who both was "foreign" (ζένων) in ousia to the Father and "did not exist prior to being begotten" (οὐκ ἦν πρὶν γένηται; DSD 4.2 / 48,20-23).²²

Dionysius claimed that the analogies of husbandman-vine and shipwright-boat were used as examples of "certain things that had an origin (genēta) and certain things that were made" (poiēta). He insisted that he had mentioned these analogies "casually," that they were not altogether useful for his purpose, and that subsequent to their use he provided "truer examples" upon which he dwelt at length and which succeeded in distinguishing originate and created things from their source without substantially separating them (i.e., seed-plant and wellspring-river; DSD 18.1-3 /

²²Opitz questioned the validity of the Arian appeal to Dionysius, though he accepted the images of husbandman-vine and shipwright-boat as genuinely Dionysian in that they were derived from John 15:1. He theorized that since Dionysius used the terms infrequently they might have been Arian phrases (1937, 49-50). Athanasius, however, rejected the Arian claim to Dionysius because they had quoted him out of context, and not because their claim was groundless (DSD 4.3). It is apparent that Dionysius used language that was not only injudicious in his own time, but proved troublesome in later times as well (Abramowski 1982a, 259).

59-60).

Clearly, Dionysius did not intend to separate the Father and the Son. On the other hand, he did not offer to withdraw the illustrations that caused misunderstanding. Instead, he insisted that his theology be read in its entirety; images that emphasized distinctness should not be read apart from images that emphasized likeness. For every illustration like that of shipwright-boat there was also a counterbalancing one like seed-plant: a plant, sprung from a seed or root, is different from its source, and yet it is entirely of one nature with it. The same could be said of the relationship of a stream to its wellspring (APL fr. 4 / 189-90).

Dionysius's theological method, which allowed for variable images of the divine relationships, enabled him, at one and the same time, to say of the Son that he is both eternal and yet "made" by the Father. This ability to mix temporal and atemporal language marked one of Dionysius's chief contributions to Alexandrian theology; it also further demonstrates his independence from Origen.

As we have seen, Origen divided all reality into one of two spheres: ungenerated and generated. The Father alone occupied the first category while everything else, including the Son, belonged in the second. Although Origen never put the Son on the side of creation, the Son's ontological status was unclear.

In his attempts to defend himself against the charge that he separated the Father and the Son Dionysius was, perhaps inadvertently, moving toward a clarification of Christ's ontological status. We have already noticed his keen interest in the implications of the Father-Son relationship and his belief that the terms "Father" and "Son" entailed that these two persons existed in an unbreakable and inseparable relationship. Now faced with the problem of extracting himself from ecclesiastical difficulties arising from his "casual" use of such imagery as shipwright-boat and maker-creation, Dionysius further reflected on the meaning of the Father-Son relationship.

Refusing to withdraw the analogy of maker-creation, Dionysius, instead, insisted that when applied to the Father and the Son the analogy was to be understood in a generic sense (Simonetti 1965, 28). If the Father is the "maker" ($\mu\omicron\lambda\eta\tau\acute{\eta}\varsigma$), of the Son it is not in the sense of "artificer" ($\chi\epsilon\iota\lambda\omicron\tau\acute{\epsilon}\chi\eta\varsigma$; APL fr. 8 / 194,2-3). Again, if the Father is the creator of the Son, this does not mean that the Son is a creature. "I do not consider the Word to be something made," he said, "even if in passing I call God a creator while referring to the Son" (APL fr. 9 / 195,1-3).

Here begins a movement away from Origen's insistence that a line be drawn between ingenerate and generate entities. To be sure, the Father was still the Son's source of existence and divinity. Nevertheless, this fact no longer

needed to cloud the ontological status of the Son vis-à-vis creation. Dionysius insisted that "Father" and "Creator" were two distinct, non-synonymous terms (APL frs. 8, 9 / 193,13-14; 195,1-2). In so insisting, he redrew the line of ontological demarcation. No longer was it to be placed between the Father and creation, as Origen had done. It was now to be inserted between the Trinity and creation. The generation of the Son belonged to the inner life of God and bore no similarity to the generation of created beings by God (Dorner 1870, 2:180-81, 483).

"Consubstantial with the Father"

If the Son is moved from the side of the many to the side of the One, what should be said about his essence or ousia? Was the Son the "same stuff" as the Father? Dionysius specifically rejected the use of homoousios because it seemed to him to be a Sabellian term that denied the divine triad of hypostaseis (Wand 1974, 117). Unfortunately for Dionysius his counterpart in Rome was neither a Sabellian nor an enemy of homoousios. Dionysius's attack on that term was seen in Rome as at least an attack on the eternity of the Son, if not an outright rejection of his divinity altogether. Moreover, defending orthodoxy by asserting that the Godhead consisted of three hypostaseis looked like tritheism to Roman eyes.

The debate between the two Dionysii was fueled partly by a lack of terminological precision. For Dionysius of

Alexandria, hypostasis meant roughly the same thing as persona, i.e., "an individually distinct entity." His counterpart in Rome, however, might easily have assumed that the term corresponded to substantia. As such it would signify "the essential reality of deity" and obviously would be tritheistic if applied separately to the three persons of the Godhead (Lampe 1980, 86-87).²³

More than definitions were at stake here. Also in conflict were two distinct approaches to the doctrine of the being of God. Rome, with its fear of Marcionism, took the una substantia of God as its point of approach to the Trinity. Historically, it had found the attempt to distinguish the three Persons to be a difficult task. Alexandria, on the other hand, had approached the Godhead from the angle of the three hypostaseis and had had trouble adequately expressing the divine unity. Though both groups had much in common, it is not surprising that their present encounter was hostile and filled with misunderstanding.

In response to his Roman counterpart Dionysius sought a way to describe the inner relationship of the Father and

²³Over a hundred years after the death of Dionysius things had not improved much. Augustine wrote in his De Trinitate, "In order that we might have some words for the ineffable, and so might be able to speak in some way about that which we cannot fully express in any way, the phrase was employed by our Greeks, one essence, three substances (una essentia, tres substantiae). But the Latins said instead, one essence or substance, three persons (una essentia vel substantia, tres personae)" (7.4.7 / Arias 1968, 389 / McKenna 1963, 229).

Son such that there would be real unity without identity, but also distinction without separation (Bienert 1978, 218). He succeeded by both avoiding Dionysius of Rome's favorite citations from John's Gospel (i.e., 10:30 and 14:10)--which were also favorite modalist proof-texts and therefore could be taken as identifying the Father and the Son--and by refusing to use anything other than examples, analogies, and metaphors about the relation of the Father and the Son (Bienert 1978, 218).

Dionysius began his defense by first registering a complaint of his own. He thought it strange that he should have to account for failing to use a word, homoousios, which was not biblical (APL fr. 4 / 188,11-189,2). Nevertheless, he did not care to press the point. If Rome wanted to use homoousios to describe the Father-Son relationship he would not oppose it. However, if he were to be forced to use the term he insisted on the right to define it in his own way. And, his own way was to be an Alexandrian way: to begin with the three hypostases and to define their unity in a way that did not compromise their distinctions. Within this context, then, homoousios was not a statement about the essential unity of Father and Son, but a declaration of their generic oneness.

Homoousios is the rough equivalent of ὁμοουῆς, ὁμογενῆς, and συγγενῆς for Dionysius. Nature provides bountiful examples of this type of unity. A plant, springing

from a seed or root, is different from its source and yet is "absolutely of one nature" (ὁμοουσίᾳ) with it (APL fr. 4 / 189,14). Likewise,

a river flowing from a source partakes of a different shape and name; for neither is the source called river nor the river source, and both these things exist, and the source is, in a sense, the father and the river is the water from the source. (APL fr. 4 / 189,15-190,3)

Finally, human generation represents a transmission of a single nature (homogenēs) from parent to child. Parents, differ from their children in only one aspect, "that they (are) not themselves the children" (APL fr. 4 / 189,4-6).

Homoousios expressed for Dionysius the reasonable unity of being and form in the sense of ontological likeness without excluding differences and even hierarchies of the beings among themselves (Bienert 1978, 209-10). The doctrine of the Trinity that he forged in disagreement with Rome was summarized in his formula "thus we both expand the Monad into the Triad without division, and gather together again the Triad into the Monad without diminution" (APL fr. 7 / 193,2-4). In this formula Dionysius recognized that the members of the Triad could be understood as projections of the one divine essence. Nevertheless, he insisted that this projection was done without compromising the distinctness of the three Persons (Kelly 1978, 136). He might concede to Rome that behind the hypostases lie a single divine essence, but he had the last word by insisting that this common essence not be allowed to blur the Trinitarian distinctions.

The conflict with the Sabellians and then with Rome served to reinforce the Origenian tension over the degree of the Son's likeness to and equality with the Father. Dionysius's rash assault on the modalists heightened the Son's unlikeness to the Father and threatened to make a fiction of the Trinity. When faced with the implications of his thought, he subordinated the models of inequality and dissimilarity to those of equality and resemblance. The key word is "subordinated"--he did not renounce the former models, he only insisted that they be read in the context of other, more orthodox, metaphors. Thus was preserved the Alexandrian tension in the Trinity between equality and inequality of the hypostases.

Dionysius advanced from Origen by calling the Son a "work," and by distinguishing this word from "creature" in such a way that the Son would no longer appear to be ambiguously suspended ontologically between God and the creatures. The Son now clearly belonged on the side of the Father. And yet to call the Son a poiēma left the door cracked open for possible misunderstanding, an opening Arius would exploit much to the embarrassment of Dionysius's future successor, Athanasius.

Theognostus

After the death of Dionysius in 265 our knowledge of events and people in the Alexandrian church enters, as it were, a long, dark tunnel. Occasionally light penetrates

into the tunnel and we are able to glimpse the theological life of the times, but these glimpses are few and extremely fragmentary in character. Our sense of frustration is heightened by the fact that during the tenure of Peter the Martyr an anti-Origenist mood gripped the church--a mood that had far-reaching consequences for Alexandrian theology, but whose causes and extent can only be surmised. The only certain fact is that when we again emerge from the tunnel in the 320's, during the reign of Bishop Alexander, the theological structure, though definitely Alexandrian, is of a decidedly different cast than would be expected as a course of normal development from Origen.

Theognostus succeeded Dionysius as the head of the school when the latter became bishop. All that remains of Theognostus's work are four fragments and Photius's summary of the contents of his seven volume Outlines, the Hypotyposeis (Routh 1846, 3:409-14; Diekamp 1902).²⁴ According to Photius, volume one of the Hypotyposeis dealt with God the Father, who created the universe in time. Volume two demonstrated that the Father must have a Son. This Son, however, was a "creature" (ktisma) and had authority only over the rational beings. Volume three affirmed the Holy Spirit's personal existence as a being subordinate to the Father and to the Son. The fourth volume was concerned with the doc-

²⁴A fifth fragment may exist in the Vaticanus graecus 470 (Munitiz 1979).

trines of angels and demons, and followed Origen's teaching that these spirits were clothed in attenuated bodies. Volumes five and six showed how the Son became incarnate and proved that an incarnation was possible. They also demonstrated that the Son, although confined spatially by his incarnate form, was unrestricted in his ἐνέργεια. Finally, volume seven dealt with the Creation and contained a discussion of "other matters in a greater spirit of piety--especially at the end of the work concerning the Son" (COD 106 / 414,7-10 / Quasten 1983, 2:110).

Although we possess only Photius's outline of Theognostus's work, Origen's influence on Theognostus is quite noticeable. Indeed, Photius chastised Theognostus for teaching the same "nonsense" as Origen (COD 106 / 3:41,20-21). Origen and Theognostus held similar views of a hierarchically arranged Trinity and of the assignment of particular spheres to each of the divine persons--i.e., to the Father all of creation and to the Son the rational beings (cf. PA 1.3.4). They also agreed in their conception of angels and demons as corporeal beings (cf. PA fr. 23A). Likewise, both taught that the incarnate Son was limited in space, but not in energy (cf. JN 10.3).

In the Hypotyposesis Theognostus apparently proved that the Son was a ktisma (Routh 1846, 3:413,1). It is impossible to know precisely what Theognostus meant by this word. Nevertheless it does appear that the term functioned

in a manner similar to Dionysius's poiēma (Barnard 1970, 180). Dionysius, we remember, used poiēma to draw a line of distinction between the Son and created beings. It appears that Theognostus was trying to do the same thing with ktisma.²⁵

As ktisma the Son was to be carefully distinguished from creation. The Son neither came to be from nonexistence nor from a substance foreign to the divine essence. On the contrary, the Son was the "brightness" of the Father's light. And, more importantly, he was the "emanation" (ἀπορροια) of the Father's substance, a claim that could be made for no creature (Radford 1908, 15-16, 18). Elaborating on this point, Theognostus says that the ousia of the Son,

is not a substance devised extraneously, nor is it one introduced out of nothing; but it was born of the substance of the Father, as the reflection of light or as the steam of water. For the reflection is not the sun itself, and the steam is not the water itself, nor yet again is it anything alien; . . . but he is an emanation from the substance of the Father, this substance of the Father suffering the while no partition. For as the sun remains the same and suffers no diminution from the rays that are poured out by it, so neither did the substance of the Father undergo any change in having the Son as an image of itself. (DNS 25.2 / 21,1-7 / 166-67)

²⁵It is questionable whether Theognostus used ktisma at all. The word appears in none of the extant fragments and is found solely in Photius's description of the contents of the Outlines. Photius believed that Theognostus might have used the word rhetorically and that it did not represent his own convictions about the Father-Son relationship. Dorner follows this line of reasoning (1870, 173-74). Radford added that Theognostus's use of ktisma could not have been too offensive within the context of his theology for Athanasius did not hesitate to appeal to his writings against the Arians (1908, 14; see DNS 25).

Along with being "an emanation from the substance of the Father," the Son is also the Father's "image" (eikōn). The Son as "image" qualifies the Son as "emanation." The latter term, in expressing the fact that one nature originates in another, implies that there is a difference between them. "Image" contradicts that implication (Radford 1908, 15-16).

A fragment of the Hypotyposeis discovered by Diekamp sheds more light on Theognostus's understanding of the Son as an image of the Father (1902). The Son is properly called Logos

because he comes forth as the nous of the Father. For clearly the Logos is the finest product of the nous. For the Logos is also the Father's image. (Diekamp 1902, 483)

Theognostus's linking of logos, nous, and eikōn rests on the view that the Son, as Logos, is a full expression of the divine understanding. Hence he is the image of that understanding. That is why the Scriptures bestow the title "wisdom" upon him as well, since "this name is better able to show the fullness of the thoughts in him (Diekamp 1902, 483)."

"Fullness" apparently triggers the words of Col 2:9 in Theognostus's memory ("in him dwells the fullness of the Godhead. . . ."), though he completely misapplies the text by omitting the word "bodily": Theognostus observes that this dwelling does not mean that the substance of the Son

was such that divinity had to be introduced into it. Rather, his substance is in and of itself "completely full" (συμπληρώω) of divinity. Thus the Son has "similarity with the Father according to his substance" (ousia), and "preserves complete similarity with the One." Consequently, the Logos is unalterable (ἀναλλοίωτος) since "he is the unalterable Father's double" (μίμημα; Diekamp 1902, 483).

In this fragment we find Theognostus moving toward a particularly intimate connection between the Son's ousia and that of the Father. Though the Son is a ktisma he is also the perfect image of the Father. In him dwells the fullness of divinity; he is the complete and perfect expression of the Father's mind.

Theognostus preserved the Origenian tradition of maintaining a tension in the Father-Son relationship. He also followed Origen's and Dionysius's lead in interpreting dissimilarity and inequality within the context of likeness and equality. Certainly there can be no doubt that Theognostus intended the Son to be compared ontologically with the Father and not with creation (Grillmeier 1975, 162). And yet, though he makes the Son an emanation "from the Father's substance," Theognostus is careful not to identify the two substances. The Son is like the Father in ousia (ἔχων τὴν ὁμοιότητα τοῦ πατρὸς κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν; Diekamp 1902, 483), not homoousios with him. The use of "creature" to describe the Son was a step backward from Dionysius's

"work," but the manuscript evidence is too fragmentary to estimate the significance of "creature" in Theognostus's theology.

Pierius

After Theognostus the leadership of the catechetical school passed to a devoted student of Origen. It was during this period, at the close of the third century, that the influence of the great Alexandrian reached its high water mark in his home city. Indeed, Pierius, the new head of the school, was nicknamed Origen Junior by Jerome (Vir. ill. 76), and with good reason. Master and student shared similar affections and experiences. Pierius was an exemplary ascetic. His tastes ran in the exegetical-homiletical sphere, rather than in dogmatics. Photius informs us that he wrote commentaries on Luke and 1 Corinthians (COD 119 / 429-31), and Jerome mentions his homilies on Hosea (Vir. ill. 76). Episcopal disfavor, due to his lapse during Diocletian's persecution, forced him to live out his life away from Alexandria.

Pierius also shared Origen's fondness for the allegorical method. Photius, not without his customary editorializing, preserves Pierius's interpretations of the cherubim made by Moses and of Jacob's pillar:

he admits the actual construction of those things, but propounds the foolish theory that they were given economically, and that they were in no respect like other things which are made; inasmuch as they bore the likeness of no other form, but had only, as he foolishly

says, the appearance of wings. (COD 119 / 430,20-431,3 / ANF 6:157)

Pierius, moreover, followed Origen by embracing the latter's notion of the inferiority of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son (COD 119 / 430,13-15). Perhaps Pierius understood the Trinity as constituting some sort of hierarchy, though Photius does say that his sentiments about the Father and Son were "pious" (COD 119 / 430,89). Maybe Pierius taught that the Son was divine, but that the Spirit was not (Radford 1908, 51-52). Such a doctrine would have made him the forerunner of the Pneumatomachi.

Of particular interest for the development of Trinitarian doctrine in Alexandria is Photius's parenthetical remark that Pierius spoke of the Father and the Son as two "natures" (phvsai) or "substances" (ousiai) (COD 119 / 430,9-10). This choice of terms would represent a major departure from accepted Alexandrian practice. Although Egyptian theologians were careful to protect the distinction of the hypostases within the Godhead, neither Origen nor Dionysius would have defined the Father and Son as two ousiai or two physeis. Photius insists that Pierius used ousia and physis as synonyms for hypostasis (COD 119 / 430,12-13). But even if this contention were true--and we have no way to verify Photius's claim--Pierius has moved dangerously close to tri-theism and has raised the possibility that the distinctions between the hypostases can be elevated into Arian assertions of not only the dissimilarity

of ousia of the Father and Son, but also their absolute unlikeness in essence. Photius tried to salvage Pierius's reputation from the charge of being a forerunner of Arius by maintaining that his theology was orthodox in intent. Photius's assessment of the Alexandrian teacher has tended to sway judgement in favor of Pierius. It is interesting to note that Athanasius, although he claims Origen, Dionysius, and Theognostus as his teachers in the faith, nowhere claims Pierius as such. It is doubtful the omission was unintentional--particularly since there was a church in Alexandria in Athanasius's time which was named for Pierius (Williams 1987, 42, 44)--but its cause lies beyond our grasp.

Summary

In this chapter we have observed that:

1. Origen's understanding of the Father-Son relationship served as a guide for subsequent discussions of the subject in Alexandria throughout the third century. This does not mean that Alexandrian thinkers were content merely to parrot Origen's theology. Rather, they all worked within the parameters of the fundamental tension between equality and inequality in the Father-Son relationship that was characteristic of Origen's doctrine of God.
2. The tension between equality and inequality in Origen's vision of the Father-Son relationship is best expressed

by the Colossian metaphors: "image of the invisible God," and "firstborn of all creation." "Image" denoted the Son's equality with the Father. It was essentially, though not entirely, a revelatory metaphor. The Son had to "image" the Father as fully as possible in order to reveal the Father to humanity. "Firstborn," on the other hand, was primarily, though again not exclusively, an ontological metaphor. It distinguished the firstborn Son from the unbegotten Father; and, in the process, placed him on a level subservient to the Father. Origen did not keep these metaphors distinct in his thought. "Image," when injected into discussions of ontology, softened Origen's subordinationism. Likewise, "first-born" prohibited the identification of the Revealer with the Revealed.

3. The tension in the Father-Son relationship between inequality and equality resulted in an ambiguous definition of the Son's ontological place with regard to creation. By distinguishing between ungenerated and generated being, Origen seemed to draw a firm line between the Father and creation, and to place the Son on the side of the creatures. Origen clearly did not place the Son among the creatures, but his insistence on an ontological distinction between the Father and Son clouded the Son's ontological status.
4. Dionysius maintained the tension between equality and

inequality in the divine relationship, but used a variety of metaphors to depict the affiliation of the Father and Son. On the side of their equality, Dionysius insisted that the very titles "father" and "son" denoted the interpenetration and inseparability of the divine persons: there could be no "father" without the "son," and the name "father" denoted the common bond between them. Again, Dionysius insisted, against Origen, that logos could be understood substantively as an independent hypostasis. It was not merely an extension of nous (as Origen had understood it). Consequently, nous and logos constituted a fitting example of the Father-Son relationship for it preserved the unity of the Godhead without blurring the distinctions of the Persons. Just as nous, which exists in itself, is the "father" of logos, so also is logos the "son" of nous; logos cannot be made before nous or without it, but exists with it.

5. Dionysius's defense of his anti-Sabellian assertions (which seemed to compromise the divine unity) resulted in a clarification of the Son's status in relation to creation. Although he had called the Father the "maker" or "creator" of the Son, Dionysius did not mean that the Son was a creature. Rather, the Son was a "work" (poiēma), distinct from creation. By calling the Son a "work" and by refusing to place him ontologically with the creation, Dionysius clearly intended that the line of

ontological demarcation run between the Trinity on one side, and creation on the other.

6. Dionysius's choice of "work" as descriptive of the Son's ontological status, together with his analogies of the divine relationship such as maker-creation or shipwright-boat, left open the possibility for misunderstanding and provided Arius with powerful support for his contention that the Son was a creature. Additionally, his reading of Ps 45:1 as a depiction of the generation of the Son perhaps also aided the Arian cause. By placing this text within the context of the divine begetting of the Son, Dionysius inadvertently strengthened Arius's use of v. 7 as a testimony of the Son's promotion to divinity. Had Origen's reading of v. 1 been allowed to stand, the context of the Son's generation would have been removed from the passage and Arius would have had to cite v. 7 "out of context."
7. Theognostus maintained Origen's hierarchical structure of the Trinity in his own theology, even to the extent of assigning spheres of influence to each Person. He also called the Son a ktisma, but in a way probably comparable to Dionysius's poiēma. The Son was to be distinguished from creation, and belonged ontologically with the Father. The Son was "an emanation from the substance of the Father," and was also the Father's "image." He was "completely full" of divinity, was

similar in substance to the Father, and was unalterably "the Father's double."

8. Pierius spoke of the Father and Son as two "natures" or "substances." Photius suggested that Pierius used ousia and physis as synonyms for hypostasis. If true, Pierius moved dangerously close to tritheism, and opened the door for Arian assertions of the unlikeness of the ousiai of the Son and Father.

At the turn of the fourth century, then, an Origenian view of the Father-Son relationship had dominated Alexandrian theology for several decades. This view maintained that the unity of the Father and the Son, though ineffably intimate, could not blur their hypostatic distinctness. In short, Alexandrian-Origenian theology included a tension between likeness and unlikeness, equality and inequality, when it spoke of the relationship of the Father and the Son. Therefore, as we enter the fourth century we find that contained within the Alexandrian-Origenian theological tradition were the seeds of both Arian and Athanasian theology.

With the ascendancy of Peter as archbishop at the turn of the century, however, Alexandria entered a new phase of doctrinal development. It is to this next phase that we turn in chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW SOTERIOLOGY AND ITS EFFECT ON
THE DOCTRINE OF THE FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIP FROM
PETER THE MARTYR TO ATHANASIUS

Introduction

The previous chapter focused attention on the development of the doctrine of the Father-Son relationship in Alexandria from Origen to Pierius. In this chapter, we will look at the evolution of Alexandrian soteriology in the fourth century. We will see that there evolved in Alexandria a doctrine of redemption that was focused on the idea of an exchange--and by this we mean that human nature was re-created or transformed, indeed "deified," through its union with the divine nature in the incarnate Christ.¹ As Alexandrians strove to clarify what exactly was involved in such an exchange, they discovered that subordinationist theology became less and less capable of expressing the

¹A similar idea of salvation is echoed in Paul's writings (2 Cor 8:9: "though (Jesus Christ) was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich") and in Irenaeus's doctrine of recapitulation (adv. Haer. 5.14.2; 3.18.1, 7; 3.22.1; 3.23.1; 3.21.10). Irenaeus's writings were circulating in Egypt in devotional handbook format by the end of the third century (Roberts 1979, 10-14).

divine side of the transaction. Salvation from an Alexandrian standpoint, in other words, came to require a fully divine Son whose divinity was in every sense both equal and identical with the Father's.

Peter the Martyr

We have already noticed how Bishop Dionysius anticipated the important role redemption would play in Alexandrian thought, when, in his letter to Stephen, he emphasized the mercy rather than the being of God as the starting point of theological reflection. The type of soteriology that would eventually mature in Alexandria, however, demanded a reassessment of Origenist theology. With Peter the Martyr the initial step in that direction was taken, when Origenist anthropology was jettisoned in favor of a position that linked, rather than separated, the origins and destinies of the soul and body.

At the close of the third century Origenist influence in Alexandria had reached its high-water mark in Pierius (Radford 1908). When Peter became bishop at the turn of the fourth century the tide began to ebb. The new bishop looked upon Origen, not as a source and guide for doctrine, but as a "framer of a perverse dogma."²

²Although the work as a whole is of doubtful authenticity, this statement from the "Genuine Acts of Peter the Martyr" probably is a true indication of Peter's attitude toward Origen. For a list of the textual editions of this work see Quasten (1983, 2:117-18).

There exists no critical edition of Peter's works.

Generally, Peter's theological reforms have been erroneously interpreted as signaling the ascendancy of an anti-Origenist faction in Alexandria, a faction rooted in an old and deep bifurcation of the Alexandrian church. From before the time of Clement the intellectual elite in Alexandria had distinguished themselves from the common Christians (Lebreton 1923-24). One of the ways in which the "thinkers" expressed their difference from the rest was in their notion of religious knowledge. They tended to speak of religious knowledge in a gnostic fashion. On the one hand there was a popular religious knowledge, available to all, but, on the other hand, there was a secret tradition, reserved for the elite, which offered a higher and more immediate knowledge of God than was attainable through popular understanding (Lebreton 1923-24, 5).

According to T. E. Pollard the Christian "gnostics" (if we may so call them) produced a theology in the Alexandrian school, based on their rarified knowledge of God, that was different from the faith of the Alexandrian church.

The fragments attributed to him can be found in Routh (1846, 4:21-28), PG (18:449-522), and Pitra (1966, 4:187-95, 425-30). Schmidt published what he believed to be a Coptic fragment of Peter's writing (1901), but Delahaye conclusively proved otherwise (1901, 101-3). A year later W. E. Crum issued several Coptic fragments, about which he made no claim for authenticity (1902-03). Finally, Henry Chadwick and John Barnes discovered the Coptic text of an alleged letter from Peter to Apollonius, Bishop of Lycopolis (1973). Chadwick believed that the letter could be genuine; if not, it at least contained authentic elements (1973, 443-50).

Origen, who was the most gifted spokesman of "gnostic" intellectual Alexandrian thought, became the focal point of the long-developing tension between the two groups. He was the embodiment of orthodox gnosticism. His departure for Caesarea coincided with the polarization of the Christian intelligentsia and proletariat. The former identified even more strongly with the school while the latter solidified its grip on the church. Generally, outward relations between the two groups were cordial, but inwardly pressure was building toward confrontation (Pollard 1970, 78). Finally open conflict erupted during Peter's episcopacy (Barnard (1970, 183).

It is doubtful, however, that this portrait of events in Alexandria during the third century is accurate. Certainly there was friction between the church and school, but there is no reason to believe that this friction produced well-defined warring factions by the turn of the century.

Had the Alexandrian church which Peter governed been divided into factions, his revisions of the tradition would presumably have been more sweeping. We would expect a major overhaul of doctrinal premises. Instead we find evidence only of fine-tuning the tradition. Peter openly rebutted certain tenets of Origen's theology, but he did not proscribe the whole system. The dissemination of Origen's ideas continued under Peter, perhaps even with encourage-

ment, for Athanasius cited Origen favorably (DNS 27; ES 4.9). Far from being repudiated, Origen's teachings continued to provide axioms from which Alexandrian theology, even in its post-Nicene phase, would never depart.

Nevertheless, Origen had his detractors in Egypt. The survival of Peter's reforms demonstrate dissatisfaction with certain Origenist doctrines.³ What were these points of disagreement? Radford maintains that there were three that came to light during Peter's episcopate: (1) the allegorical method, (2) the pre-existence of souls, and (3) the resurrection of the body (1908, 72-86). As I shall show, however, it is more accurate to say that Peter disagreed with Origen's doctrine of the soul; and that these three points were where that disagreement came to light.

Peter believed the destinies of the soul and body were inextricably intertwined; they both fell together, and they both must be redeemed together. Adam's soul and body were created at the same time "by one operation." Conse-

³That Peter sealed his reforms with his own blood, no doubt aided his cause greatly. Between A.D. 200 and 400, according to Peter Brown, people directed their attention to divine power rather than divine personalities. This divine power was represented in "a limited number of exceptional human agents," who were empowered to bring it to bear among others because of their personal, stable, and clearly perceptible relationship with the supernatural. Brown points out that among Christians these "friends of God" included apostles, martyrs, bishops, and ascetics (Brown, 1978, 11-12, 58). Perhaps Peter was just such a "friend of God" in the eyes of his people, especially after his martyrdom.

quently,

it is manifest that man was not formed by a conjunction of the body with a certain pre-existent type. For if the earth, at the bidding of the Creator, brought forth the other animals endowed with life, much rather did the dust which God took from the earth receive a vital energy from the will and operation of God. (Routh 1846, 4:49,10-17 / ANF 6:283)

Here Peter was contradicting Origen's doctrine of the pre-existence of souls. To Origen, the coats of skins given by God to the fallen Adam and Eve were an allegory of the bodies bestowed on the rational beings after they had sinned and had been expelled from the divine presence (Comm. in Gen. 3.21; CC 4.40). Though there is no extant supporting evidence, Procopius maintained that Peter openly challenged this interpretation (Routh 1846, 4:50,20-27). Radford speculated that the challenge consisted of an assault on the allegorical method (1908, 72), but his hypothesis has little evidence to support it.

Although we do not possess Peter's exegesis of Gen 3:21, we do find an anti-Origenist interpretation of this passage in the writings of Methodius, a contemporary of Peter. By looking carefully at Methodius's argument we can surmise the scope of Peter's disagreement with Origen. Near the beginning of Methodius's "Discourse on the Resurrection" (GCS 27:217-424), it is asserted that the coats of skins "are not bodies," because Adam had already admitted his corporeal nature when he called Eve his bones and flesh. The coats of skins were given to signify mortality, "in order

that, by the dissolution of the body, sin might be altogether destroyed from the very roots" (1.40.6 / 285,8-10 / ANF 6:364). Here we find Methodius urging a point that Peter probably used against Origen also: redemption had to be both spiritual and physical. In Methodius's words,

if He bore flesh for any other reason than that of setting the flesh free, and raising it up, why did He bear flesh superfluously, as He purposed neither to save it, nor to raise it up? But the Son of God does nothing superfluously. (2.18.8 / 370,3-5 / ANF 6:368)

Methodius and (presumably) Peter challenged Origen's interpretation of Gen 3:21, not because they disagreed with the allegorical method per se, but because they believed the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls, which Origen had found in this passage by means of allegory, was incorrect. Essentially then, the problem was not with exegetical method, but with particular results of that method. Methodius himself used allegorical interpretation in his treatise on the Banquet of the Ten Virgins (SC 95); and that Peter did not ban the practice in Alexandria is obvious by its continued use long after his death. Consequently, the legitimacy of allegorical exegesis was not the issue.

An emerging soteriology of exchange was the cause of the dispute with Origen. Once the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls was overturned, the place of the body in the redemptive scheme of things gained in importance. Thus the resurrection from the dead had to be a deliverance from the consequences of the fall on human flesh: mortality and

corruption. Origen's notion of the resurrection did not seem to meet the needs of the new exchange-type soteriology. His understanding of the resurrected body led him to conclude that it was impossible for the corrupted body to return to its original nature. Bodies were like seeds of corn; when they were placed in the ground they contained within themselves a certain life-principle which survived the decomposition process and eventually generated a new body. The new body, however, will not be identical to the old one. Just as the corn seed does not generate more corn seed, but a stalk and an ear, so also will the life-principle in the body not generate the old body but a new, spiritual one (CC 5.23; PA 2.10.3). Though not an altogether inappropriate understanding of resurrection, particularly in the light of passages such as 1 Cor 15:37, 42-44,⁴ Origen's notion was controversial from the start (PA 2.10.3) and failed to garner much support, particularly in a society that was preoccupied with the preservation of corpses.⁵

⁴"And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. . . . So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body."

⁵Egyptian Christians practiced mummification throughout the period of our study. It was also quite common not to bury the dead but to keep their mummified bodies at home in a coffin where they could be viewed by friends and relatives (Ath. v.Anton. 90-91; Scott-Moncrieff 1913, 102-106;

Peter forged his doctrine of resurrection by looking to the risen Christ (Pitra 1966, 4:427, sec. C). The Risen Lord is the "first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:20). Peter believed that "first fruits" meant Christ's resurrected body revealed the character of all resurrected bodies. Above all, that body was the same one that was buried, as Christ himself had proven to the disciples. Consequently, our resurrected bodies will be the same ones that had previously died (Radford 1908, 79), not a new creation sprung from a surviving seed.

The result of the resurrection, according to Peter, is the immortality and incorruption of the body. Referring to St. Paul's dictum that "flesh and blood" cannot inherit the kingdom (1 Cor 15:50), Peter held that the "flesh and blood," which St. Paul said could not inherit the heavenly kingdom, represented human nature as a whole, both soul and body. As it is now, humanity is caught in the spiritual and moral corruption of sin and the physical corruption of disease and death (Pitra 1966, 4:427-28, sec. C; Radford 1908, 79). Before the kingdom of Heaven can be entered, humanity must be delivered from the vice of corruption. Such a deliverance occurs in resurrection:

it is by the glory of the Holy Spirit that the bodies of the just are to be enlightened with immortality, with incorruption, with glory and brightest splendor. It is plain that the resurrection consists not in a change of

Gregg and Groh 1981, 177-78).

nature but in a garment won for us by grace, whereby when death and corruption are put to flight there begins an eternal abiding, with a glorious participation of the nature of God. (Pitra 1966, 4:429 / Radford 1908, 82)

Although we do not possess enough evidence to define Peter's anthropology, the quotation above displays no departures from the anthropology common to Christian Platonists of the third century, as outlined by J. Patout Burns.⁶ Peter and Origen shared the same anthropological heritage, but Peter's insistence that body and soul partook of a single common destiny in contrast to Origen's difficulty in finding a place for corporeality in his understanding of redemption, inaugurated the doctrinal development that would redefine Christ in Alexandrian theology. Humanity, from Peter's perspective, needed a Redeemer who was not so much an illuminator as he was a deliverer. Primarily, though certainly not exclusively, Origen's Christ was a teacher, and the salvation he offered consisted of illumination. By

⁶Essentially, this Christian Platonist anthropology taught that God originally created human beings as a union of body and spirit. The spirit was intended to rule the body, but the Fall precipitated a role reversal. The spirit fell under the domination of the bodily passions and physical desires. Although humans continued to have a yearning for God, their ardent desire for physical satisfaction sapped their energy for spiritual things. Only the dissolution of the body in death and its reconstitution in resurrection could restore the soul again to its proper role as the governor of the flesh. One need not wait until the resurrection of the dead to gain some measure of control over sinful appetites. Through the revelation of God in Christ, the desire for God is aroused and the way to the control of sinful passions is made manifest. Thus begins a steady and never-ending growth into union with God (Burns 1981, 8-9).

Origen's time the image of Christ as teacher was a well respected and ancient portrait of Jesus, based in the NT and articulated by the apostolic fathers. Indeed, H. E. W. Turner called this depiction of Christ the "principal contribution (of the apostolic fathers) to the doctrine of redemption" (1952, 43-44). Clement had found this idea useful in his debate with the Gnostics at Alexandria, and Origen elevated it into a theological system. Gnosis might save a soul, however, but it was of little use against the mortality and corruption of the body. Though Peter seemingly left no clue about how redemption ought to be accomplished, Alexandrians eventually came to realize that those maladies could only be healed by a transfusion of the divine immortal and incorruptible nature. Such a transfusion was possible only on God's initiative. If anyone less than God enacted the exchange, full and complete salvation would continue to elude humankind.

Was it possible, then, for a Son, who was a "second God," to successfully transform humanity? Peter did not answer this question; he probably did not even realize such a question would be raised as a result of his disagreement with Origen's system. Nevertheless, his successors on St. Mark's throne, no doubt spurred on by Arius's view of Christ, did raise the question of the Father-Son relationship and with the help of a soteriology of exchange sculpted a new definition of the divine being. It is to their

achievement that we now turn our attention.

Alexander

The job of constructing a soteriology based on Peter's challenges to Origen fell to Alexander.⁷ Unfortunately the times would not allow a quiet and peaceful context in which to work out the implications of Peter's theological reforms. Instead, Alexander would have to articulate his theology in conflict with a popular preacher who was boldly trying to draw the line of ontological distinction between the Father on the one side and the Son and creatures on the other.⁸

Alexander's anthropology was similar to Peter's. Like Peter, Alexander maintained the common origin and common destiny of soul and body. He believed that humanity

⁷Properly speaking, Peter was succeeded by Achillas, who served as bishop for about a year and a half until 312. Though none of his writings survive, Achillas managed to leave his mark on history. It was his ill-fated decision to readmit a repentant Melitian sympathizer, Arius, to the Alexandrian clergy.

⁸At one time a collection of 70 letters by Alexander existed (Quasten 1983, 3:14). Unfortunately only two of these epistles have survived: an encyclical letter regarding Arius's deposition (Opitz 3:6-11), which has two parts (Quasten 1983, 15-16), and a letter to Alexander of Byzantium (ALX; Opitz 3:19-29). A critical edition of these letters can be found in volume 3 of Opitz. One of Alexander's sermons, AEC, has been preserved in Syriac and translated into Coptic, Latin and English. The text, together with Coptic and English translations, is in Budge (1910); another English translation is in ANF, vol. 6, and a Latin translation is in PG 18:585-604.

was originally made in God's image and that the soul was intended to rule the body. When the soul, however, became bound to sin its original purpose was thwarted. Being "immersed in error" the soul was stricken with impotency; it "declined from the straight path," gave in to tempters and ruined, temporarily, the divine plan for humankind (AEC 3 / 590-91 / 300).

Man went forth from paradise to a region which was the sink of unrighteousness, fornication, adultery, and cruel murder. And there he found his destruction; for all things conspired to his death, and worked the ruin of him. (AEC 4 / 591-94 / 300)

After falling into bondage to death and corruption, humankind was visited by God's Son. In a passage that perhaps inspired the wording of Athanasius's DI 14, Alexander spoke of an Artificer who came to recreate a form that lay rotting in the ground because of its sin (AEC 3 / 590). God sent his "incorporeal Son" down from heaven into the flesh prepared for him in Mary's womb. By joining human nature to himself in the incarnation, he "united that which death by the separation of the body had dispersed" (AEC 5 / 595-98 / 300). When Jesus ascended he offered to the Father "not gold or silver, or precious stones, but the man whom He had formed after His own image and similitude" (AEC 7 / 602-4 / 302). Christ, in sum, "suffered that we should live forever" (AEC 5 / 598 / 300).

Lamentably the extant documents do not allow a more detailed exposition or interpretation of Alexander's soteri-

ology. The similarity with Peter is obvious: the soul and body fall together and share a common destiny, death and corruption. But Alexander has moved toward a doctrine of salvific exchange as the remedy to this situation. Redemption is not only freedom from sin, death and decay, it involves recreation. Sin, death, and corruption, the attributes of fallen human nature, are joined to the divine nature of the Son in the incarnate body of Christ. It is within this fleshly crucible that they are overcome and purged. In Jesus God has exchanged perfection for sin, life for death, and incorruption for corruption. Although the details are sketchy, Alexander clearly is operating with a soteriology of exchange.

Late in his episcopate, Alexander was forced to address the question of the quality of the divine nature linked to the human one in Christ. "How divine was Jesus?" was the question echoed throughout the city. Was he fully God or the first and highest of the creatures? Alexander responded that as the Father's icon, or image, the Son was the "perfect likeness in all things to the image and impress of the Father" (ALX 52 / 28,5-6). In opposition to Arius, he turned to the iconic analogy to support his assertion that the Son was not a creature at all, but existed eternally with the Father. Alexander's demonstration of the Son's sempiternity with the Father relied heavily on the case made by Origen and Dionysius, but included some new

additions and odd twists that clearly stamped it as his own.

First, Alexander maintained that the Father and Son were inseparable, since the Son was in the Father's bosom (ALX 15). This argument seems to have come from Dionysius, but the use of John 1:18 was Alexander's contribution.

Next, Origen and Dionysius had asserted that the term "father" implied the existence of a child. To speak of God as Father, then, was to affirm at the same time the existence of the Son. Since the Father was eternal, the argument went, so the Son must also be eternal. Alexander arrived at the same conclusion, but from a different direction. He began with the eternal existence of the Son and worked back to the eternality of God as Father. The Father was always the Father, according to Alexander, because the Son was always with him:

and with the Son always present with him, the Father is always perfect, unfailing in goodness, who begot the only-begotten Son not temporally or in an interval or from nothing. (ALX 26 / 23,29-31 / 38)

This reversal of Origen's and Dionysius's logic was probably born out of the debate with Arius. In that debate the critical question was the nature of the Son, not the nature of the Father. Alexander maintained that the iconic model represented an intimate, almost organic union between the image and its prototype. So intimate was the relationship, in fact, that Arius mistook Alexander's position for Sabellianism and felt constrained to rebut it publicly. Alexander was not a Sabellian; he conceived of the Godhead

as a close, near-substantial unity and argued that the Father's eternity was predicated on the Son's (ALX 27).

Human parent-child relationships provided a key to understanding the unity of the Father and the Son. Arius had insisted that "Son" could only be understood in a natural sense; sons were offspring of their parents. To be a son of God, then, was to be God's offspring. But Arius's God did not ineffably reproduce himself in a Son who was made out of the same "stuff." God had "sons" by adopting creatures who had been made by him in time and space. Although the Word was God's greatest and most perfect "son," whatever could be said about him could also, theoretically, be said about any redeemed creature (Gregg and Groh 1981, 50-52).

Alexander, on the other hand, thought sonship could have more than one meaning. The Arians understood "only-begotten" in John's Gospel as descriptive of the Son's creation by the Father; he alone was directly made by God (Asterius, Fr. 8). Alexander, too, thought *μονογενής* meant that this Son, as compared with all other "sons," was unique, but he insisted that the Son's uniqueness was essential, not an accident of creation. "The sonship of the Savior," he said, had "nothing in common with the sonship of all created beings" (ALX 28 / 24,6-8).

Alexander's insistence on two types of sonship--that which was natural and belonged uniquely to the Son, and that

which was by adoption and applied solely to creatures who had been reconciled to the Father through the work of the Son--called for a rethinking of Origen's hierarchical perception of the Trinity. John 14:28 ("The Father is greater than I"), for example, was no longer construed as a statement about the ontological relationship between the Father and the Son, as it had been for Origen. To be sure, the Father was deserving of a "characteristic high status" because no one caused his being (ALX 52). But Origen had read John 14:28 as proof that the Father was on a higher ontological plane than the Son; it meant no such thing for Alexander. Alexander reasoned that it was possible to compare only homogeneous quantities, not heterogenous ones. The Son did not say that the Father was qualitatively better than he, only that the Father was greater. By using the comparative "greater," the Son implied that in nature and substance he was similar to the Father (Simonetti 1970, 154):

the Son is immutable and unchangeable, as the Father, and self-sufficient and perfect like the Father, wanting only his unbegotten character. He is an exact and identical image of the Father. It is clear that the image contains all things by which the greater likeness exists, as the Lord himself teaches, saying, "My Father is greater than I." (ALX 47 / 27,13-17)

"Greater" in John 14:28 is simply a disclosure of the different origins of the Father and Son--the Father is unbegotten, the Son begotten. Nevertheless, as the Father's image, the Son, although begotten, shares the Father's

status. The Son, too, for instance, is worthy of worship, even though the Father alone is unbegotten (ALX 52).

As a child bears a likeness in substance to its parents and reflects their characteristics in its own nature, so the Word, as the unique Son of the Father, is a perfect reflection of the Father's substance. Although Alexander insisted that the Son's nature is divine and belongs ontologically on the side of God rather than creation, his theology was still pre-Nicene in character. For Alexander the quintessential metaphor for the relationship between the Word and God was icon. The term implied that no matter how similar the image and the prototype were, and in the case of the Father and the Son there was virtual congruence, they remained two distinct entities.

From a later perspective it could be said that Alexander's theology was certainly homoion. It was not, however, homousion. In John 10:30 Jesus said that he and the Father were one, not in order to proclaim himself the Father, nor to teach that "the two natures are one in the hypostasis,"⁹ but that

the Son of the Father is disposed by nature accurately to save the paternal likeness. Thus he took from his

⁹Alexander tended to avoid using ousia, perhaps because it was not scriptural. His use of hypostasis shows that he considered it the near equivalent in meaning to ousia (Stead 1977, 161). Thus, possibly under the influence of Pierius, Alexander was unwilling to offer complete unity of divine substance as an alternative to Arius at this point in their debate.

nature an impression of his likeness in all regards and is an unchangeable image of the Father and can express the image of the archetype. (ALX 38 / 25,23-26 / 40)

Alexander's thought represents the first attempt to express a theology which reflected the theological reforms of Origenist anthropology and soteriology by Peter the Martyr. The impetus toward an exchange-type soteriology initiated by Peter, has led to Alexander's jettisoning of the Origenist hierarchical structure of the Godhead in favor of a closer ontological identification of the Father and the Son. Alexander clearly has moved the accent from distinctness to likeness in the discussion of the Son's relationship with the Father. Nevertheless, Alexander's partiality for icon as the model of the Son's relationship to the Father, kept him from coming to the fundamental Nicene insight that Arianism could only be successfully overturned if the Son were reckoned consubstantial with the Father. It also obscured the fact that the exchange was jeopardized if the Son were simply an image and not the expression of the archetype itself.

Athanasius

With Athanasius we emerge from the drought of primary materials that has plagued our study since Theognostus. Though there have been interpolations in his corpus of writings (see Quasten 1983, 3:29-34), there is more than enough genuine material in the collection to permit us to discern with confidence Athanasius's theological and exegetical

positions.¹⁰

A striking feature of Athanasius's writings is their theological consistency. Early in his episcopacy Athanasius arrived at doctrinal positions that would be fine-tuned over the years, but never changed. As we saw in the Introduction (pp. 8-11), Athanasius's earliest works, the CG-DI and CA 1 and 2, reveal that his thought revolved around two foci, a soteriology of exchange and an anti-Arian polemic. In the following sections we will examine the features of his soteriology and the effect that doctrine had on his understanding of the Father-Son relationship.

Athanasius's Theology

The Incarnate Son

Athanasius's power as a thinker and churchman lay in his ability to plumb the riches of the salvation offered in Christ Jesus (Pelikan 1962, 77; Sellers 1954, 33-34; Roldanus 1977, 5; Kannengiesser 1973, 112). The doctrine of redemption portrayed in the pages of DI and CA has seldom been equaled in grandeur in all of Christian history. The force of Athanasius's soteriological concerns compelled him to insist that doctrines, in order to be true, must be ef-

¹⁰The entire corpus can be found in PG 25-28. In addition, several critical editions of individual works have been published. To the list in Quasten (1968 2:23-85) should be added Robert W. Thomson's text and translation of CG and DI (1971), and also the SC edition of the same works (vol. 18 and 199). In preparation for publication in SC is Charles Kannengiesser's text of the Contra Arianos.

ficacious (Pelikan 1962, 77; Kannengiesser 1973; Young 1983, 70-72). Although his thought displays a speculative side (Strange 1985, 344), Athanasius was primarily a religious thinker and not a philosopher (Sellers 1954, 6).

So far we have traced the development of an Alexandrian soteriology of exchange and have noted how the evolution of the doctrine of salvific transaction was in tension with a doctrine of subordination of the Son to the Father. If it were indeed possible to trade human sinfulness for divine perfection in the incarnation of Christ, then it was no longer possible to maintain that Christ, in some manner, was a lesser form of deity than the Father. Arius helped the episcopal party see this difficulty more clearly by propounding the Son's unlikeness to the Father. Athanasius responded by redefining the Father-Son relationship in a way that was both anti-Arian and in harmony with Alexandrian soteriological concerns. To that achievement we now turn our attention.

Unlike Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, who had distinguished between image and likeness with respect to the imago Dei, Athanasius asserted that likeness to God is itself the content of the image, not a gradually attained goal of piety (Norman 1980, 79-92). Creation according to the image indicated for Athanasius both the contingent nature of humanity and the possibility of a real, ontological participation in God. It was the image that

gave men and women the ability to understand the creator in such an intimate contemplation of the divine being that the very needs of the body could be transcended by grace and the contemplative person rendered immortal and incorruptible. As long as the likeness to God was maintained, Athanasius asserted, people could remain in uninterrupted contemplation of God and live "an idyllic and truly blessed and immortal life" (CG 2 / 6,15 / 7).¹¹

Human disobedience severed the contemplative union with God. Turning its attention inward to something closer at hand, "the body and its sensations" (CG 3 / 8,4-5 / 9), humanity fell prey to selfish desires and preferred its "own good to the contemplation of the divine" (CG 3 / 8,9 / 9). Thereupon people became imprisoned in carnal pleasures and defiled and disordered their souls. "And in the end they forgot the power they had received from God in the beginning" (CG 3 / 8,12-13 / 9).

Athanasius could not fully incorporate Origen's notion of the Fall into his theology. As we have seen, Origen had taught that the Fall took place when the incorporeal rational beings were distracted from their contemplation of God. Peter the Martyr, on the other hand, had insisted that both body and soul fell together. Athanasius blended these two ideas. With Origen, Athanasius maintained

¹¹Athanasius would later describe this idyllic life as the first way to God through Adam (CA 2.65).

that the ideal pre-Fall state was one of contemplation, but, with Peter, he insisted that it was corporeal humans, not the rational beings, who were created in the divine image and who were charged with maintaining the state of blessedness.

Once the contemplative umbilical cord was severed, humans returned to their natural state and became subject to mortality. Although God had created people for incorruption, and had made them in the image of his own eternity, as the Wisdom of Solomon testified (6:18), once the relationship was broken individuals found themselves slipping back into the non-existence out of which they had been brought by God's creative act (DI 5).

The human condition thus became one of paradox. We had been made for God and yet by forsaking contemplation of the divine we had turned our attention onto ourselves. Or, as Athanasius put it, our eyes were "no longer directed upwards but downwards" (DI 14 / 168,33-34 / 169). People began to worship dead heroes (DI 15), and in ignorance of the true God, "preferred non-existent things to the truth" (CA 2.14 / 176A). Moreover, once fellowship with God was severed, a flood-gate of wickedness was opened and humanity developed an insatiable appetite for sin (DI 5). God's perfect creatures, in other words, had become imperfect through sin (CA 2.66), and, as a result of sin, were slipping back into non-existence. Thus creatures that had been

intended to live forever because of the image of the Word within them, became mortal (DI 4).

Although God could not allow this situation to continue, the options for remedying it were limited. Humans had to die, for death was the divinely promised price of disobedience. If disobedient men and women did not die, then God would be a liar. Humanity's repentance would not fully alleviate the situation either; it would merely dissolve sin without granting exemption from death (DI 7 / 150,11-12 / 151). Had sin alone been the problem, repentance would have sufficed. But sin was the means by which the entire human race had been infected with the disease of death and decay. Repentance could offer no cure for these maladies (DI 7).

Furthermore, the Fall had brought to light a structural design flaw in humanity. The grace requisite for maintaining the image of God had to come from without, from God. There was nothing inherent in people themselves that would make them obey God. Thus falling into sin was inevitable. Even if God had allayed the curse for sin after the Fall, the results would not have been permanent; humans would have continued to misstep in their relationship with God (CA 2.68; Roldanus 1977, 163, 355-56). Along with the flaw in humanity there was also a flaw in the relationship between God and the creatures. Divine grace was not inalienably guaranteed. Although God as creator loved and

provided for his creation, he was not bound to humanity in such a way that it was incumbent on him to share gracefully of his divine nature with it (Strange 1985, 344). As far as Athanasius was concerned, true redemption depended on an unbreakable, inalienable communion of divine and human. Complete salvation, therefore, would have to entail, among other things, the re-creation of human nature, the restoration of immortality and incorruptibility, the re-imparting of divine knowledge, and the re-establishment of participation in God.¹²

The Son was the only means of such salvation. No creature could accomplish this task; angels and humans both had proven their ability to disobey God (CA 1.49). Moreover a creature would have to battle the devil on equal terms, since Satan too is a creature. There would be no victory over evil, at best there would be a negotiated truce (CA 2.70). No one else, Athanasius held, could make corruption incorruptible

except the Saviour himself, who also created the universe in the beginning from nothing; nor could any other recreate men in the image, save the image of the Father; nor could another raise up what was mortal as immortal, save our Lord Jesus Christ, who is life itself; nor could another teach about the Father and overthrow the cult of idols, save the Word who orders the universe, and who alone is the true only-begotten Son of the Father. (DI 20 / 182,2-10 / 183)

¹²Norman also lists impassibility, the exaltation of human nature to divine glory and possession of the heavenly kingdom as elements of full salvation for Athanasius (1980, 131-65).

The Word restored the knowledge of God in humanity by coming into creation and attracting mortals to him. The Word's works in the flesh, and also those of his followers, weakened and overshadowed the works of all other heroes and gods "in order that from wherever men were attracted he might lift them up and teach them his true Father" (DI 15 / 170,34-35, 172,36 / 171, 173; DI 14; DI 53).

Christ had to be more than just an illuminator or educator in order to re-create humanity. Ancient and venerable though it was as an interpretation of redemption (Turner 1952, 33-35), the Christ-as-teacher soteriology had reached its zenith in the Alexandrian tradition with Origen. The restoration of the knowledge of God alone could not break the grip of death and decay. Moreover, humanity would still have been structurally flawed; its inherent weakness to temptation would repeatedly compromise its standing with God. A teacher can guide, but not refashion. Full redemption required a stay of the death sentence and a permanent placement of divine, sanctifying grace within the redeemed.

An exchange between the incarnate Logos and humanity was the necessary condition of re-creation. The manhood assumed by the Word was the crucible wherein God made a completely new humanity. In Jesus Christ all people are inseparably incorporated into the Son (CA 1.43; Roldanus 1977, 159, 355). He has become the new head of the race (Roldanus 1977, 355-56). In this capacity the Son is the "firstborn

of all creation." When he appeared in the flesh the Son became the means of adoption into the family of God (CA 2.62, 64).¹³

Just as Adam affected succeeding generations by his actions as the first head of the race, so the actions of the incarnate Christ as the new head of humanity had consequences for all joined to him in the incarnation.¹⁴ Whatever was done by the Logos in the flesh was done "for our sakes." It is because the Son experienced chrismation, death, and resurrection in his own body that others are able to do the same. "The incarnation is completely the primordial factor in the eyes of Athanasius" (Roldanus 1977, 155). Although Phil 2:9-10 and Ps 45:7 speak of the exaltation and anointing of Christ's manhood, they are actually references to the exaltation and anointing of all humanity:

and, as the passage of the Apostle shews, that we had not been redeemed and highly exalted, had not He who exists in the form of God taken a servant's form, so

¹³Although Athanasius did understand the title "first-born" in a manner compatible with Origen, that is as a reference to the Creator-Word in whom creation came to be (CG 41; CA 2.63), his "master-stroke was to identify the one who within the Godhead had been the only-begotten Son of the Father from eternity with the one who within the economy was the first-born of creation and of the new creation" (Strange 1985, 345).

¹⁴Athanasius's Christ is an archetypal and not a representative man. That is to say, he has become the new Idea of humanity in which other humans might participate. He is not organically tied to each and every individual so that all literally die on the cross with him. For a fuller discussion of this notion, together with its historical grounding in the Platonic tradition, see Norman (1980, 100-102).

David also shews that not otherwise should we have partaken the Spirit and been sanctified, but that the Giver of the Spirit, the Word Himself, had spoken of Himself as anointed with the Spirit for us. (CA 1.50 / 117A-B / 336)

Athanasius expanded the Pauline parallel, "as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor 15:22), into as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all die and shall be made alive. In Christ's body the sentence of death, passed on all humanity because of the transgression of the divine command, was carried out. All died in him, not because he substituted himself for all, but because the incarnation made him the new head of humanity. His death was an act of solidarity; "that which happens to him, happens for all and to all those who have united themselves to him" (Roldanus 1977, 175, 158, 179-80; DI 8, 9, 20; CA 1.41; 2.69).

Having abolished the law of death in his body, the Word next destroyed death itself and decay by rising again from the dead. In the resurrection the immortal Son gave his immortality to his body and, as a consequence, to all who were adopted as children of God through it.

Therefore as an offering and sacrifice free of all spot, he offered to death the body which he had taken to himself, and immediately abolished death from all who were like him by the offering of a like. For since the Word is above all, consequently by offering his temple and the instrument of his body as a substitute for all men, he fulfilled the debt by his death. And as the incorruptible Son of God was united to all men by his body similar to theirs, consequently he endued all men with incorruption by the promise concerning the resurrection. (DI 9 / 154,7-15 / 153, 155)

Re-created humanity had now been restored to its former glory before the Fall, but with one important difference. Prior to the incarnation, God's love and grace were never securely possessed by his creatures. They were divine gifts that could be withdrawn at any moment. The re-creation of humanity in the incarnate Christ changed this situation. Unification with the Word's body also meant incorporation into the Word. Grace was no longer something extrinsic, it had now been mingled with human nature. Neither was it contingent. The divine Son who, as the image of the Father was unchangeable, had hypostatically united the divine nature with the human for all eternity (Roldanus 1977, 156-57). God, therefore, could adopt his creatures as children because he saw the Son in them. Likewise, when they call God their Father it is the Holy Spirit within them who actually calls the Father (Roldanus 1977, 148-49). The nature of the union of God and man was this, Athanasius explained, "that He might unite what is man by nature to Him who is in the nature of the Godhead, and his salvation and deification might be sure" (CA 2.70). It was now possible, not naturally but by grace, to live a "deified" existence in the Son (Roldanus 1977, 148). In addition, this grace of adoption was inalienably guaranteed to all by the incarnation (Roldanus 1977, 159, 355-56; Gregg and Groh 1981, 29).

The Divine Son

The compelling need of his soteriology for a divine agent in the exchange that was fully and in every sense God brought Athanasius to a new understanding of the Father-Son relationship. Although his quest for a workable definition of the Godhead was aided by the necessity of combatting a view of Christ that made him the highest order of creature and by the Nicene confession of the common substance of the Trinitarian Persons, Athanasius's theology was wholly Alexandrian in character. It was a combination of Alexandrian soteriological requirements and Origenist themes of divine unity and likeness. As we might expect from someone who was completely captivated by the doctrine of redemption, the Son was not only the focal point of Athanasius's religious life, but of his theology as well. Strictly speaking, the Son was the key to understanding the Trinity. It was the Son who revealed the Father and sent the Holy Spirit. Without a right understanding of the Son, a true knowledge of the Father and Spirit was impossible (CA 1.8).

Athanasius continued in the Alexandrian tradition of speaking of the Father-Son relationship in a most intimate way. However, for Athanasius the operative metaphor for the doctrine of the Son was not image, as it had been for Origen and Alexander, but light (Pelikan 1962, 15).¹⁵ The emphasis

¹⁵"Through the evolution of the image of light and radiance from rhetorical naiveté to theological subtlety and

on light as opposed to image allowed Athanasius to probe the very essence of God and to assert the consubstantiality of the divine persons. While Tertullian and Eusebius of Caesarea had used the metaphor of light to prove the Son's distinctness in being and unity with the Father, Athanasius used it to illustrate the essential relationship of the Father and the Son (Hanson 1982b, 102). Heb 1:3 proved more than the Son's eternity. Radiance, Athanasius asserted, was "proper" (ἰδιος) to the essence of its source. "We see that the radiance from the sun is proper to it," he said (CA 2.33 / 217A), just as the "expression" (χαρακτήρ) cannot be different from the "subsistence" (hypostasis; CA 2.32 / 216B). Similarly, the Son is

begotten not from without but from the Father, and while the Father remains whole, the Expression of His Subsistence is ever, and preserves the Father's likeness and unvarying Image, so that he who sees Him, sees in Him the Subsistence too, of which He is the Expression. And from the operation of the Expression we understand the true Godhead of the Subsistence, as the Saviour Himself teaches when He says, "The Father who dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works" which I do; and "I and the Father are one," and "I in the Father and the Father in Me." (CA 2.33 / 217B / 366).

Making use of the iconic analogy, Athanasius, too, could assert the absolute likeness between prototype and type, but this was due to the fact that there was an essential likeness between the Father and Son, just as there is

precision, the dogma of the Trinity came of age, and for this evolution Athanasius deserves a good share of the credit" (Pelikan 1962, 56, 57).

an essential likeness between the sun and its radiance. One therefore can see the Father's hypostasis in the Son. It is to a hypostatic identity and not simply to a volitional union, that John 10:30 and 14:9-10 bear witness.

Although the Johannine material could be and was understood by Athanasius to speak of the congruent will and activity of the Father and Son, Athanasius believed that the harmony of will and act implied a likeness of substance.

Thus the Word

is known from the Father's works which He Himself worketh, to be "in the Father and the Father in Him," and "He that hath seen Him hath seen the Father," because the Son's Essence is proper to the Father, and He in all points like Him. (CA 2.22 / 192C / 360)

Elsewhere Athanasius used John 5:17 ("My Father is working still, and I am working") to prove the same point (CA 2.20-21). Against Arius, this verse demonstrated the eternal existence of the Word in the Father. Since creation was a divine act, the argument went, and since the Father and Son accomplish all things together, for the Son to be a creature would mean that the Son became his own creator. On the contrary, John 5:17 showed that it was "proper of the Word to work the works of the Father and not to be outside of him" (CA 2.21 / 189B; Weber 1965, 141).

Once the Son was identified as the Father's living will it was improper and inadequate to speak of a moral union of the Trinity. John 10:30 and 14:9-10 were not statements about two unlike hypostases in active conjunc-

tion, nor were they declarations about similar substances that were the image and prototype of each other. They affirmed the one, divine substance of God which was eternally existent and operative in three Persons. Athanasius construed John 14:9-10 with Prov 8:30, a text which, as we shall see in chapter 3, functioned in the Alexandrian tradition as a proof for the Son's eternality. In Athanasius's hand, however, Prov 8:30 was read as a statement of divine circumincession. The Son was daily the Father's delight and constantly rejoiced before him because of the perichoresis he and the Father enjoyed (CA 2.33).

This substantial intimacy of the Father and Son distinguished them ontologically from creation (Roldanus 1977, 349; Florovsky 1962, 46-47; Strange 1985, 344). By insisting that the Son was proper to the divine essence, Athanasius unequivocally placed him outside the realm of the creatures. Although as creator the Word was "in all creation," Athanasius boldly proclaimed, "he is in essence outside the universe" (DI 17 / 174,5-6 / 175). Moreover, as the true and proper Son of the Father, his mode of sonship was natural and not as that of the creatures "by participation" (κατὰ μετοχήν; CG 46 / 130,54).

The assertion of the substantial unity of the Godhead demanded a reworking of Origen's doctrine of creation. Since everything came into existence as a direct result of the divine will, Origen's ontology was divided into two

categories: unbegotten and begotten. For Athanasius, the generation of the Son was not associated with the divine will. The Son was begotten out of an eternal necessity of the divine being to exist trinitarianly; his generation was completely divorced from the act of creation (Pollard 1970, 131-33; Strange 1985, 344). The separation of creation and trinitarian manifestation enabled Athanasius to express God's essential triune nature more adequately than Origen.¹⁶ Moving the begetting of the Son into the inner life of God freed God's being from cosmology and allowed for the perception of creation as a divine act at the beginning of time (Meijering 1968, 60; Meijering 1975, 95-97; Meyendorff 1983, 28; Roldanus 1977, 349).¹⁷

The movement of the Son's generation into the inner life of God also disallowed any perception of the Son as lesser than or subservient to the Father. Exegetically the Son's equality with the Father can be seen in Athanasius's reading of Ps 33:9 ("For he spoke and it came to be; he

¹⁶Wolfgang Marcus (1963, 163) has argued that Origen's "subordinationist" language is not ontological, but economical. The Son is subordinate to the Father in order to redeem humanity ("God in his goodness comes down to men, not specially, but in his providence"- CC 5.12).

¹⁷Meijering says that in arriving at his doctrine of the Son Athanasius "merged" (aufgehoben) Origenist and Arian positions. From Origen he took the eternal generation of the Son and from Arius the creation in time (1975, 99-100). While Origen's influence on Athanasius is certainly demonstrable, that of Arius is highly problematic. Creation in time is not a strictly Arian assertion, but was part of the faith of the Church catholic from the Apostolic Age.

commanded and it stood forth"). As we recall, Origen used this text to distinguish the Son and subordinate him to the Father. Athanasius read the verbs as intransitives, not transitives as Origen had understood them. Although Gen 1:6, 9, 12 and 20 seemed to imply that God had commanded the Word to create, the Father was not speaking to an "under-worker" (CA 2.31 / 212C). The Word was the "workman and maker" of all, and was himself "the Father's will" (CA 2.31 / 213A). It was not a matter of someone hearing and answering a command, as would be the case with creatures. Rather, what the Father "thought good and counselled, that forthwith the Word began to do and to finish" (CA 2.31 / 213A). When the Word acts the Father is in him and he is in the Father, and "it suffices to will, and the work is done" (CA 2.31 / 213B / 365). The Son was not an assistant to the Father, he was a hypostatic expression of the divine substance.

With Athanasius the movement in Alexandria, initiated by Alexander, toward a closer identification of the Father and the Son reached its apex. Alexander had moved away from Origen's subordinationist language during the early conflict with Arius and had closely united the Father and Son by means of the iconographic analogy. Athanasius built upon his predecessor's foundation by favoring the metaphor of luminescence and thereby portrayed the Father-Son relationship as a substantial union. Distinctness of being no

longer implied unlikeness of essence; in whatever manner the Son was different from the Father, it was no longer acceptable to speak of a distinction of substance. The Son was "proper to the Father's substance" and was "like in essence" to him. All knowledge of the Father was mediated through the Son, his "exact and precisely similar image" (Gregg and Groh 1981, 50; CG 29, 45). The God who saved us in the incarnate Christ was none other than the God who had created us in the beginning. The Son, to use Athanasian language, was the Father's "all" (CA 3.4).

Athanasius's soteriology is based on the idea of an exchange between God and humanity, an exchange that necessitated an incarnate Lord who was fully God and as fully human as possible in pre-Chalcedonian Alexandrian Christology. For Athanasius the important nature in the Christological union was the divine one.¹⁸ In the words of Roldanus, "the humanity of Christ is the instrument of salvation, the divinity is the artisan of it" (1977, 175-76). With anything less than the divine Son becoming incarnate in man, the

¹⁸However, this fact does not exclude the need for a real human nature in his soteriology. Certainly he was not a Logos-flesh Christologian (Dragas 1980, 1:33-34). Although he was imprecise with regard to the presence of a human soul in Christ, it is hard to imagine Athanasius debating Gregory's dictum that Christ did not redeem what he did not assume. Athanasius says that the Lord's body contained "the common substance of all bodies" (DI 20 / 182,25). Again, he says that Christ is said to have drunk, eaten and been born in order to show that his body was "true" and not "unreal" (DI 18).

system collapses. As Athanasius himself said repeatedly in debating the Arians, no creature could save us. Deification gave Athanasius a powerful proof of Christ's divinity while at the same time providing the logical consequence of the doctrine of a fully divine Savior (Roldanus 1977, 163).¹⁹

Summary

In this chapter we have traced the development of an Alexandrian soteriology of exchange from its beginnings in the theological reforms of Peter the Martyr to its ultimate expression in the theology of Athanasius, and have observed how the emergence of this soteriology led to a redefinition of the being of God. We have noted the following significant points in this development.

1. Peter's reforms did not include a complete rejection of Origen's theology. They did not represent the revolt of a well-defined anti-Origenist faction in Alexandria. Origen's thought continued to be very influential in the shaping of the Alexandrian tradition. Both Athanasius and Arius would find support for their positions in Origen's theology.
2. Peter's disagreement with Origen focused on the doctrine

¹⁹Norman argues, however, that Athanasius's understanding of redemption imported an ontological tension into his thought, one which he did not resolve. While, on the one hand, Athanasius needed a fully divine Savior to make his soteriology work, on the other hand his doctrine of apotheosis was predicated on a likeness of creatures to God (Norman 1980, 172-203, 207).

of the soul. Origen had taught a pre-mundane Fall of rational beings. The creation of the material world had been one of the consequences of that fall. Salvation, in Origen's view, therefore, tended to concentrate on the soul. Christ was essentially perceived as the teacher of truths that, if followed, would restore the soul to its proper spiritual realm. Peter, on the other hand, believed that the body and soul were created and fell together. Christ, in Peter's view, came to redeem both soul and body. Salvation had to include victory over death and decay as well as sin. Thus, Origen's concept of resurrection as a production of a new body from a seminal principle of the old body was rejected in favor of a doctrine that affirmed that the body which died would also rise again from the dead.

3. The different view of salvation required a different type of savior. Peter's Christ was not so much an illuminator as he was a redeemer. But what kind of redeemer he was and how he redeemed was left to Peter's successors, Alexander and Athanasius, to decide.
4. Alexander began to speak of salvation as an exchange between human and divine in the incarnate Christ. Jesus united sinful and corruptible flesh to himself, and transformed it by his death and resurrection. However, Alexander was unable to see that the exchange he envisaged could only be successful if the Son was completely

divine. In his debate with Arius Alexander moved away from Origen's hierarchical Trinitarian structure. Christ's sonship is natural, and as the Father's icon he is intimately connected with the Father. In nature and in substance he is similar to the Father.

5. Athanasius realized that the redeemer had to be, in every sense of the word, fully God if an efficacious exchange were to take place between Christ and humanity. Only a complete divine re-creation of the race could break the bonds of sin, death, and decay and unbreakably and inalienably restore the communion of God and human-kind. As the brightness of eternal light, the Son was "proper" to the Father's essence; one could see the Father's hypostasis in the Son.
6. The need for a fully divine savior resulted in the complete redefinition of God. The Son was not generated as a result of the divine will (as Origen had taught). The Son was begotten out of an eternal necessity of God's being to exist trinitarianly. The creation of the world was completely divorced from the generation of the Son. Thus the Son was not a hypostasis subservient to the Father. He was, instead, a hypostatic expression of the divine substance.

In these first two chapters we have tried to trace the maturing of the Alexandrian understanding of the Father-Son relationship over the course of roughly 150 years, from

Origen to the final edition of Athanasius's CA 1 and 2. During this period we have witnessed continuity in the assertion of the eternal existence of the Son and in the insistence on real distinctions between the divine persons. Within the context of these two fixed-points of theology, Alexandrian thought underwent a development. It moved from a perception of the Godhead as a hierarchy of divine persons to one in which the intra-Trinitarian relationship is consubstantial in nature. This shift in accent from distinction to unity was inaugurated by Peter the Martyr's insistence on the common destiny of the soul and body. Peter's successors, Alexander and Athanasius, came to realize that an efficacious exchange necessitated the full divinity of the divine agent. Partial and subordinate divinities could not redeem through an interchange of natures. The Son, in short, had to be the Father's all if the deification of humanity through the incarnate Lord was to become reality. Except for the distinction of names, whatever could be said about the Father also had to be said about the Son (CA 3.4). But the driving force behind this assertion was not a necessity of the Alexandrian doctrine of God, it was a necessity of Alexandrian soteriology.

We have also observed how the interpretation of particular passages changed in the light of these new theological trends. The subject of John 10:30, for example, changed from the moral union of the Father and Son into consubstan-

tiality and interpenetration. Few biblical texts, however, went through greater exegetical upheaval and fueled the fires of heated controversy more than Prov 8:22-30. To the story of its place in the Church of the first three centuries we now turn.

CHAPTER 3
THE INTERPRETATION OF PROV 8:22-30
IN ANTE-NICENE CHRISTIANITY

Introduction

It has been said that it is difficult to speak of a fixed tradition of exegesis before Origen (Greer 1973, 5). While this statement may be true with regard to exegetical method, it is not true of the interpretation of particular passages themselves. Prov 8:22-30 had a fairly fixed tradition of exegesis long before Origen read the passage. The personification of Wisdom in the text tempted Christian exegetes to construe Sophia as a divine hypostasis.¹

This final chapter in the preparation for Athanasius's interpretation of Prov 8:22-30 will focus on the interpreta-

¹Rabbinic exegesis did not perceive Wisdom as a hypostasis (contra Simonetti 1965, 9-10), but rather as a manifestation of God's living personal presence, on the same level as the Shekinah, Ruach ha-Kodesh (the Spirit of God), and the Word (Memra). For an excellent discussion of rabbinic exegesis as well as a summary of patristic understandings of Wisdom, see Jaeger (1961).

There is one extant example of Gnostic interpretation of Prov 8:22-30. In the Great Apophasis of "Simon Magus" the Seventh Power or Hebdomad was identified as the good power, generated before all ages according to Prov 8:23, 25 (62r,15-18). The Hebdomad was also linked with the Spirit who hovered over the water in Gen 1:2. See Salles-Dabadie (1969) for a critical text and commentary.

tion of that passage in the Ante-Nicene church. Here we will seek to discover the role Proverbs 8 played in the theological expression of ancient Christianity and to determine if a fixed tradition of interpretation of the passage emerged. Finally, we will look at some exegetical techniques developed in the ancient church that proved useful to Athanasius in interpreting Prov 8:22-30.

Prov 8:22-30 in the Apologists

Justin Martyr

Christians, almost without exception, identified Sophia in Proverbs 8 with the Son.² Virtually from the be-

²The two exceptions were Theophilus of Antioch and Irenaeus. Both men linked Wisdom with the Holy Spirit. In Theophilus's case the association was no more than an indirect one. In Autol. 2.15 Theophilus likened the three days of creation, which preceded the making of the luminaries in the first chapter of Genesis, to the Trinity: God, Word, Wisdom. Yet Theophilus had difficulty distinguishing the latter two members of the triad. He asserted that God made all things "by his own Word and Wisdom (Autol. 1.7)," but made no attempt to differentiate their creative responsibilities. They simply were the means by which God created.

The distinctions between Word and Wisdom break down altogether in Autol. 2.10 (Grant 1970, 38, 40). Word and Wisdom are at first distinguished: God had his Word with him and then begat him "emitting Him along with His own wisdom before all things." Then they are identified: the Word is the Spirit of God and the Wisdom who anointed the prophets. He was present at the inauguration of the cosmos (Prov 8:27-29 is cited as proof). Next, Logos and Sophia are again divided: they were present in God before the world came into existence. Finally they are united: the Word was always present with God (for so says Prov 8:27), and "by his Word God created the heavens and the earth, and all that is in them."

No such ambiguity about the distinction between the Son and the Spirit existed in the mind of Irenaeus. In book four of adv. Haer. he twice identified the Son with Word

ginning, then, the passage was understood by patristic exegetes to impart information about the Father-Son relationship. During the era of the Apologists Prov 8:22-30 began to take its place as an important text in the development of the doctrine of the Trinity.³

According to Justin, God is the "unbegotten" (ἀγέννητος) nameless being who ruled the universe from high above the heavens (2 Apol. 6). As such, God is completely unknowable and transcendent (Dial. 60, 127). God

is incapable of coming into immediate contact with any of his creatures, yet is observant of them although removed from them and unapproachable by them. (Barnard 1967, 81)

In order for God to bridge the gap between himself and humanity there must be an intermediary, the Logos. "God communicates with the world only through the Logos. And he

(verbum) and the Spirit with Wisdom (sapientia; 4.20.1, 3 / SC 100: 626,18; 632,53-55). He asserts that both Verbum and Sapientia were present with the Father prior to the creation of the world (4.20.3 / SC 100:632,55-56) because they had always been present with God (4.20.1 / SC 100:626,17-18). Prov 3:19-20 and Prov 8:22-25, 27-31 affirmed that the Holy Spirit was with God "before all things came to be" (4.20.3). Like Theophilus, Irenaeus did not differentiate creative responsibilities. There is "one God," he concluded, "who, by the Word and Wisdom, made and arranged everything" (4.20.4 / SC 100:634,70-71).

³The Apologists were not the first Christian writers to use the passage. There is a possible allusion to Prov 8:22 in the Shepherd of Hermas (Sim. 9.12.2; Simonetti 1965, 13-14). Prov 8:22-25, 29 also appears to have influenced the language of Odes of Solomon 7:8, 13 and 41:9-10, 15 (Harris and Mingana 1920, 246-48; 402-3; but cf. Charlesworth 1973, 37; 142). Prov 8:28-29 is also apparently behind the wording of the Epistle of the Apostles 3 (James 1955, 486).

reveals himself exclusively through the Logos" (Quasten 1983, 1:208). Originally, the Logos dwelt within God as the divine intelligence or rational thought (Barnard 1967, 90; Kelly 1978, 97; Quasten 1983, 1:208). Before the creation, however, the Logos emanated from God and became externally independent from the Father for the purpose of creating the world (Dial. 62; Barnard 1967, 89-90; Quasten 1983, 1:208; Altaner 1978, 69). The Logos was God's "offspring" (gennēma; 1 Apol. 21; Dial. 62), "child" (τέκνον; Dial. 125) and "onlybegotten" Son (monogenēs; Dial. 105). Though independent from the Father to a degree, the Son was subordinate to him (Dial. 61; Quasten 1:208; Altaner 1978, 69).

Justin's God, then, was the unbegotten, transcendent Father who ruled the universe from far above. In order to create the world and then to reveal himself to it, the Father had need of an intermediary, his Logos. The Logos was God's intelligence or rational thought, who before creation existed in an ineffable manner within God, but was emanated from God as an agent of creation and revelation. Though distinct from the Father after his emanation, the Logos remained in subordination to the Father.

Prov 8:22-30 fit within Justin's theological scheme as proof (1) that the Father begot the Logos before the creation of the world, and (2) that this begotten Logos was numerically distinct from the Father. In the several sections leading up to Dial. 61, Justin tried to prove from the OT

that Scripture taught the existence of "another God and Lord," who is "subject to the maker of all things" (Dial. 56 / 180,20-21 / 223). In section 61 Justin says this other deity was known by such titles as: the Glory of the Lord, the Son, Wisdom, Angel, God, Lord, Logos, and Captain of the Lord's hosts. He could be called all these names, Justin maintained, because he "ministers to the Father's will, and . . . was begotten of the Father by an act of will." This begetting took place "before all creatures" for the purpose of making the Son the "beginning" (ἀρχή) of the Father's creative acts (Dial. 61 / 204,23-24).

The begetting of the Son was explained with two metaphors. First, a word is begotten by its speaker and yet is not cut off from the speaker, but remains in him/her. Second, when one fire kindles another it remains the same, and the kindled fire appears to be its equal. Taken together, Justin thought these examples established the unity and distinction of the Father and Son without division or separation.

It is difficult to determine the biblical source of Justin's claim that the Son was begotten "before all creatures" as a "beginning." Either the Johannine prologue or Prov 8:22 could be standing behind this assertion. The case for the Johannine prologue could be made on the basis of the use of Logos and Son as names for Christ, together with Justin's emphasis on the unity of wills of the Father and

Son, which could be a tacit reference to several Johannine texts where the will and activity of the Son is linked to that of the Father. Prov 8:22, however, appears to be the more likely candidate. First of all, it is highly questionable whether Justin ever used John's Gospel in his works.⁴ Proverbs, on the other hand, was part of the received Jewish canon and presented no problems to him with regard to its use in theological discourse. Second, Wisdom is included in the list of names for Christ mentioned above, and Justin says elsewhere that this title comes from Solomon (Dial. 126). Finally, the fact that later in section 61 Justin cites Prov 8:21-36 directly suggests that he had this passage in mind as he composed the section.

Prov 8:22-30 served Justin in two ways. It established the pre-cosmic existence of Christ and also supported Christ's unity with and distinction from the Father without division or separation. How the Son was begotten and what was the mode of his existence prior to his begetting are left undiscussed by Justin. Prov 8:22 merely proved a point about the Son's generation, it did not at this time invite speculation about the being of God. Finally, the fact that Justin was content to cite the entire passage, Prov 8:21-36,

⁴"Although it has often been supposed that Justin also used John, this is at best uncertain and on the whole unlikely" (Gamble 1985, 28). For fuller treatments of Justin's use of John see Sanders (1943, 31), Hillmer (1966, 51-73), and Braun (1959, 135-39).

as referring to the origin of the Son prior to creation, shows that Justin was not uncomfortable with applying the verb "create" to the begetting of the Son. Thus begins the association of Prov 8:22-30 with the discussion of the origin of the Father-Son relationship. This was an association that would remain constant, with few exceptions, through almost four and a half centuries of Christian exegetical practice.

Athenagoras

Athenagoras is "much clearer and less reserved" than Justin in defining the divinity of the Logos and his essential unity with the Father (Quasten 1983, 1:232-33). Athenagoras defines the Son as "the Word of the Father in Ideal Form and Energizing Power." In the likeness of the Son and through him, all things come into existence. Athenagoras maintains that this creative activity "presupposes that the Father and the Son are one." He goes on to define the Son as the "mind and reason of the Father" by virtue of the fact that both Father and Son interpenetrate each other "by a powerful unity of spirit" (LEG 10.2 / 20, 22 / 21, 23).

"Son" connoted that the Word was the "first begotten" (πρώτον γέννημα) of the Father, but it did not imply that the Son came into existence at some point in time.

For God, who is eternal mind, had in himself his Word or Reason from the beginning, since he was eternally rational.

According to Athenagoras, "Son" meant that the Word came

forth to serve as the "Ideal Form and Energizing Power" of everything material (LEG 10.3 / 22 / 23), an assertion which was confirmed, he said, by Prov 8:22 (LEG 10.4).

Athenagoras, anticipating Tertullian to some degree, used Prov 8:22 to distinguish two moments in the relationship of the Father and the Son: first, the Logos was immanent in the Father ab aeterno as the Father's reason. Then at a certain point, the Word was expressed and came forth from the Father as a distinct "person" in order to organize inert matter (Simonetti 1965, 11-12).⁵

Like Justin, Athenagoras tied the generation of the Word to the origin of the cosmos and cited Prov 8:22-30 as confirmation. The "creation" of the Son was an act of God which facilitated the creation of the world. We will find that this use of Proverbs 8 would continue to dominate in the Latin West.

Prov 8:22-30 in the West

Tertullian

Prov 8:22-30 proved useful to Tertullian in his fight against the ideas of Hermogenes and Praxeas. The passage also occupied a most important place in Tertullian's constructive theology as well.

⁵Tertullian, however, assigned the second moment to Prov 8:25, see below pp. 137-38.

The "Against Hermogenes"

Hermogenes was a Carthaginian gnostic who taught that matter was eternal and equal to God. Theophilus of Antioch wrote the first refutation of Hermogenes's opinions in a work that is now lost, but which served as a source for Tertullian's treatise (Quasten 1983, 2:276).

In antithesis to Hermogenes's assertion that God had made the world from pre-existing material, Tertullian contended that God used Wisdom as the vessel of creation. It was Wisdom alone who knew the mind of the Lord and was God's spirit (1 Cor 2:11; HMG 18.1). Tertullian did not mean Holy Spirit here (Simonetti 1965, 14-15); "Wisdom," he said, "is the Word of God in the capacity of Wisdom" (HMG 18.5 / 412,4-5 / 487). Wisdom served as God's "counselor," and everything was made "by and with Wisdom" (HMG 18.1 / 411,5-7). As proof of Wisdom's central role in creation Tertullian adduced Prov 8:27-31 (HMG 18.2).

When God decided to create the world he immediately created and generated Wisdom in himself (HMG 18.3). Here Tertullian pictures the existence of the Son in three stages. Originally Wisdom was "inherent in God" (intra dominum; HMG 18.4 / 412,27). It was then "born" and "created" when, in the course of God's decision to create, "it began to assume motion for the arrangement of His creative works" (HMG 18.4 / 412,27-34 / 487). Finally, the Word was "brought forth through whom all things were made and without

whom nothing was made" (HMG 45.1 / 434,17-19).

Tertullian has introduced a new element into the order of creation with his notion that Wisdom was first created within God before it was generated outwardly. As we have seen, Prov 8:22 was looked to by Justin and Athenagoras as a statement about the coming forth of the Son as preliminary to the creation of the universe. Tertullian moved the point of reference back a step; the verse now referred to the time before the actual generation of the Son as a distinct person. Wisdom was first established within God as the beginning of God's ways for his works. Then the Word was produced for the accomplishment of the divine plan (HMG 45.1).

These stages in the process of the generation of the Word receive further elaboration in section 20. Hermogenes had apparently argued that "beginning" in Gen 1:1 implied the existence of matter. Tertullian countered that in this verse "beginning" could only refer to the order in which things are done. "Beginning" in Gen 1:1 meant simply the initial step in the order of creation. But what was this "beginning"? To exclude Hermogenes's definition of "beginning" Tertullian had to draw Prov 8:22 into the discussion of Gen 1:1. Since, according to Prov 8:22, everything was made in God's Wisdom, to say that God made the world in the beginning was to say that he made it in Wisdom (HMG 20.1). Wisdom is properly called the beginning of God's ways for in it God "conceived and arranged" the things he made (HMG 20.2 /

414,17-18⁶). Thus Wisdom was the "primal operation" of God's creative activity (HMG 20.2 / 414,20-21).

The "Against Praxeas"

In the debate against Praxeas the scene shifted from the doctrine of creation to the question of God's very being. What Tertullian had only adumbrated in the previous treatise with respect to the Father-Son relationship, he was now forced to explain in detail. In the process he developed a doctrine of God, the influence of which on Christian theology can hardly be overestimated (Quasten 1983, 2:284-85). As in the case of his doctrine of creation, Prov 8:22-30 played no small role in Tertullian's exposition of God's triune nature.

A major proof-text for the monarchian position was Isa 44:24 ("I am the Lord, who made all things, who stretched out the heavens alone"). Praxeas had appealed to this text in his contention that God was one and single (PRX 19.1). Tertullian agreed that before creating the world God was, indeed, "alone" (solus; PRX 5.2). For Tertullian, however, God was alone in the sense that there was nothing in existence external to him (PRX 5.2; 19.1). Within the divine being itself God was not alone, for he possessed reason (ratio; PRX 5.2). To have reason, Tertullian believed, is to have the presence of one being within another. He used

⁶Page 414 is misnumbered as 114 in CCL.

the analogy of human thought to illustrate his point. It is possible, he said, to carry on a conversation within oneself wherein one's reason acts, so to speak, as a second person (PRX 5.6). If such is true for humans, Tertullian concluded, it must be even more true for God (PRX 5.7).

Tertullian restated the two phases in the Word's hypostatization that he had articulated against Hermogenes. Wisdom was first "created" (conditus) by God as the beginning of his ways. Wisdom became the seat of God's intellectual activity in imagining and planning creation (PRX 7.1).

As soon as it pleased God to put forth into their respective substances and forms the things which He had planned and ordered within Himself, in conjunction with His Wisdom's Reason and Word, He first put forth the Word Himself, having within Him His own inseparable Reason and Wisdom, in order that all things might be made through Him through whom they had been planned and disposed. (PRX 6.3 / 1165,13-18 / 601)

Next the Word⁷ was begotten (generatus) in a nativitas perfecta as a distinct person to carry into effect all the plans for creation, or, as Prov 8:27 says: "when he established the heavens, I was there" (PRX 7.1). It was also at the moment of the Word's emission from God that Sermo became Filius (PRX 7). Thus the stages of progression from internal Wisdom to emanated Son are reflected in Prov 8:22, 27.

⁷Although sapientia and sermo were names that Tertullian used for the Second Person (PRX 6.1; 7.3; 19.2-3), he distinguished between them by saying that Wisdom was born prior to creation and was immanent in God while sermo emanated from God in order to begin the creative process (Quasten 1983, 2:326).

V. 22 refers to the establishment of Wisdom within God as the place where creation was conceived and planned. V. 27 depicts the emitted Son standing beside the Father as a counselor in creation.

By reading these two verses in this manner Tertullian advanced from his interpretation of Prov 8:22-30 in HMG. The generation of the Son was now divided into two distinct moments: the first of immanence, within God's intelligence as the divine Word and the second as a subsistence outside of God when the act of creation began. Tertullian found these two moments of existence in Prov 8:22-30 by distinguishing the verbs in vv. 22 and 25; "created" in v. 22 belonged to the first moment, "beget" in v. 25 to the second (PRX 7.1).⁸

Prov 8:22-30 had one other function in Tertullian's doctrine of the Trinity. It proved that the Father and the Son were distinct but not separate. Wisdom speaks of itself in these verses as a secundam personam (PRX 6.1 / 1165,4). If the Father and the Son, who is Wisdom, were not distinct, Tertullian baited Praxeas, then there ought to be Scriptures that said so: "I the Lord created myself the beginning of the ways for my works, before all the hills I begot myself,"

⁸Tertullian was not always consistent in this practice, however. Occasionally generavit is understood as the equivalent of condidit and refers to the time when the Logos is distinct from and yet immanent in God (PRX 6.1; 18; Simo-netti 1965, 17-18).

for example (PRX 11.3 / 1171,21-22).

Tertullian's use of Prov 8:22-30 moved the passage to center stage of Trinitarian speculation. Previously, it had been used primarily as a proof of the hypostatic existence of the Son or Spirit before the creation of the universe. It had never invited speculation on the mode of this process. Tertullian, however, saw it as a witness to the inner life of God. Its verbs carefully nuanced the Word's progression from immanence to subsistence as Son. In this discovery, Tertullian broke new ground by separating the historical referents of vv. 22 and 25. Although the Nicenes would reject Tertullian's interpretation of the passage, they would be greatly indebted to him for splitting the referents of vv. 22 and 25. The technique proved to be, as we shall see, a major contributor to Athanasius's recovery of Prov 8:22 for orthodox belief.

Cyprian of Carthage

Cyprian refers to Prov 8:22-30 only once in his extant corpus. In book two of the Testimonies he cites Prov 8:22-31; Ecclus 24:3-7; Ps 89:27-33; John 17:3-5; Col 1:15, 18; Rev 21:6; and 1 Cor 1:22-24 as proof that "Christ is the First-born, and that He is the Wisdom of God, by whom all things were made" (2.1 / CCL 3:28 / ANF 5:515). Apart from the fact that he links Prov 8:22 with Col 1:15, something Asterius also would do (see below, pp. 191-92), Cyprian breaks no new ground in the exegesis of Prov 8:22-30 in this

brief sentence. Since he is reported to have read Tertullian daily (Jerome Vir. ill. 53), Cyprian probably understood Prov 8:22-30 as referring to the time when the Word passed from imminence to subsistence. "Firstborn of all creation," then, might also refer to this hypostatizing event.

Dionysius of Rome

Stronger evidence of Tertullian's influence on the interpretation of Prov 8:22-30 in the Latin church can be found in the surviving fragment of Dionysius's letter to his namesake in Alexandria. Since the better part of this fragment is taken up with the meaning of Prov 8:22, it has been suggested that the interpretation of this verse was directly connected with the errors of which Dionysius of Alexandria had been accused (Simonetti 1965, 25-26).

Dionysius of Rome contended that Prov 8:22 was misunderstood if it was used to prove that the Son came into existence. "Created" could have more than one meaning; and in this verse it meant that the Son had been "set over the works that had been made by him" (Feltoe 1904, 181,1-3). The Son, in other words, had been placed before all created things for he was the source of their existence (Bienert 1978, 213). What "create" did not mean in Prov 8:22 was "make" (poieō). Col 1:15, Ps 110.3 and Prov 8:25 all bore witness against taking ktizein in this way. In these and many other passages, Dionysius asserted, the Son is said to have been "begotten" (γενενησθαι), but never to have been

"originated" (γενόμενα; Feltoe 1904, 181,11).

Tertullian's influence on Dionysius is evident in the latter's reading of Prov 8:25. We saw above how Tertullian separated the referents of vv. 22 and 25 into two distinct moments in the Word's generation, understood as the process leading from immanence to distinct subsistence: v. 22 referred to the former stage and v. 25 to the latter. Dionysius followed Tertullian in separating v. 22 from v. 25 and also in seeing in the latter verse a testimony to the Son's individual subsistence.⁹ He did not follow Tertullian, however, in interpreting Prov 8:22 in terms of the immanent stage of the Word's generation. For Dionysius, this verse has no reference to the divine begetting at all; it is a statement about the Son's status vis-à-vis creation. The key word in the interpretation of the text is archē. The Son, as archē, is the cause of all that exists. His glory and dignity exceed that of any other being except for the Father.¹⁰

⁹Simonetti has observed that as long as the investigation of the problem of the Father-Son relationship had not degenerated into arguments over the meaning of the terms create and beget, Prov 8:22-25 could be adduced to prove the real existence of the Son as a divine person and his derivation from the Father. But, once a distinction was introduced between the two terms, the passage could not be invoked either by those who considered the Son created or by those who considered him begotten. From this perspective the interpretation of Dionysius of Rome was no less arbitrary than that of Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia (1965, 37).

¹⁰It is likely that Dionysius's exegesis of Prov 8:22 was influenced by Origen's lengthy discussion of Wisdom as

Though brief, Dionysius's interpretation of Prov 8:22-25 was important. Like Tertullian, he distinguished the referents of vv. 22 and 25. Unlike Tertullian he refused to read v. 22 as a statement about the generation of the Son. Only v. 25 referred to that event. The Nicene interpretation of Prov 8:22-25 would draw the same exegetical conclusions though it would not follow Dionysius in treating v. 22 as an ontological statement.

Lactantius

Our survey of Latin writers and their understanding of Prov 8:22-30 ends with Lactantius. In the Divine Institutes he says that before God began to create, a "holy and incorruptible spirit" was begotten, which God called his Son (4.6.1 / CSEL 19:286,7-8). Lactantius proves that God has a Son from both Scripture and secular writings: and in his list of biblical passages he includes Prov 8:22-31 (4.6.6-8). He appears to be well within the tradition, begun by Tertullian, that understood Prov 8:22-30 to refer to the generation of the Son just prior to the creation of the world.

the archē of God's creative activity. He might have been influenced, however, by Tertullian. In discussing the various meanings of "beginning" (principium) Tertullian included the Greek meaning, which he understood to be "power." Understood in this way Prov 8:22 would teach that God, in his transcendent power and authority, created the earth (HMG 20.1).

On the eve of the Arian controversy the Latin West had established a fairly distinct approach to the interpretation of Prov 8:22-30. The passage was read in the West as a depiction of the generation of the Word from the Father. The Western exegetical technique of separating vv. 22 and 25 and the insistence that the latter verse alone referred to the Word's hypostatization held great promise for Nicene exegetes struggling to resist the Arian contention that "create" in v. 22 was an ontological statement. On the other hand, eastern Christians in general and Alexandrian ones in particular would have great difficulty using Tertullian's interpretation of the passage once Origen had shown the necessity of the Son's eternal hypostatic existence. In other words, the eastern Nicenes of the fourth century could learn from Western techniques of interpreting Prov 8:22-30, but would have to gain a completely different interpretation of the text with them.

Prov 8:22-30 in the East

Clement of Alexandria

Turning our attention now to the Eastern reading of our passage, we begin with Clement of Alexandria. Although Clement rarely cited Prov 8:22-30, when he did use it he applied the passage to the Son and Word of God.

On the basis of Prov 8:22, Clement described the hypostatic emergence of the Son as his creation. In STR 5.89.4 (14) he maintained that the Stoics were mistaken in their

belief that God pervaded all being. They had been "misled" by Wis 7:24 ("because of (Wisdom's) pureness she pervades and penetrates all things"). This verse does not refer to God, as the Stoics supposed, but to Wisdom, who was the "primocreature" (πρωτοκτίστον) of God. "Before heaven and earth and all existing things," he said, "Wisdom came to be in the Almighty" (STR 6.138.4 (16) / 22:50,8-9). In section 20 of the Excerpta ex Theodoto Clement again used "primocreature" to describe the status of the Son on the basis of Prov 8:22; the passage states that the Son is the first-creature, God's initial act of creation.¹¹

According to Clement the Son's nature is the "most perfect, and most holy, and most potent, and most princely, and most kingly, and most beneficent" in heaven and earth next to that of the Almighty (STR 7.2.5 / 17:5,20-22 / 524). The Son is the "highest excellence" who orders everything according to the Father's will (STR 7.2.6 / 17:5,20-24). He is also the "paternal Word" and savior who was the Father's counselor before the foundation of the world, an assertion which Clement supported by appeal to Prov 8:30. The Wisdom in which God delighted was none other than the Son (STR 7.2.6, 7).

¹¹Clement uses prōtoktiston one other time in his works: STR 6.58.1. After the third century the term fell into disfavor as an orthodox expression. Only Eusebius of Caesarea used it (HE 1.2.21).

The way to Arianism and the way to Nicea both begin with Clement. As the first writer to call the Son a creature on the basis of Prov 8:22, he inaugurated the association of the Son's generation with creaturely genesis that would prove so disastrous in Arius's hands. But his use of Prov 8:30 as a foundation for his confession that the Son was the Father's counselor before the creation of the world would find its ultimate fruition in Origen's adoption of that verse as a key proof-text for his doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son. In Clement's interpretation of Prov 8:22, 30, then, lay the seeds not only of doctrinal deviation, but also of the correction of that deviation.

Origen

Prov 8:22-30 was an important passage for Origen for a variety of reasons. First of all he used vv. 25 and 30 to demonstrate the eternal hypostatic existence of the Son. Secondly, v. 22 was extremely influential in Origen's speculation on the Son's ἐπίνοια. Finally, Origen apparently called the Son a creature on the basis of v. 22.

Origen's monumental achievement in the history of Christian doctrine was his theology of the eternal hypostatic generation of the Son. As we shall see, Prov 8:22-30 played an important role in anchoring this doctrine in Scripture.

Prov 8:25 and 30 were two important texts in Origen's proof of the eternal hypostatic existence of the Son. In

his ninth homily on Jeremiah, he called attention to the fact that the verb in Prov 8:25 is in the present, rather than the perfect, tense ("before the hills he begets me"). Consequently, he concluded, the Savior was not engendered once and for all by a single act of God in past time. Instead, the Son is continually being begotten by the Father from all eternity (JER 9.4). As we saw in chapter 1, the notion of a continual hypostatic engendering of the Son was the means by which Origen could distinguish between the Father and Son without dividing them.

Origen also found Prov 8:30 to be useful evidence for the Son's eternal generation. Here his case depended on the assumption that the Father is absolutely unchangeable. The argument for the Son's eternity would then run along the following lines: since God is said in Prov 8:30 to "rejoice" in Wisdom, there could never have been a time when he did not rejoice lest this rejoicing mean that God had changed. Thus God always had to have rejoiced; and therefore the object of his rejoicing always had to exist. The "only-begotten Word," then, "eternally co-exists with him and is Wisdom" (PA 4.4.1 / 350,15-16; cf. PA 1.4.4).

Along with proving the eternity of the Son, Prov 8:22-30 was a key text in Origen's understanding of how the epi-noia "wisdom" attached to Christ. Origen believed that Wisdom was the fundamental concept of the Son. Prov 8:22 identified Wisdom as a "beginning" (archē) of the ways of

God. Logos, another concept of the Son, by contrast, existed "in the beginning" according to John 1:1. To Origen the use of archē in these two passages signified that Sophia was superior to Logos and was Christ's essential title. Sophia was the "beginning" whereas Logos was in the "beginning." In other words, it was because the Son was Wisdom that he also was Word and not vice versa (JN 1.17(18), 31 (34)).

Since Prov 8:22-30 was such a rich source of data about the Son--i.e., that he is first and foremost Wisdom hypostatically existing from all eternity--how did Origen understand the verb "create" in v. 22? Would not such a word be difficult to reconcile with a doctrine of eternal generation? Unfortunately we have no clue as to how Origen interpreted "created" in v. 22. He is reputed to have called the Son a ktisma on the basis of the verse (PA 4.4.1 / 349, fr. 22), but we cannot be certain that this section of PA is accurate. The passage is from one of Justinian's letters and was included in the GCS edition of the PA by Ketschau; it is not found in any of Origen's extant writings. Thus we have no control by which to judge the accuracy of its transmission over three centuries. Moreover, with the exception of this particular fragment, Origen never uses the word ktisma in reference to the Son.¹²

¹²J. A. Lyons rejects the authenticity of the fragment in PA 4.4.1 (1982, 113 n.76) while Charles Lowry (1938, 39-40) and Rowan Williams (1987, 141) defend its genuine-

Nevertheless, Origen did not seem to hesitate to apply terms like "creature" to the Son, even if he did not use this very word. In CC, for example, he says that the Son is one of the δημιουργήμάτων (5.37 / 147:114,38-39). But such language does not mean that Origen was a third century Arian. As we have seen, Origen drew ontological distinctions between unbegotten and begotten beings. In spite of the fact that the Son belonged to the latter category, Origen's theology did not rank the Son on the side of creation, as did the theology of Arius. On the contrary, the Son was the image of the Father. Even the title "firstborn of all creation," though inherently subordinationist in Origen's system, was still a title proper to the divinity of the Word (TTS / 1304B-D). Since the begetting of Wisdom implied no parallels with corporeal reproduction, Wisdom must be believed "to have been begotten beyond the limits of any beginning that we can speak of or understand" (PA 1.2.2 / 29,16-30,1 /

ness. Patricia Cox has put forward a most intriguing and defensible argument that Origen did indeed call the Son a ktisma, but that he used the term to mean "foundation" or "building" rather than "creature." "As ktisma, the Son is a dwelling which houses and cultivates a way of thinking which turns psychic wandering into a round dance of transformation. The soul gathers images to itself just as the Son gathers the dwelling places into the 'harmony of a single world.' The harmony is the relational context of the imaginal world of God. The single world is God's ktisma, whose space has room for all of the principles because he is the fullness of all the divine images through which God, the 'reality of things,' is seen. As ktisma, the Son is the hidden connection; and the hidden connection is a place in which to dwell" (1980, 335-36).

16). While it would be reasonable to suppose that Origen called the Son a "creature," it would be unreasonable to assume that he meant to say that the Son was merely a creature.

One aspect of Origen's interpretation of Prov 8:22-30 would prove most useful to the Nicene cause. The passage was a significant text in Origen's biblical defense of the Son's eternal hypostatic existence. When the Nicenes coupled Origen's exegesis of vv. 25 and 30 with the Latin tradition of distinguishing between vv. 22 and 25, they were able to make v. 25 the interpretive key for v. 22 and not the other way around as the Arians had wished to do. That is to say, the verse that proved the Son's eternal generation (v. 25) became the means for understanding "created" in v. 22. Arius, as we shall see below, took the opposite approach. For him, "created" in v. 22 was the key by which the rest of the passage was to be read.

Dionysius and Alexander of Alexandria

So far as the surviving literature allows us to see, Prov 8:22 virtually disappeared from the Alexandrian scene for over a half century after Origen. Indeed, the only third century writer in the Greek tradition after Origen to make use of the verse was Methodius of Olympus.¹³ As we

¹³Methodius refers to Prov 8:22-23 in his exegesis of Gen 1:1 (creat. fr. 11 / GCS 27:498,32-499,15). It would not be wrong, he says, if one equated archē in Gen 1:1 with Wisdom in Prov 8:22-23. It was both "fitting" and "more

said above, Dionysius of Rome's discussion of v. 22 may have been a response to his counterpart's interpretation, but the literary remains of the bishop of Alexandria give no clue that this was so. Theognostus, as we have seen, called the Son a ktisma, but we do not know how Prov 8:22 influenced him. Likewise, Peter the Martyr's extant writings contain no mention of this text. The case of Alexander's silence is even more surprising. Prov 8:22 was one of the most important texts in the Arian arsenal. In fact, the controversy was initiated over the interpretation of this particular passage. Yet, we find no evidence for Alexander's use or interpretation of the verse. Not until Eusebius of Caesarea does Prov 8:22 gain significant attention in the Eastern church.

Prov 8:30, on the other hand, maintained a consistently exalted position in the East. In proving the eternal, hypostatic existence of the Son Dionysius the Great parroted the proof Origen had given in the ninth homily on

seemly" that everything which came into existence was younger than Wisdom in that it came to be through it. Methodius next interjects John 1:1-2 into the discussion. Being in the beginning means that the Word was in the Father and came forth from him. This fact in no way compromises the Son's status. John 1:2 says that the Word was in the beginning with God. This text is, however, not a clue to the inner life of God. Rather it indicates the Word's position of authority, which he had with the Father before creation ("beginning" here signifying "power"). Unfortunately Methodius does not return to Prov 8:22-23 to tell us how his understanding of "beginning" in John 1:1-2 affects his reading of Proverbs 8.

Jeremiah. Linking Wis 7:26 and Prov 8:30, Dionysius asserted that,

God is Light eternal, never beginning nor ceasing. The brightness then lies before Him eternally, and is with Him without beginning and ever-begotten, shining in His Presence being that Wisdom which said, "I was that wherein he rejoiced, and daily I was glad in his presence at all times." (Fr. 3 / 18,6-11 / NPNF 4:182)

At the start of the Arian controversy, Alexander attempted to interdict Arius's teaching that the Son once was not by citing Prov 8:30 (ALX 27). Thus we see that just as Origen's understanding of the Son as an eternally existent hypostasis became firmly fixed in the Alexandrian tradition, so also did his understanding of Prov 8:30 as an important biblical foundation for that doctrine become a fixture in the Alexandrian exegetical tradition. As such it would severely compromise Arian appeals to v. 22 as proof that the Son was begotten in time as God's most exalted creature.

Eusebius of Caesarea

Eusebius's exegesis of Prov 8:22-30 represents some of the most profound and detailed work on the passage in the ante-Nicene and early Nicene eras. In the DE Eusebius says Prov 8:22 teaches that the Son is begotten, that he is distinguishable from the Unbegotten, and that he was called into being "before all ages, set forth as a kind of foundation for all begotten things" (DE 5.1 (213A) / 211,12-14 / 1:231). As Son, he is the "intellectual and firstborn image

of the unbegotten nature" (DE 5.1 (212C) / 210,30-31).¹⁴

According to Prov 8:22, in Eusebius's view the Son is a gennēta, but not in the rigid and specific sense of a thing made. Rather, the term is to be understood generically--the Son comes from the Father. But so does everything else. Like Origen, Eusebius recognized that there was some relationship between the creation-generation of the Word and the creation of the world. Thus Prov 8:22 could be combined with Col 1:15: the Son, created before time, is the first-born of all creatures (Simonetti 1965, 48-49).

How close an identity between the Son and the creatures did Eusebius wish to maintain? His reading of Prov 8:25 tends to widen the gap between them. Eusebius noted that v. 25 described the same event as Ps 2:7 ("You are my son, today I have begotten you"), but from a different perspective. The Psalm spoke of the generation of the Son from the standpoint of the Father whereas Prov 8:25 looked at it from the point of view of the Son (DE 4.16 (183D)). His generation was "before all ages," and established him as

the Creative Word of God, One with the Father, Only-begotten Son of the God of the Universe, and Minister and Fellow worker with the Father, in calling into being and constituting of the Universe. (DE 5.1 (214C-D) / 212,30-34 / 233)

¹⁴Eusebius also says Prov 8:22 was probably the text the writer of Col 1:15 had in mind when he called the Son the firstborn of all creation.

Eusebius sensed that Scripture meant to distinguish the Son's generation from that of all other beings. Thus the addressee of Ps 110:3-4 could be neither angel nor human. Angels could not sit on the right hand of God. Neither were humans begotten before the morning star or made priests forever after the order of Melchizedek. Only the Son--who as Wisdom was created in the beginning of God's ways, established before the ages and begotten before the hills--could be the subject of such statements (DE 5.3 (221A-B)). Prov 8:22-25, therefore, was describing a unique generation. Nevertheless, though he believed the Son's eternal presence with the Father to be attested by Prov 8:30 (DE 5.1 (216D-217B)), Eusebius avoided clarifying the manner of the Son's generation. He preferred to say that there were no analogies between divine and human generation (Simonetti 1965, 49). All that could be said was that the Son was generated neither by separation, diminution, division nor in a corporeal manner (DE 4.15).

In ET Eusebius further expanded the distance between the Son and the creatures. The "create" in Prov 8:22 was not absolute, but was defined by the phrase "beginning of his ways." Consequently, to "create" meant to "order" ($\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha}\sigma\sigma\omega$) or to "dispose" ($\kappa\alpha\theta\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\eta\mu\iota$). Here Eusebius arrives at an interpretation not unlike that of Dionysius of Rome: "the Lord has disposed me to preside over his works" (ET 3.3; Simonetti 1965, 52).

Eusebius used the Hebrew text of Prov 8:22-30 in his interpretation of the passage in ET.¹⁵ Perhaps the exigency of the Arian controversy drove him to discover a fresh interpretation of what was by now a hotly debated verse of Scripture (Simonetti 1965, 52-53). Also his decision to suspend the details of the Son's generation in a non liquet was no longer satisfactory in an age that fearlessly sought to define the Son's pre-existence in the minutest detail. Eusebius refused to be drawn into that discussion. Instead, his recourse to the Hebrew text allowed him to read "possessed" for "created" in Prov 8:22. In so understanding the passage, Eusebius did away with the troublesome ktizein of the LXX, destroyed the Arian interpretation of this text, and eliminated any (real or imagined) contrast between v. 22 and v. 25 (Simonetti 1965, 55).

The substitution of "possessed" for "created" also enabled Eusebius to shift the focus of Prov 8:22. It had been understood generally among the ante-Nicenes as a depiction of the Son's pre-cosmic generation by the Father. The Hebrew text of v. 22, however, would not sustain this reading. It instead seemed to support the eternal existence of the Son. If God possessed the Son in the beginning, the Son was already in existence. Prov 8:22-25, Eusebius says, signifies that Wisdom "existed, pre-existed, was anterior to

¹⁵Simonetti thinks Eusebius used the Hexapala, to which he would have had access in Caesarea (1965, 52-53).

the entire universe and presided over it" (ET 3.3 / 143,25).

Eusebius's contribution to the interpretation of Prov 8:22-25, particularly in the ET, was to introduce the Hebrew meaning of the text into the discussion of its exegesis. In so doing, he removed all cosmic reference from v. 22 and insisted that it testified to the Son's eternal existence. His contribution to the interpretation of the passage, however, went virtually unnoticed. The Arians had nothing to gain by adopting it; the Nicenes associated him with their enemies and no doubt mistrusted his exegesis. Although Eusebius had correctly understood the verb in v. 22 as "possessed," the church was committed to waging a bloody internecine war on the basis of the LXX mistranslation, "created."

The Eastern tradition of interpretation of Prov 8:22-30 followed Origen's lead with regard to the understanding of vv. 25 and 30. Origen had used these verses to prove the eternal hypostatic generation of the Son, and they continued to be read that way in the East throughout the third century. Consequently, this established use and interpretation of these verses proved to be a potent weapon to the Nicene cause. In another vein, both Clement and Origen (and perhaps Dionysius and Theognostus) seemed willing to call the Son a creature on the basis of v. 22, but did not discuss in great detail how this word could be used appropriately about God's only begotten Son. Thus when the Nicenes were faced

with assigning an orthodox meaning to the term "create," they were afforded little guidance from the interpretive tradition of the East.

Significant Developments in Ante-Nicene
Exegetical Method

Our survey of the exegetical preparation for Athanasius's interpretation of Prov 8:22-30 would not be complete if it stopped with an examination of the history of exegesis of this passage. As we have seen, the ante-Nicene church tended to link the creation of the world with the generation of the Logos when it read Proverbs 8. Such a reading of the text in the fourth century would be more amenable to Arianism than it would be to Athanasius. Although Athanasius did receive some help from the exegetical tradition, he was pretty much on his own in trying to remove Prov 8:22 from the Arian arsenal.

And yet there is a sense in which he was not alone at all. As we shall see in chapter 6, Athanasius learned to read Scripture from the Alexandrian tradition, and in particular from Origen. Although Alexandrian exegesis of Prov 8:22-30 might not have been as helpful to him as he would have wished in combatting Arianism, the principles of biblical interpretation he learned proved invaluable for his reading of the text.

Alexandrians looked on Scripture as the product of the divine mind (PA 3.1.16), and as uniform in subject matter.

The mystery of God, revealed in Jesus Christ, bound the words of sundry prophets and apostles into one book. The incarnation had turned all of Scripture into Gospel, Origen maintained (JN 1.6.33), and had placed the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament beyond doubt (PA 4.1.6). The Lion of Judah alone was capable of opening the sealed scroll (Rev 5:1-5): Christ was the key to Scripture's narrative meaning (that which was written within the scroll), as well as its spiritual sense (that which was written outside the scroll; JN 5.6).

When Origen spoke of the unity of both Testaments he was not giving instructions on exegesis (Torjesen 1986, 7-8). Athanasius, with his notion of the one scope of Scripture, would make that contribution. Rather, Origen was insisting that the saving doctrines of Christ--concealed symbolically in the literal sense and visibly revealed in the spiritual--were Scripture's subject matter (Torjesen 1986, 13).

For Origen Scripture is the classroom of the Logos. The literal level contains the original, historical pedagogy of the Word. It is a symbolic record or transcription of the historical experience of the OT saints together with the teaching activity of Christ. The spiritual sense of Scripture is a contemporary pedagogy of the Logos, a reenactment of Christ's original teaching activity to present-day readers. Exegesis moves from the historical to the contem-

porary instruction of the Logos, from the saving doctrines of Christ once taught to the saints to the same saving doctrines that transform contemporary hearers (Torjesen 1986, 13).

The purpose of this movement is to draw the reader into the text where the original teaching activity of Christ might be reencountered through the interpretation of the spiritual sense (Torjesen 1986, 13-14). The teachings drawn from this contemporary didactic activity of Christ on the spiritual level are arranged according to the soul's progress toward perfection (Torjesen 1986, 13).

We might say that Origen's concept of the journey of the soul is paideia, by which he means the educational and correctional activity of the Logos by which each soul receives a form of instruction and revelation suited to its particular needs. The revelation of the Logos to each individual is progressive because the soul is transformed by each new vision of the Logos, becomes more like him, and is thus able to receive a fuller revelation of him. (Torjesen 1986, 32-33)

The progressive revelation of the Logos in Scripture is the reason for Scripture's three-fold sense. The three levels correspond to the three levels or phases of the soul's journey to perfection. The body of Scripture is the unexegeted text; the soul of Scripture is for those who have advanced beyond the letter, but are not yet ready for the mysteries; the spirit of Scripture is for those who are ready to hear those mysteries (Torjesen 1986, 40-41). The levels of meaning are not distinct. Rather, each stage prepares the way for the next and is itself dependent on the

previous stage (Torjesen 1986, 41).

For Origen the formation ($\mu\alpha\lambda\delta\epsilon\iota\alpha$) of the soul is the purpose of Scripture (Torjesen 1986, 43). Once the notion of Christ as teacher was de-emphasized in Alexandrian soteriology in favor of Christ as redeemer, the skopos of Scripture would switch from the formation of the soul to the economy of salvation, and paideia would be replaced by oikonomia as an interpretive category. Nevertheless Athanasius was indebted to Origen for the idea of a Scriptural scope as well as for the perception of Christ as the unifying meaning of the Old and New Testaments.

Athanasius also learned some critical techniques from Origen that helped him to establish the proper "time" referent of a particular passage. Origen had devised a method for determining the historical accuracy of a given narrative.

Because the principal aim was to announce the connexion that exists among spiritual events, those that have already happened and those that are yet to come to pass, whenever the Word found that things which had happened in history could not be harmonized with these mystical events he used them, concealing from the multitude their deeper meaning. But whenever in the narrative the accomplishment of some particular deeds, which had been previously recorded for the sake of their more mystical meanings, did not correspond with the sequence of the intellectual truths, the scripture wove into the story something which did not happen, occasionally something which could not happen, and occasionally something which might have happened but in fact did not. (PA 4.2.9 / 321,11-16; 322,1-15 / 286)

Origen called these places in the text "stumbling-blocks"

(PA 4.2.9), and found them through what R. M. Grant termed

historical-literal analysis (1961). This method, which Origen borrowed from Theon, established the historical accuracy of a given narrative by asking a series of questions about the possibility, credibility and/or sufficiency of a particular action (Grant 1961, 15, 43). If a text could pass these three tests it was factually accurate; if not, its meaning had to be sought on a higher level.

By using this method, Origen concluded that the story of the cleansing of the Temple in John 2:13-22 was not historical (JN 10.24.141-42; Grant 1961, 63-64). The story was possible, for merchants did sell animals in the Temple during the Jewish feasts, but it was not credible. One man could not drive all the animals and merchants from the Temple, particularly since they were there at the people's good pleasure. Neither was it sufficient. It was unworthy of Jesus to believe him capable of such rash action. Furthermore, the story could not be reconciled with the synoptic chronology.

Athanasius, as we shall see, appropriated this method, not to decide the historical accuracy of a text, nor as an excuse for allegory, but to determine the text's place within the economy of salvation. Origen's procedures for deciding the factual validity of a given passage were used by Athanasius to determine the theological value of a biblical assertion by providing a key to unlock the "time" of a particular text, to ascertain its status with regard to the

economy of salvation. Athanasius also employed Origen's notion of specially placed "stumbling-blocks" in the text, but reshaped it to fit the needs of his particular situation. Just as Origen had taught that the text contained "stumbling-blocks" that indicated the passage was to be understood exclusively in its spiritual sense, Athanasius believed that certain Christological texts had a specific characteristic that classified them as economic in nature. This characteristic, or "custom" (ἔθος) was to signify the "fleshly origination of the Son" by adding the "cause for which He became man." When such a cause-statement was lacking, the passage referred to Christ's Godhead (CA 2.53 / 260B / 377).

Athanasius also appropriated another ancient exegetical practice occasionally used by Origen (Hom. in Lc. 10, for example) which might be called exaggerated verbal exegesis (Linton 1961). This particular method began among the rabbis, but was quickly adopted by the church and can be found in the NT, the Apostolic Fathers, the Apologists, and several fourth and fifth century writers (Linton 1961, 144-56). Briefly stated, the primary question asked of the text under this method of exegesis was "Who is speaking?" (Linton 1961, 143). The answer was usually obtained in three steps: (1) by exaggerating the verbal meaning of some facet of the text, (2) by rejecting the "natural" subject of the text because the facet seized upon in step one could not be ap-

plied to the "natural" subject, (3) by substituting a new subject for the "natural" one (Linton 1961, 144). Acts 2:27, for example, seized upon the statement of Ps 16:10-11 that the soul of the speaker would neither be left in Hell nor see corruption and concluded that the subject of such a statement could not be David, but must, instead, be Christ. Similarly, Justin rejected David as the subject speaking in Ps 22 because Jesus, not David, had been pierced and had had his hands stretched out on the cross.

As we will see in chapter 6, Athanasius's use of Scripture's single scope as an exegetical device primarily depends on discovering the "person" of any given text. Although for Athanasius "person" is a much broader interpretive category than it is in the works of his predecessors, he still maintained that correct interpretation required that the speaker of a given biblical assertion be identified. In Athanasius's case, if the speaker was the Son, the "person" could either be the pre-existing Lord or the incarnate one. Finally, Athanasius's interpretation of Prov 8:22 will depend heavily on exaggerating the verbal meaning of the passage in order to substitute the incarnate Lord for the pre-existent one as the subject of v. 22.

Summary

In this chapter we have sketched the exegetical preparation for Athanasius's interpretation of Prov 8:22-30.

1. The linkage of our passage with the generation of the

Son began with the apologists, Justin and Athenagoras. Both writers tied the begetting of the Son to the origin of the cosmos: the Son was "created" in order to facilitate the creation of the world by a God who was utterly transcendent.

2. In the West, Tertullian split the referents of vv. 22 and 25, but within the context of an economic Trinitarianism. When God decided to create he first generated Wisdom within himself (v. 22); when he began to create he generated Wisdom outside himself as the means of creation (v. 25). Cyprian, perhaps under Tertullian's influence, probably understood Prov 8:22-30 as a reference to the passing of the Word from immanence to subsistence. Lactantius, likewise, understood the passage in this way. Dionysius of Rome, too, divided the referents of vv. 22 and 25. However, for him v. 22 was not a statement about the Son's origin (v. 25 was that); it was an assertion of the Son's ontological distinction from and superiority to the creation. "Created," in Dionysius's view, meant that the Son had been "set over" all created things since he was their source of being.
3. Athanasius perhaps became acquainted with the Western tradition during his first exile in Rome, although he might have known Dionysius's works in Alexandria. The idea of splitting the referents of vv. 22 and 25, and especially Dionysius's divorce of v. 22 from the genera-

tion of the Son, must have seemed sound to him. If v. 25, which had been used in Alexandria to prove the Son's eternal hypostatic existence could be separated from the troublesome v. 22, then there might be a way to salvage v. 22 for the Nicene cause. If the two verses remained linked together, then Arius's contention that v. 22 interpreted v. 25 (see chapter 4) was so strong that the Nicene attempt to recover v. 22 was doomed. However, an Alexandrian and Nicene interpretation of the text could not succeed if based on an economic Trinity.

4. The East, beginning with Origen, had used vv. 25 and 30 as proofs for the eternal hypostatic generation of the Son. Thus there was a strong tradition of interpretation to counteract Arian suggestions that v. 22 taught the Son's creation in time. But the East had tended to read the passage as a whole, with the result that "create" in v. 22 stood in some relation to the eternal generation of the Son taught in vv. 25 and 30. Eusebius's contribution, that "create" ought actually be read "possessed," came too late to help the Nicenes. Eastern exegesis of Prov 8:22-30, therefore, tended to foster ambiguity in regard to the Son's ontological status. It was too easy to move from Prov 8:22 to Col 1:15 and to speak of Christ as the firstborn of all creation in such a way that he seemed to be the first step in the creation process and perhaps belonged to the created order.

5. Athanasius's interpretation of our passage, as we shall see, was an amalgam of aspects of Western and Eastern exegesis. He also would benefit from some exegetical techniques practiced by his forebears. Among these were: (1) the assumption of the unity of Scripture, (2) Christ as the scope of Scripture, (3) the use of rhetorical critical techniques to draw out the meaning of a text, and (4) the use of exaggerated verbal exegesis to decipher the "person" (speaker) in a given text.

This concludes the sections on the theological and exegetical preparation of Athanasius's interpretation of Prov 8:22-30. In chapter 1 we saw how an Alexandrian understanding of the Father-Son relationship emerged in the third century which held in tension notions of the Son's equality and inequality with the Father. We next saw how this Alexandrian theology, guided by the soteriological concerns evolving in the late third, early fourth century, moved toward the view that there is a substantial union of the Father and Son. We also observed how the church had traditionally understood Prov 8:22-30 as imparting information about the Father-Son relationship, particularly with regard to the generation of the Son. Finally, we explored certain exegetical techniques, developed in the second and third centuries, that would prove useful to Athanasius's understanding of our text. We now turn our attention to the fourth century context of Athanasius's interpretation: first

to the early Arian reading of our passage, and then to the early Nicene response to it.

CHAPTER 4

"BEFORE (THE SON) WAS BEGOTTEN OR CREATED OR DEFINED OR ESTABLISHED HE WAS NOT": THE ARIAN INTER- PRETATION OF PROVERBS 8:22-25

Introduction

The next two chapters will present the fourth century context of Athanasius's exegesis of Prov 8:22-30. The present chapter will discuss early Arian¹ interpretations of Proverbs 8, thereby providing an acquaintance with the position against which Athanasius was arguing in the CA. The next chapter will examine the exegesis of our passage by Athanasius's Nicene comrades, men who initially linked Prov 8:22 with an event other than the generation of the Logos from the Father: Eustathius of Antioch and Marcellus of Ancyra. Having established this context, we will then turn in chapters 6 and 7 to the interpretation of Prov 8:22-30 by Athanasius himself.

¹The terms "Arian" and "Arianism" are very poor names for the anti-Nicene theological party of the fourth century. As Rowan Williams has pointed out, "'Arianism' as a coherent system, founded by a single great figure and sustained by his disciples, is a fantasy . . . based on the polemic of Nicene writers, above all Athanasius" (1987, 82).

Given the terminus ad quem for our study, the scope of this chapter will be limited to the Arian exegesis of Proverbs 8 prior to 340. During the 320's and 330's we find significant use of Prov 8:22-30 in the writings of Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Asterius the Sophist. It is to their works that we now turn our attention.

From the beginning, the exegesis of the Bible occupied center stage in the Arian controversy. Indeed, it would not be incorrect to define the Arian controversy as primarily a debate over biblical exegesis (Turner 1954, 189; Kannengiesser 1982c, 1; Williams 1987, 107-116). The Arians were anxious from the outset

to defend their system as at least in harmony with the Biblical tradition by the construction of a formidable supporting argument from Scripture. . . . (It) is difficult to resist the impression that the Arian appeal to Scripture was not only more forcibly urged, but also more scientifically presented than had been the case with earlier heresies. (Turner 1954, 189-90)

Unfortunately, for the most part we are left with only the bricks (the scriptural citations themselves) that comprised the Arian hermeneutical structure. These citations have been widely dispersed throughout the writings of the Arians' opponents; cut off from any original theoretical context, their inner logic has been irreversibly obscured (Kannengiesser 1982c, 17). We know, for example, that Arius understood scriptural analogies about the Son's origin, not as analogies and metaphors, but as definitions (Kannengiesser 1982c, 7). He took "created," "begotten," and "estab-

lished" as exact descriptions of the Son's origins. Metaphor and analogy were washed away in the emphatic assertion that "before he was begotten or created . . . or established he was not" (EEN 5 / 3,3-4). Trying to understand why Arius read Scripture this way is like trying to comprehend the worship of Mithras. Just as a surviving Mithraum testifies to the existence of cultic ritual, so the surviving scriptural citations testify to an Arian hermeneutical edifice. Yet in both cases we have little or no idea of what went on inside the structure.

Arius

Pivotal to Arius's "formidable supporting argument from Scripture" was Prov 8:22-25 (Simonetti 1965, 9; Shapland 1951, 162, n. 71; Meredith 1974, 351; Pelikan 1962, 56; 1971, 193). It was the key passage in the Arians' arsenal, the text that was put about in "every quarter" as the proof that "the Son was one of the creatures" and should be reckoned "with things originated" (DNS 13.1-2 / 11,15-21). Hilary called it "the greatest billow in the storm they raise, the big wave of the whirling tempest" (de Trinitate 12.1 / PL 10:434 / Pelikan 1971, 193).²

In fact, the controversy probably started over the interpretation of this passage (Pelikan 1971, 193). Accord-

²Gregg and Groh argue, quite unconvincingly, that Phil 2, not Prov 8:22, was Arius's primary proof-text (1977, 273-74, 274 n. 62).

ing to the later historian Socrates, Alexander one day attempted to explain to his clergy "with perhaps too philosophical minuteness," the mystery of the divine unity (HE 1.5). Arius's own account of this lecture charged Alexander with tending to emphasize the co-eternity of the Father and Son to such an extent that the ontological primacy of the Father was blurred. Arius professed that bishop had asserted that "the Son unbegottenly co-exists with God"; moreover, the Son was "ever-begotten" ($\alpha\epsilon\lambda\gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\eta\varsigma$) and "un-generated-created" ($\alpha\gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\eta\tau\omicron\gamma\epsilon\nu\eta\varsigma$). Again, he charged Alexander with maintaining that God was not prior to the Son either in thought or in time (EEN 2 / 2,1-3).

Arius was "unable to listen to these impieties" (EEN 4 / 2,8-9). Fearing that Alexander was teaching Sabellianism, Arius openly opposed him on the ground that since the Son was begotten, he could not be co-eternal with God; the Son must at some point have come to be out of nothing (Socrates, HE 1.5; EEN 5 / 3,3-5).³

³Sozomen charges Arius with initiating the controversy when he began to preach his doctrines openly. Alexander initially balked at silencing Arius, but eventually convened a synod to decide the issue. A second synod was necessary when the first was unable to reach a decision. Sozomen describes Alexander at this second meeting as seeming "to incline first to one party and then to the other." Finally, however, the bishop decided in favor of those who "affirmed that the Son was consubstantial and co-eternal with the Father." When Arius refused to accept this decision, he was excommunicated (HE 1.15). Theodoret, on the other hand, agrees somewhat with Socrates. "While the Patriarch, he says, "in obedience to the Holy Scriptures, taught that the Son is of equal dignity with the Father, and of the same substance with God who begat Him, Arius, in

The interpretation of Scripture was at the heart of the controversy, particularly (though certainly not exclusively) the interpretation of a certain passage from the Old Testament (ὕπερ τίνος τόπου τῶν ἐν τῷ νόμῳ γεγραμμένων; Opitz 3:33,3). From Arius's letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia it seems certain this passage was Prov 8:22-25 (Simonetti 1965, 32). In his brief statement of faith at the end of the letter, Arius includes the affirmation, "before he was begotten or created or defined or established he was not, for he was not unbegotten" (EEN 5 / 3,3-4). These four verbs are not found in proximity to each other anywhere in the Septuagint.⁴ Γεννάω is the only one of the four that appears with all of the others.⁵ Ktizo and θεμελιόω appear only once together and that is in conjunction with gennaō in

direct opposition to the truth, affirmed that the Son of God is merely a creature or created being." Furthermore, Arius "taught these false doctrines perseveringly, not only in the church, but also in general meetings and assemblies; and he even went from house to house, endeavoring to make men the slaves of his error" (HE 1.1). I discount Sozomen's account because I find it doubtful that Alexander was so uncertain of his theology that he could find himself siding at different times with both sides in the debate. While it might be granted that Alexander's theology at this time was a bit fuzzy, it was so only in the sense that it leaned too far toward Sabellianism for Arius's liking, not that it was so ill defined that it was amenable to both Arian assertions and ones of the Son's "co-eternality."

⁴Simonetti suggests that "defined" was included for rhythmic reasons and echoes Rom 1:4 (1965, 33).

⁵With οὐρίζω at Ezek 47:20; with θεμελιόω at Job 38:4-21, Ps 86:4-5; with ktizo at Deut 4:25-32, 32:6-18, 1 Esdr 4:15-53, Wis 2:2-23, Sir 7:15-28, 23:14-20, 49:14-15, and Isa 45:7-10.

Prov 8:22-25. Undoubtedly this passage was on Arius's mind when he wrote the letter to Eusebius. Since EEN dates from the earliest period of the controversy (Williams 1987, 58), we can be relatively certain that the interpretation of Prov 8:22-25 found in EEN was also the one being urged at synod against Alexander and in the Baucalis (Simonetti 1965, 33).

Emotions appear still to have been running high when Arius wrote his letter to Eusebius. He passionately uses the emphatic ἄρτι to link "created" and "defined" to "begotten." His opponents apparently had focused on "begotten" as a unique descriptor of the Son's generation. But Arius had insisted that the other verbs applied to that event as well, perhaps following an exegetical rule that the sequence of verbs determined their meaning (Abramowski 1982b, 48-49).

The allusion to Prov 8:22 by Arius in his letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia is the only surviving example of his use of this passage. From what we know of his teachings, however, it will not be too difficult to conjecture what his interpretation of the text would have included.

Arius's exegesis was at all times guided by his belief in the absolute oneness of God. God is:

alone unbegotten, alone everlasting, alone without beginning, alone true, alone possessing immortality, alone wise, alone good, alone master, judge of all, manager, director, immutable and unchangeable, just and good, God of Law, Prophets and New Testament. (EA 2 / 12,4-7 / 31)

Although the use of this particular group of adjectives in this manner was without precedent in Christian the-

ology, it would not have constituted an offensive definition of God in the early fourth century. All of the phrases can be found either in Scripture or in the Alexandrian tradition.⁶ "Unbegotten" had a long and honorable pedigree in the church. Alexander used it (ALX 19 / 22,22), and it may also have been used in the Alexandrian liturgy (Kopecek

⁶We are not trying to overlook Arius's substantial debt to philosophy here. It has been argued that the use of monas betrayed Arius's primarily philosophical bent, but Barnard has shown that it was unlikely that Arius began with monas in the sense of the "Absolute of the philosophical schools" and then fitted some Christian elements into it (1972, 111-12). Stead agrees that Arius's philosophical principles were, for the most part, mediated through the Church (1964, 30). But he does think there were two main points where secular philosophy could help Arius: (1) in his defense of the Father's primacy, and (2) in the rejection of the Father's involvement in natural or physical processes. He suggests that we should suspect the influence on Arius of a form of Platonism that rejected Stoic and Aristotelian elements in its physics and theology. Since such Stoic and Aristotelian elements are present in Plutarch, Numenius, Plotinus, Clement, and Origen, Stead suggests that Arius probably owes the most to Methodius among Christians and Atticus among philosophers. He concludes that the evidence "does not . . . permit us to say positively that Arius's theology was shaped by a dialogue with non-Christian Platonist contemporaries; but it is compatible with the existence of a Platonist tradition at Alexandria which was marked by a similar reaction against Valentinian and Manichean theories" (1964, 30-31).

Arius was also familiar with Aristotelianism. During the fourth century, and even earlier, there had been a revival of interest in Aristotle. Anatolius founded an Aristotelian school in Alexandria in the late third century, and Porphyry wrote his introduction to Aristotle's Logic from the same city. That Arius was aware of this activity can be reasonably deduced from his use of the Aristotelian phrase τὰ πρὸς τὴν (EA 4 / 13,12; Stead 1964, 28).

Philo (Wolfson 1958; Dragas 1980) and Plotinus (Kannengiesser 1982c) have also been suggested as philosophical sources for Arius's thought. Williams says Arius was not a Middle Platonist and certainly stands close to Plotinus and his successors (1987, 230).

1982, 65). It was a commonplace in the theological vocabulary of the fourth century along with "everlasting" and "without beginning." Ἀναρχός goes back to Clement of Alexandria and was used by Alexander (Stead 1964, 17). The other five adjectival phrases that employ μόνος are Scriptural. "Alone true" is from Jesus' prayer in John 17:3, and "alone wise" from Paul's doxology in Rom 16:27. In Mark 10:18 Jesus says that "no one is good but God alone." Finally, 1 Tim 6:15-16 states that God alone is "Sovereign" (δυνάστης) and "has immortality" (Gregg and Groh 1981, 89).

Arius's offense, as well as his innovation, lay in what he failed to include in his primary definition of God, that God was Father (Person 1978, 18). Arius thought "Father" identified God in terms of a relationship to someone else; it was not expressive of God's essential nature.

God was not always a Father for once God was alone, and not yet a Father, but afterwards He became a Father" (CA 1.5 / 21A).⁷

Here, of course, he was departing from traditional Alexandrian theology. Disagreeing with Dionysius of Alexandria, Arius believed that the terms "father" and "son" were not mutually definable when applied to the divine persons. The

⁷Asterius refused to follow Arius on this point. God was a father proleptically. "Before the generation of the Son, the Father possessed pre-existing knowledge how to beget, since a physician also has the knowledge how to cure before he cures" (Fr. 4 / 363 / Kopecek 1979, 32). This opinion was shared by Theognis of Nicea, a Lucianist (Kopecek 1979, 32).

Father-Son relationship was neither unique, nor exclusive, nor necessary to the being of either Person (Williams 1983, 61-62; Gregg and Groh 1977, 263; Gregg and Groh 1981, 83-84).

By removing fatherhood as an essential characteristic of God's nature, Arius was able to remove the Son from an essentially divine status altogether. As we saw in chapter 1, Origen's Logos belonged on the side of divinity as opposed to creation but not unambiguously. As the image of the invisible God, the Son perfectly reflected the Father and in some sense was linked ontologically to him. As first-born of all creation the Son, who was not unbegotten, seemed to belong in the begotten, created realm. The Alexandrian tradition tended to resolve the ambiguity in favor of a Father-Son relation that would place both Persons outside of the created order. Arius, however, wanted to draw the distinction between the divine and the created in such a way as to place the Father on one side of the line and the Son on the other. God, he said,

Begot an only-begotten Son before eternal times, through whom he made the ages and everything. But he begot him not in appearance but in truth, having submitted him to his own will, an immutable and unchangeable perfect creature of God, but not as one of the creatures--an offspring, but not as one of those born. (EA 2-3 / 12,7-10 / 31)

Arius also said that the Son was "created by the will of God before times and ages," and that "he received life, being, and glories from the Father" (EA 3 / 13,4-6 / 31).

A closer inspection of Arius's creed, contained in his EA, clearly shows that his favorite biblical defense of his theology was Prov 8:22-25. "Creature" (ktisma) and "offspring" (gennēma) are the substantives of the verbs in Prov 8:22, 25. Elsewhere in his creed Arius asserted that the Son was "created and established" (κτισθεὶς καὶ θεμελιωθεὶς; EA 4 / 13,9)--again an echo of Prov 8:22-23.

To call the Son "creature" and "offspring" on the basis of Prov 8:22-25 was hardly innovative in Alexandria. Neither could Arius's assertion that the Son had been created "by the Father's will before all time" (θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸ χρόνων καὶ πρὸ αἰώνων; EA 3 / 13,14) be construed as bad theology. Origen, too, had said the Son came to be by an act of the Father's will.

Yet his rejection of Origen's view that "father" was a term belonging to the very definition of the being of God, together with his strict monotheism, compelled Arius to conclude that if the Son was "begotten," "created," and "established" by the will of the unbegotten Father, then there was a point--a "when" (ποτε), to quote Arius--before which the Son did not exist. "Begetting," in other words, implied a before and an after (Luibhéid 1982, 24-25). To express his notion, Arius devised three famous slogans: "There was 'once' when the Son was not" (ἦν ποτε ὅτε ὁ υἱὸς οὐκ ἦν; CA 1.11 / 33B), "the Son was not before he was begotten" (οὐκ ἦν ὁ υἱὸς πρὶν γεννηθῆναι; CA 1.11 / 33B-C) and "the Son was

begotten out of nothing" (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ἐστὶν ὁ υἱός; CA 1.12 / 37B).⁸

Even for these assertions Arius could find precedence in the tradition. Though Dionysius the Great was certainly no third century Arian, his works were replete with references to the Son as a "work" (poiēma) who once did not exist and who was substantially different from the Father (DSD 4.2 / 48,20-23).⁹ Athanasius of Anazarbus, for example, in what was perhaps a letter to Alexander (Kopecek 1979, 41), says Dionysius taught

God is the controller, judge and administrator of all things, who created and constructed all things, who made all things from nothing. Therefore the Father, and not

⁸Arius deliberately omitted this last phrase from his EA, though he freely used it in the EEN. Since Eusebius of Nicomedia did not use it in the EPT, Hanson theorizes that Eusebius warned Arius not to use the phrase. Rowan Williams, on the other hand, has recently put forth the thesis that EA preceded EEN (1987, 48-66). Nevertheless, the doctrine that the Son was created "out of nothing" cannot be perceived as a characteristically Arian trait. By the latter part of the fourth century the Arians did not teach this doctrine. Though Arius originally taught it, "the doctrine found favor with few and was abandoned comparatively early" (1985, 82).

⁹It is possible that Arius was born during Dionysius's episcopacy and that, as an adult, he heard Dionysius preach (Abramowski 1982, 49).

Kannengiesser denies that Dionysius was a source of Arianism. Suggesting that the genesis of Arianism lay in the "radicalized" subordinationism of Dionysius is, in Kannengiesser's view, to deny the uniqueness of Arianism itself--that the Son is truly "other" than the Father along with being a subordinated Son (1982c, 21). I am not suggesting that Arius merely "radicalized" Dionysius in attaining his doctrine of the Son. I am suggesting that in the attainment of that doctrine a good deal of groundwork already had been done by Dionysius. (1982c, 21).

the Son--because he was not made, but is--is not from another, but abides in himself. The Son, on the other hand, and not the Father--because he was not, but was made--has obtained the dignity of a Son, not of himself, but from him who made him (Sermones arianorum 16 / Bardy 1936, 207-8).

Here we find Dionysius not only refusing to identify the Father and the Son, but also showing no qualms about speaking of the Son as a creation of the Father. Although we cannot adjudicate the authenticity of the above quote, it is still beyond question that the Arians found the vocabulary, if not the thought, of Dionysius amenable to their own positions and frequently cited his works. So frequently, in fact, that around 350 Athanasius was forced to salvage the reputation of his episcopal predecessor with an apologetic work, DSD.

But Arius's theology did fall outside the mainstream of the Alexandrian doctrinal development that we sketched in chapters 1 and 2. His three slogans indicated an understanding of the Father-Son relationship that veered widely from the path followed by previous Alexandrian theologians, yet not so far that it lost all of its Alexandrian characteristics. Arius was a paradox in that his thought was at once a departure from and yet grounded in the Alexandrian tradition; he both repeated and betrayed Origen (Kannengieser 1984, 304; Patterson 1982a, 912-14; Rusch 1980, 17).

When Arius called the Son a "creature" who came to be at a certain "moment" "from nothing" and who "did not exist before he was begotten" he was expressing his fundamental

belief in the monas of God by making the Son necessarily dependent on the Father and inferior to him. The purpose was not to diminish the Son, but to exalt the Father (Gregg and Groh 1981, 86; Stead 1985a, 153). The Father-Son relationship was not one that involved a shared ousia. Rather, it centered on the divine will, upon which the Son was dependent for his very existence (Florovsky 1962, 44; Stead 1977, 223). These assertions and tendencies were all Origenian, apart from Arius's insistence that the Son once was not and that he came to be from non-existence.

Again, we have noticed how in Origen's thought dependence on the will of the Father for existence tended to link the Son with creation more than it did with God. The early Arians solidified the link: "if the will of God has pervaded all the works in succession," Asterius said, "certainly the Son too, being a work, has at His will come to be and been made (Fr. 6 / 344 / NPNF 4:460). Again, Athanasius of Anazarbus defended Arius to Alexander by identifying the Son with the 100 sheep in the Synoptic parable of the lost sheep.

For all that are made being represented in parable by the hundred sheep, the Son is one of them. If then the hundred are not created and originate, or if there be beings beside that hundred, then may the Son be not a creature nor one among others; but if those hundred are all originate, and there is nothing besides the hundred save God alone, what absurdity do Arius and his fellows utter, when, as comprehending and reckoning Christ in the hundred, they say that He is one among others? (Opitz 3:18,2-8 / NPNF 4:459)

Arius was much more willing than Origen to draw a firm line between God on the one side and the Son and creatures on the other, but he waffled on the point and could not baldly define the Son as a creature (Meredith 1974, 351). The Son was a "perfect creature of God," who, though a creature, was "not as one of the creatures" (EA 2 / 12,9-10). In asserting that the Son was an "offspring," or a "creature," or a "work," Arius was also asserting that he was not an "offspring," "creature," or "work" in the normal sense of those words. The distinction is clear in Arius's first slogan, "there was 'once' when the Son was not."

Traditionally, it has been assumed that pote in this slogan implied time, that there was a "time" when the Son was not. Athanasius certainly understood the Arian slogan this way. As Kannengiesser has shown, however, the three slogans constitute a "polemical leitmotiv" for Athanasius, and serve as a backdrop for his own exegetical principles, chief of which is the discovery of the "time" (καίρος) of a passage (1983b, 192-240). Thus we cannot be certain that Arius had "time" in mind when he spoke of the generation of the Son, even though pote is a temporal word (Kannengiesser 1983b, 193). In his letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, Arius stressed the point that the generation of the Son took place "before time" and "pre-temporally" (πρὸ χρόνων καὶ πρὸ αἰώνων; EEN 4 / 3,2). He used the same phrase in his confession of faith to Alexander (EA 3 / 13,4), along with the adverb

"timelessly" (ἀχροόντως, EA 4 / 13,8).¹⁰ By insisting on a pre-temporal generation of the Son, Arius distinguished between Christ as creature and all other creatures whose existence begins temporally.

Arius's reluctance to identify the Son fully with the created realm may also be seen in his claim that the Son, though a creature, was immutable and unchangeable (EEN 4 / 3,3; EA 2 / 12,9). Though the Son is not necessarily or intrinsically immutable and is, in principle, capable of change, as God's master creation he must have been inalienably endowed from the first "with all the glory and fullness that it is possible for a creature to have" (Williams 1985, 9-10). As the everlastingly perfect creature of God, he could do no other than to "love righteousness and hate iniquity."¹¹ In asserting that the Son was created pre-

¹⁰W. R. Schoedel has suggested that Philo's doctrine of creation might stand behind Arius's assertion. For Philo creation was a non-temporal act since time itself is a product of the motion of the world (Opif. mundi 26-27; Aet. mund 52-54). Thus it could be argued that there was neither a "before or an "after" with God in regard to the creative act and yet there was a "once" when the world was not (1984, 42).

¹¹The fact that the Son was not intrinsically unchangeable in Arius's system must have been what his opponents seized on when they charged him with teaching that the Son was mutable (ALX 11 / 21,12; ALX 13 / 21,21; ECL 8 / 8,2-3), even to the extent that it was possible for the Son to rebel as Satan had done (ECL 10 / 8,9-10). Athanasius says the Thalia taught the mutability of the Son (CA 1.5). And the church, gathered at Nicea, forbade the application of τροπτόν and ἀλλοιωτόν to the Son (Opitz 3:52,4). If Arius did not in fact teach the mutability of the Son, Gregg and Groh's thesis that a morally improveable Son lay at the heart of Arian soteriology is greatly compromised (see Wil-

temporally and that he was immutable, Arius drew a dotted line between the Son, who was God's perfect creature, and all the rest of creation.¹²

The concept of the creature-Son contradicted the Nicene notion that "God" was a substance in which the Father and Son participated jointly. God was "alone unbegotten"; he pre-existed the Son and became Father when he willed the Son to be from nothing. God is the source of all creation. The fact that he begot the Son in no way implies an ontological likeness of the Son to him. Their essential relationship is causal and not participatory.¹³

Questions about divine substance and the Son's connection with it apparently entered the debate at an early stage, probably because Alexander's circle was using the phrase τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς οὐσίας ἴδιος to reinforce the case for

liams 1985, 9-10). Even if Gregg and Groh are correct that Arius did, indeed, speak of the Son as changeable, he was the only early Arian that did so (Following Kopecek contra Kannengiesser that CA 1.5 (21C,4-13) cannot be assigned to Asterius (Kopecek 1982, 52-53; Kannengiesser 1983b, 167-74).

¹²Subsequent Arians would distinguish between Christ and the creatures by asserting that Christ had been made directly by God whereas the rest of creation had been made by Christ. For more on this theory, see below on Asterius the Sophist and also Eunomius's Apology 15, 17, 18, and 22.

¹³Arius could find allies for this position in contemporary philosophy. Alexander of Aphrodisias's commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics viewed the act of fathering as an action of one being upon another (τὰ πρὸς τι). As such it is comparable to the relationship that obtains between a builder and a house; it is an external relationship and says nothing about the substantial definition of the terms involved (Williams 1983, 66-67).

the coeternity of the Father and Son (Williams 1983, 58-59). Arius, on the other hand, understood idios as relating "only to a quality predicated of a substance" (Williams 1983, 59). Porphyry had argued that idios cannot designate a substance--it refers to a quality not a quantity. Similarly, for Arius the divine properties are eternal and impersonal (i.e., logos, sophia, dynamis). To call the Son idios would reduce him to an unhyposatized, impersonal quality (Williams 1983, 58-61). The Son, therefore, could never be the true word, true wisdom, or true power of the Father and still be a distinct hypostasis (ECL 7 / 7,12-13; Asterius, Frs. 1-2b, 10 / 341-43, 345). Arius therefore rejected the unity of ousia as an expression of the Father-Son relationship. He believed the Son to be alien to and in all things unlike the Father's "essence" (ousia) and "propriety" (ἰδιότητος; CA 1.6 / 24A). The Son, properly speaking, belongs to things begotten and created, not to the unbegotten and uncreated (CA 1.6 / 24A).¹⁴

Arius also objected to the phrase "from (ek) God" (EEN 2 / 2,3) and its variant "from his substance" (ousia; EPT 3 / 16,3-4) as descriptions of the Son's generation from the Father.¹⁵ Arius likened such terminology to the "Manichean"

¹⁴This language is paralleled in SYN 15.3 / 242,16-17: ἴδιον οὐδὲν ἔχει τοῦ θεοῦ καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἰδιότητος, οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἴσος, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ὁμοούσιος αὐτῷ.

¹⁵Asterius did say that "the begotten one" was "from" (ek) the Father, but the textual evidence is too fragmentary to ascertain his exact meaning (Frs. 21-22 / 349-50).

notion of "consubstantial portion" (μέρος ὁμοούσιον; EA 3 / 12,11).¹⁶ To say that the Son is "from" the Father as a separable meros or as an emanating προβολή fatally jeopardizes divine simplicity and immutability: if God has "components," he is compound in nature and there are substances prior to him. If he can be "extended," he is mutable. In either the case of division or extension the corporeality of God is implied. Iamblichus used homoousios to describe the product of the combination of different material elements. Hydrogen and oxygen are consubstantial as components of water, for example. But according to Iamblichus, the term "consubstantial" can only be applied in the material sphere. There can be no compound intellectual substances, nor hybrid part-intellectual, part-material substances (Williams 1983, 63-65).

While it is impossible to know whether Arius was familiar with the works of Iamblichus, the latter's understanding of what it means to be homoousios has a two-fold significance. First, it shows that roughly contemporary usage linked homoousios directly with the notion of a compound and divisible substance. Second, it indicates that the idea of substantial participation was highly problematic

¹⁶Williams doubts that the phrase "consubstantial portion" was Manichean. It was that consubstantiality implied, in Arius's view, divisibility and materiality in God. By this definition, then, consubstantiality would parallel the doctrine of the Manichees (1983, 65).

in late third and early fourth century philosophy. According to Iamblichus, a being's ousia was a core beyond participation by another being. Moreover, all transcendent realities were ἀμικτον as a consequence of being immutable. In this light, Arius might have opposed the language of consubstantiality out of fear that it made Father and Son components of a divine substance--a substance which, having component parts, would be both divisible and material (Williams 1983, 63-65).¹⁷

Arius's Christ was divine by grace, not by nature. Divinity was a status bestowed proleptically on Christ as a result of his unwavering harmony with the divine will. The Son was freely begotten by the Father before all ages, and was freely elected to be the channel through which God manifested his glory. Having elected him for this task and knowing that the Son would make a perfect response to him, the Father bestowed unparalleled graces on the Son and made him a "created perfection" (Williams 1985, 11).¹⁸

Christ maintained his divine status by participating (μετοχή) in the Father. Since the Son was a creature, it

¹⁷Another reason why Arius might have rejected ousia language when referring to the Father-Son relationship is that, from his standpoint, homoousios was patripassian, it involved the Almighty in the suffering of Christ (Hanson 1985, 190).

¹⁸Gregg and Groh see things somewhat differently. In their view, Christ's promotion was a reward for his virtue and obedience. The element of predestination is missing from their account of Arianism (Gregg and Groh 1981, 43).

was impossible to say that he was the divine Sophia, Logos or Dynamis. And yet Scripture did ascribe divine attributes to the Son in passages such as John 1:1-14. The Arians squared theology and Scripture by saying the Son received titles which properly belonged to God, such as Logos, because of his participation in the real, divine Logos. They emphatically denied that the Son was the divine Logos because the divine attributes, like Logos, could not be shared--they were proper to God (Gregg and Groh 1981, 110; Williams 1983, 60-61).

Arius proposed two different ways in which the Son could be said to participate in the Father. First, the Son could participate in Sophia, for example, because he was brought into being by Sophia (ECL 7 / 7,24-8,2). Arius might have Origen's JN in mind here. In JN 2.17-18, the possession of natural qualities by definition is distinguished from possession by derivation.¹⁹ Using metochē in this way would be an appeal to a tradition of sorts, "a reminder that no one had ever claimed that the Son was what he was independently of his derivation from the Father" (Williams 1983, 73-75).

A second way in which Arius conceived of the Son's participation in the Father was by grace (CA 1.5). God alone is intrinsically Logos and Sophia. Although the Son

¹⁹Although, strictly speaking, Origen used metochē for communication rather than for participation.

might be permanently rational and wise, he was not necessarily so since, as a creature, he was theoretically subject to change. In other words, rationality and wisdom are not part of his essential definition. He became these by participation (Lorenz 1979a, 59; Williams 1983, 75-76). Rationality and wisdom are accidental, not natural or necessary, qualities of his being.

Both ways of conceiving participation rest on Arius's fundamental theological conviction that God is monas, that the ontological line is drawn between the Father and the creation (including the Son). To say that someone is Logos, Sophia, or Dynamis by participation is not the same thing as to say that he/she are these essentially. The Father is these things essentially, the Son is not.

Exegetically, Arius's concerns were expressed in an interpretation of Prov 8:22-25 that was both literal and paradoxical. He could read Scripture literally and at the same time emphasize its metaphorical character; Prov 8:22, in Arius's view, said that the Son was a creature, but not as one of the creatures (Kannengiesser 1984, 305-6). For Arius, as for the Apologists and Origen, Prov 8:22-25 described a single event; the verbs of these verses were synonymous. But Arius departed from the interpretive tradition by reversing the order in which the verses were read. The tradition had understood "create" in the sense of "beget"; Arius understood "beget" in the sense of "create" (Simonetti

1965, 33-34). Prov 8:22-25 was crucial to Arius's cause because it was one of the few texts that unambiguously spoke of the pre-existent Christ as having been created by God. Once Arius made his case here, he was able to use vv. 22-25 as the key to unlock the meaning of all other passages in which the Son is said to have been generated by the Father or derived from him (Simonetti 1965, 35-36).

Eusebius of Nicomedia

We have one example of Eusebius's reading of Prov 8:22-25. EPT begins with a brief confession of Eusebius's own theological beliefs. "We affirm," he said,

that the unbegotten is one, and one also that which exists in truth by Him, yet was not made out of His substance, and does not at all participate in the nature or substance of the unbegotten, entirely distinct in nature and in power, and made after perfect likeness both of character and power to the maker. EPT 3 / 16,3-5 / 42)

Eusebius went on to affirm, as did Origen, that knowledge of the Son's begetting was beyond attaining. It was both inexpressible in words and incomprehensible in thought (EPT 3). Here Eusebius distanced himself from Arius's dramatic assertion that the Son originated out of nothing. The begetting of the Son belonged properly to the mystery of God.

Eusebius then placed this confession of faith upon the foundation of Scripture. Prov 8:22-25 teaches that the Son was "created," "established," and "begotten" by the "substance" (ousia) and by the unchangeable and ineffable "nature" (physis) of the Maker. The fact that the Son was

"created" and "established" prohibited saying that he was "out of" (ek) God, or "from" (apo) God, or was an emanation of God's substance. Whatever derives from the Unbegotten cannot be called "created" or "established" for it, too, would be "unbegotten from the beginning" (EPT 5 / 16,12-15). Neither does generation by the paternal ousia imply a similarity of substance with or likeness to, the divine nature. Isa 1:2, Deut 32:18 and Job 38:28 clearly show that "beget" is not applied uniquely and exclusively by Scripture to the Son; all of creation, from humankind to the dew-drops has been "begotten" by God. "Everything is from (ek) God," Eusebius says (EPT 8 / 17,7); "there is nothing that is from (ek) his substance (ousia)" (EPT 7 / 17,4). Rather, everything that exists has come to be by the will of God (EPT 7).

Eusebius, then, understood Prov 8:22 in a manner similar to Arius. "Create," "establish," and "beget" are all roughly synonymous, with "create" acting as the standard of meaning for the other two. This reading is enhanced by an appeal to several parallel passages in which "beget" is used in regard to God's creative activity. The bishop of Nicomedia diverges from Arius, however, by refusing to sustain the Alexandrian's contention that v. 22 taught the Son came into being out of non-existence. While Eusebius agrees that the Son derived his existence from the Father's will and not from the Father's substance, he maintains that the mode of the Son's generation lies beyond human comprehension.

Asterius the Sophist

Asterius was Arius's more cautious defender and ally (Quasten 1983, 3:196). He was a brilliant thinker who refined Arius's thought in ways that made it a more formidable challenge to the Nicenes than it had been in its original form. His indefatigable work as an interpreter of Scripture (he wrote commentaries on Romans, the Gospels, the Psalms, and also homilies on the Psalms (Quasten 1983, 3:196)), placed Arianism on an impressive biblical foundation.

Arius's assertion that the Son was a creature was challenged by the Nicenes on two fronts. First, they argued, it failed to explain adequately the demiurgic function of the Son attested by John 1:3 and Col 1:16. If "all things" came to be through the Son, how could the Son be included with the "all things" (CA 2.24). Second, if the Son were a creature called into being by God's will, why was he alone created initially? Why did not everything come into existence at once (CA 2.24)?

It was Asterius who met these objections. In response to the first, he took up the concept of "firstborn" in Col 1:15. Though the Son is "one among others," he is the "first of the things that come to be." Asterius compared him to the sun, which, though one of the visible phenomena, enlightens the whole world by its maker's command. Likewise, though the Son is "one of the intellectual natures," he "enlightens and shines on all those in the intellectual

world" (Fr. 3 / 343).

With regard to the second objection (why, if the Son were a creature, did he precede all other creatures in coming to be), Asterius turned to the Johannine concept of the Son as "onlybegotten." Creation, he said, was unable to endure the "unmixed hand of the Father" as he brought things into existence. Seeing this, the Father created the Son "first and alone, one only," and called him "Son and Word." God then brought everything else into existence by means of the Son (Fr. 8 / 344).²⁰

The Arians might be charged with teaching that the Son was a hybrid, demi-god, or tertium quid. But as the monogenēs and the prōtotokos--the "only-begotten" and the "firstborn" of all creation, the Son was a perfect creation of the Father (Gregg and Groh 1981, 117; cf. Rusch 1980, 17). The Arians used these two biblical adjectives to express their belief that the Son was the only creature made directly by the hand of the Father, and that he was the first thing made when the Father willed to create the world. He was not different in nature from the rest of God's crea-

²⁰Asterius might have been dependent on Philo for his notion of the "unmixed hand." According to Philo, when God willed to create the world, he first generated the Logos. As the hypostatization of the Forms in the intelligible realm, the Logos became the pattern for the making of the world. The Logos was a co-worker in creation and was a necessary part of the process because creation could not sustain the unmediated touch of the Almighty in the process of its generation (De specialibus legibus 1.60; Wolfson 1958, 10-12).

tures. His difference was qualitative: it was on him that God had placed his favor or preference in a way unknown by any other creature (Gregg and Groh 1977, 276-77).

Our passage appears twice in the extant fragments of Asterius's works: once in a Marcellan fragment (Fr. 23), and once in the homilies on the Psalms. Marcellus of Ancyra says Asterius replaced ἐθεμελίωσεν in Prov 8:23 with γεγεννήσθαι (Fr. 23 / 350). This transposition of verbs probably means that Asterius, like Arius, read the verbs of Prov 8:22-25 as synonymous. He therefore had no difficulty transposing v. 25's verb into v. 23.

In Homily 21 on Psalm 11 Asterius describes Christ's heavenly birth as προαίωντος and supports his claim with an appeal to Prov 8:23 (Richard 1956, 165,6-11). The sermon takes its theme from the title of Ps 11: "For the end, a Psalm of David upon the eighth." Asterius maintains that "eighth" signifies the resurrected Lord, who was raised on the eighth day (Richard 1956, 160-61). In the section of the homily where our passage appears, he discusses a further way "eight" signifies the resurrection. There was a "week of days" in which the world was restored to Christ (Richard 1956, 165,4-6). "Days" should not be taken literally here. The second "day" was the incarnation, and the third was Christ's manifestation as God's Son at the wedding at Cana (Richard 1956, 165,11-19). The first "day," says Asterius, was Christ's "engendering before time" (ἡ προαίωντος . . .

γέννησις; Richard 1956, 165,6-7). He then quotes Prov 8:23 to signify that there was no other "day" before Christ's generation (Richard 1956, 165,8-11). Maurice Wiles and Robert Gregg believe that although "day" cannot be taken literally, the use of "day" in the context of the Son's generation suggests that Christ's birth was coincidental with the beginning of time rather than outside of it (Wiles and Gregg 1985, 127-28).

If Wiles and Gregg are correct, such a notion would tie the Son more closely to creation than Arius's "timeless" generation did.²¹ For Asterius the begetting of the Son would signal the inauguration of creation since time would begin with his generation. This notion would harmonize well with Asterius's view that the Son alone was able to sustain the "unmixed hand" of the Father. Since the purpose of God in making the Son is the creation of the world, the begetting of the Son and the dawn of time ought to be, it would seem, coterminous events.

In Asterius we again encounter the typical Arian appeal to Prov 8:22-25 already noticed in Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia. "Create" in v. 22 is the operative term for the understanding of "establish" and "beget" in vv. 23 and 25. Asterius, however, placed the creation of the Son at the

²¹Wiles and Gregg, on the other hand, insists that the homilies link Christ more closely to God than to creation (1985, 129-30).

beginning of time rather than outside of it as Arius had done. In making Christ's engendering coincident with the inauguration of time, Asterius made the Son's link with the created order even less ambiguous than Arius.

Summary

In summary,

1. From the beginning the Arian crisis focused on the interpretation of Scripture. Unfortunately, the Arian literary remains are in such fragmented shape that it is impossible to discern with any accuracy an Arian system of exegesis.
2. Prov 8:22-25 was pivotal to Arius's disagreement with Alexander. Fearing that his bishop had blurred the distinctions between Father and Son, Arius used Prov 8:22 to prove that the Son did not belong by nature to the Father. The Son was, instead, God's most exalted and perfect creature.
3. There is no extant example of Arius's interpretation of our passage. His allusion to it the EEN makes clear, however, that he understood the verbs of Prov 8:22-25 as synonymous.
4. Arius was at all times guided by his conviction that God was absolutely one. When applied to the Father-Son relationship, this conviction resulted in the notion that "father" was not expressive of God's essential nature, but was indicative of a relationship with

something other than himself. God, in short, became a "father" by adopting a "son" who belonged ontologically in the created realm. Arius's purpose was not to diminish the Son, but to exalt the Father by making the Son necessarily dependent on and inferior to the Father.

5. Arius's theology was at once both a departure from and an expression of the Alexandrian tradition. Origen and Theognostus had called the Son a ktisma and Dionysius had styled him a "work." Origen had compared the generation of the Son to an act of will, and had blurred the distinction between the Son and the creatures because of it. Dionysius had asserted a radical hypostatic difference between the Father and the Son in his debate with the Sabellians. Yet no Alexandrian before Arius had dared to teach that the Son had begun to exist at a certain point after having been brought to that point out of non-existence.
6. Arius was much more willing than his forebears to draw a firm line between God on the one side and the Son and creatures on the other, yet he was reluctant to identify the Son fully with the created realm. Though he was charged with teaching the Son was created in time, he insisted the generation took place before time and pre-temporally. Again, though he was charged with flatly saying the Son was mutable and changeable, Arius's teaching was much more subtle. The Son was not intrin-

sically immutable, and in principle was capable of change. But as God's perfect creature, fully endowed from the first with all glory, it was impossible for him to rebel against God. Hence, he was de facto immutable.

7. Questions about divine substance and the Son's relation to it entered the debate at an early stage. Those in Alexander's circle were probably insisting that the Son was "proper" to the Father's ousia. Arius believed this claim reduced the Son to an impersonal and unhypostatized quality of God. Arius also rejected notions that the Son was "from" (ek) the Father or from his essence. These assertions would mean God's ousia was compound and not simple. For the same reason Arius probably rejected homoousios. According to Iamblichus, homoousios described the product of the combination of different material elements. If the Father and Son were homoousios they would be components of a divine substance that would be both material and divisible.
8. The Son achieved divinity by grace as a result of his unwavering obedience to the divine will. He maintained his divine status by participating in the Father. Participation in the divine Logos, Sophia, and Dynamis (attributes which properly belonged to God) bestowed these titles on the Son. The Son, however, is not essentially Logos, Sophia, and Dynamis.
9. Prov 8:22, for Arius, said that the Son was a creature,

but not as one of the creatures. Like so many exegetes before him, Arius understood vv. 22-25 as a description of one event, the generation of the Son. Arius departed from the Apologists and Origen, however, by insisting that the "beget" in v. 25 be understood in the sense of the "create" in v. 22. Since Prov 8:22-25 was one of the few texts that spoke unambiguously of the generation of the Son as a creation, Arius used this text to unlock all other Scriptural passages where the Son is said to have been generated by the Father or derived from him.

10. Eusebius of Nicomedia did not believe Prov 8:22 taught the creation of the Son ex nihilo. Properly speaking, the origin of the Son belonged to the mystery of God. The application of such verbs as "create," "establish," and "beget" to that generation, however, means the Son was not originated "out of" (ek) God or "from" (apo) God. It also means the ousia of the Son is neither similar to nor like the divine nature. Isa 1:2, Deut 32:18, and Job 38:28 clearly show that "beget" is not a unique term for the generation of the Son; all of creation has been begotten by God.
11. Asterius the Sophist linked our passage with Col 1:15 and John 3:16 in an effort to counter Nicene charges that the Son could not be a created creator. As first-born of all creation and onlybegotten Son of the

Father, the Son was created in the beginning to serve as the medium by which God made everything else. Being firstborn and onlybegotten did not make the Son quantitatively different from other creatures. His difference was qualitative; God had placed his favor and preference on him in a way he had not done on any other creature. The homilies on the Psalms demonstrate that Asterius followed the typical Arian ploy of reading the verbs in Prov 8:22-25 as synonymous. By saying that the origin of the Son was proaiōnios, Asterius might have been asserting that the event was coincidental with the beginning of time and not outside of it. If so, Asterius would have placed the Son more firmly in creation than did Arius, who said the Son's generation was "timeless."

The early Arians--Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Asterius--read Prov 8:22-25 in a fairly traditional manner. It was a cosmological text that also imparted information about the Father-Son relationship. In so interpreting Prov 8:22-25, the Arians disregarded the traditional Alexandrian reading of v. 25 as a proof for the eternal existence of the Son. There is no evidence of the slightest Arian uneasiness about the fact that "beget" is in the present tense while "create" and "establish" are in the past tense. All three verbs were understood to mean one and the same thing, to create. Finally, the Arians avoided v. 30 altogether in

their exegesis. That the Father had delighted in the Son, and that the Son had rejoiced daily in the Father's presence, appears to have played no role in their reading of vv. 22-25.

Arian interpretations of Prov 8:22-25 also differed from one another. Eusebius disagreed with Arius and refused to say v. 22 taught the Son was brought into existence from non-existence. Asterius perhaps was even less hesitant than Arius about linking the Son to creation on the basis of v. 22.

This, then, was the Arian context of Athanasius's interpretation of Prov 8:22-30, the understanding of the text which he would try to overturn in the CA. As we noted in the introduction (pp. 8-11), Athanasius's thought revolved around two foci: a doctrine of redemption that necessitated a redeemer who was completely God and a strong anti-Arian polemic. As we will see subsequently, both of these concerns were present in his interpretation of Prov 8:22-30. However, before we can examine his exegesis one more contextual chapter is necessary, the interpretation of our passage by Athanasius's Nicene contemporaries, Eustathius of Antioch and Marcellus of Ancyra.

CHAPTER 5
THE NICENE UNDERSTANDING OF PROV 8:22-30: PROVERBS 8
IN THE WORKS OF EUSTATHIUS OF ANTIOCH
AND MARCELLUS OF ANCYRA

Introduction

In order to set the stage for Athanasius's reading of Prov 8:22-30, it is important not only to examine the early Arian interpretations of the passage but also to trace the early Nicene exegetical response to those interpretations. Eustathius of Antioch and Marcellus of Ancyra first divorced Prov 8:22 from cosmology. Instead of interpreting "create" in v. 22 as a statement about the pre-cosmic generation of the Son from the Father, these writers referred the verb to the incarnation.¹ This innovation in the interpretation of v.22 successfully undercut the Arian reading of the text and pointed the way for Athanasius's own approach to the passage.

¹This was the approach adopted by the majority of the later Nicenes: Epiphanius of Salamis, Gregory of Nazianzus, Didymus of Alexandria, Pseudo-Basil and Gregory of Nyssa. For references, see Shapland (1951, 162).

Eustathius of Antioch

Eustathius became bishop of Antioch in 323/24, after transferring from the see of Beroea in Syria.² When the Arian controversy broke out, he became an immediate ally of Alexander against Arius. Eventually his outspoken support of the Nicene position--a support made easier by what appear to have been Sabellian tendencies in his theology--cost Eustathius his bishopric. He was deposed and exiled to Thrace in 328 or 329 and never returned to Antioch.³

The orthodoxy of Eustathius's doctrine of the Son has long been a subject of debate. The Father and Son are so closely identified in his theology that he has been accused of teaching the Father and Son constituted a single, divine hypostasis.⁴ Of course in 325 such a doctrine could well have been orthodox since the Nicene Creed itself tended to

²Contra Lorenz who believes that Eustathius became bishop of Antioch in 319 (1979b, 543). Quasten also supports 323/24 as the year Eustathius became bishop of Antioch (1983, 3:302). He was, perhaps, the successor of Philogonius at Antioch (Roey 1959, 1202).

³Accepting Hanson's chronology against 326 as the year Eustathius was deposed. Eustathius had certainly died by 343, and in all likelihood his death took place prior to Constantine's in 337 (Hanson 1984).

⁴Both Marcellus (by Loofs) and Paul of Samosata (by Sellers) have been proposed as sources for Eustathius's theology. Sellers convincingly argued against Marcellus (1928, 95-96), but was not able to gain support for Paul. Simo-netti suggests that the affinities with Paul in Eustathius's theology be seen as points of doctrine that were well rooted in the Antiochene tradition and survived Paul's condemnation (1965, 45).

equate ousia and hypostasis. The fragmentary character of the surviving corpus of Eustathius's writings also contributes to the confusion about his beliefs.⁵ R. V. Sellers, for instance, has, at different times, argued that Eustathius did not and that he did teach the Son had a distinct hypostasis. Sellers initially suggested that the Son had no distinct hypostasis: Eustathius's Trinity was essentially economic in character (Sellers 1928, 90). Twelve years later, however, he came to the opposite conclusion and asserted that the Son did, indeed, have an independent hypostasis, and therefore that Eustathius did not teach an economic Trinity (Sellers 1954, 122-23). On this point it can now be said that there is a consensus of sorts. The non-economic interpretation of Eustathius has been sustained by both Spanneut (1954, 221-22) and Lorenz (1979b, 545).

According to Jerome, Eustathius waged a prolific literary war against Arianism (Vir. ill. 85). Among his anti-Arian works was a Homily on Prov 8:22, which was composed shortly after the council of Nicea (Spanneut 1948, 70).⁶ Unfortunately, only fifteen fragments of this homily

⁵Unfortunately, only one of Eustathius's works has survived intact, De engastrimytho adversum Origenem, of which there is a modern edition edited by Erich Klostermann (1912). All the other literary remains of Eustathius consist of fragments chiefly scattered in dogmatic florilegia (Quasten 1983, 3:303). These fragments can be found in PG 18:675-704. They have been edited twice in modern times, once by Ferdinand Cavallera (1905) and once by Michel Spanneut (1948).

⁶Sellers dates the homily no later than 329 (1928,

have survived,⁷ and none of these include an interpretation of Prov 8:22 itself. In fact, the only direct mention of Prov 8:22 in the entire extant corpus is in a fragment from a work written while Eustathius was in exile, De fide contra Arianos:

When therefore it says: The Lord created me the beginning of his ways for his works, by clear proofs it shows the man Christ to have been made an unchangeable beginning of good things for us when he suitably directed us into the heavenly ways. (Fr. 60 / 112,13-16)⁸

Although this fragment from De fide is later than the Homily on Prov 8:22, there is no reason to believe that it departs in any major way from Eustathius's exegesis of the passage in his earlier work. The fragments from the homily strongly emphasize the distinction of natures in the incarnate Christ. Such a discussion would be superfluous if Eustathius had understood Prov 8:22 cosmologically. Under

73), Quasten says it was written in 329 (1983, 304).

⁷Fragments 18-32 in Spanneut 1948. These fragments are drawn from two works by Theodoret: the Eranistes (frs. 18-31) and the Ecclesiastical History (fr. 32). Of these only the phrase καρτερίαν μὲν ψυχῆς in fr. 24 is considered of suspect authenticity (Spanneut 1948, 28, 69).

⁸Quoting Lebon's translation from the Syriac, Spanneut's text runs as follows: "Cum ergo dicit: Dominus creavit me initium viarum suarum in opera sua, manifestis argumentis demonstrat principium immutabile bonorum nobis factum esse hominem Christi cum ad vias caelestes apte nos disposuit. Pitra's translation of a similar fragment (number eight in his text) reads: "Quando igitur ait Dominus: 'Creavit me initium viarum suarum operibus suis,' claro demonstrat argumento bonorum principium immutabile nobis exstittisse hominem Christum, quoniam nos ad viam coelorum direxit" (1966, 4:442-430).

those circumstances his chief concern would presumably have been to show that "create" could not be applied literally to the Logos, and not to indicate how divine and human co-exist in Christ. Only if the incarnation were the text's referent would a consideration of the Christological question of the two natures be appropriate. It is unlikely, then, that Eustathius's basic understanding of our passage changed over the years. We may presume that all the relevant fragments of his work bear witness to a common interpretation of Proverbs 8.

For Eustathius 1 Cor 2:6-8 was the key that unlocked the meaning of Prov 8:22. In the former passage, according to Eustathius, Paul in effect identified the "God-bearing man" (hominem deiferum; Fr. 59 / 112,9-10) with the Wisdom God had "predestined before the ages to our glory" (NASB). Furthermore, "the man who was crucified" was characterized in 1 Cor 2:8 as "the Lord of Glory" and in Acts 2:36 as "Lord and Christ" (Fr. 25). In 1 Cor 2:6-8, then, the man Jesus and divine Wisdom were linked to such a degree that the same term, Wisdom, could be applied either to Christ pre-existent or to Christ incarnate. When Eustathius sought to discern the "person" of Prov 8:22 (see above, pp. 160-61), he discovered that it was Christ incarnate. The man, Jesus was "created" in the beginning (Simonetti 1965, 44-45; Simonetti 1975, 74 n. 112). God, therefore,

did not so make the Wisdom nor yet the Word who has the might of dominion from the beginning, but Him who was

lifted up on high and stretched out His hands upon the Cross. (Fr. 25 / 103,9-12 / 235)

In preference to referring the weakness and passion experienced by Jesus to his divine nature, Eustathius insisted that these belonged to his humanity (Frs. 24, 28). The man, taken from the Virgin, was made the crucible of salvation by the Word (Frs. 18, 23, 26).

Given the incarnational interpretation of "create," the remainder of Prov 8:22--"beginning of his ways, for his works"--acquired new meaning. The man who was created had become "an unchangeable beginning of good things for us," by directing us "into the heavenly ways" (Fr. 60 / 112,15-16). Unfortunately the evidence is much too fragmentary to allow us to determine the full shape of Eustathius's soteriology. The important point here, however, is that "beginning" could no longer be construed as a parallel to Gen 1:1 and John 1:1 since "created" now referred to the incarnation. In effect, the parallel to Prov 8:22 had been changed. It now was not John 1:1, but John 1:14. Consequently the phrase, "beginning of his ways, for his works," was now understood to refer not to creation, but to the salvation offered by the incarnate Lord.

If the referent of Prov 8:22 was changed from the pre-cosmic generation of the Word to the incarnation, how was the rest of the passage, vv. 23-30, to be understood? Did the passage as a whole indicate the incarnation, or did other parts of it specify the generation of the Son by the

Father? Since in Eustathius's view, "Wisdom" is a name for either Christ pre-existent or Christ incarnate, both readings of the text would presumably be permissible. Nor does the surviving evidence allow us to choose between these alternatives since only v. 22 appears in any of the fragments. However, Eustathius does not hesitate to say that the Logos was truly begotten and is the Father's image and true Son by nature (Frs. 21, 27, 33); and his tendency to apply terms such as "beget," "generate," "true Son" and "Son by nature" to the Logos suggests that it would be difficult for him to apply v. 25 to the incarnation. It is more likely that his exegesis echoed (whether consciously or unconsciously) the Western interpretive tradition that distinguished between Prov 8:22 and 25 (Simonetti 1965, 46-47). If our suspicion is correct, then Eustathius's contribution to the interpretation of Proverbs 8 was the attribution of v. 22 to the incarnation and v. 25 to the pre-cosmic generation of the Word.

Eustathius of Antioch produced the first Nicene response to the Arian exegesis of Prov 8:22-25. His rebuttal assigned the verb "created" in v. 22 to the incarnation and not to the generation of the Word from the Father. 1 Cor 2:6-8 provided the key for this interpretation. It was not divine Wisdom who was the crucified "Lord of Glory," but rather the man Jesus. Naturally it was also the man who was created as the beginning of the blessings to be bestowed

upon all. With regard to the interpretation of Prov 8:25, Eustathius, like exegetes in the West, appears to have separated the referents of vv. 22 and 25. Once he had disconnected v. 22 from creation and cosmology, he resorted to the traditional understanding of v. 25. The "beget" in this verse signified the generation of the Son from the Father.

Marcellus of Ancyra

Another early defender of the Nicene Creed who also attempted to recapture Prov 8:22 from the Arians by interpreting it as a reference to the incarnation was Marcellus of Ancyra.⁹

Marcellus was one of the strongest defenders of the Nicene faith. In 335-36 he produced refutations of Asterius the Sophist and of the Eusebii of Nicomedia and Caesarea.¹⁰

⁹If Tetz is correct that Marcellus wrote De incarnatione et contra Arianum (1964), then the bishop of Ancyra also interpreted Prov 8:22 as a reference to the Church. In section 12 the Church is said to have been "begotten before all the hills" because it was "created first among those things begotten from God" (1004C-1005A). Christ's statement from the cross that he was committing his spirit unto the Father (Luke 23:46) meant that everyone who has been made alive in Christ has also been committed unto the Father since all are one body in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28). This "one body" is the Church, and it is the Church which is spoken of in Prov 8:22 as being created "in the beginning of his ways," for it was created in Christ.

¹⁰One hundred twenty-nine fragments of Marcellus's writings have survived. Of these, 128 are from his work against Asterius; and the 129th consists of his letter to Pope Julius in 340, which includes a confession of faith. Most of the fragments are scattered through two works by Eusebius of Caesarea: Marcell. and ET. Klostermann has gathered together the 129 fragments in GCS 4:183-215.

These treatises led to Marcellus's exile in 336 (Quasten 1983, 3:197-98), when the Arians were again influential in Constantine's court. Upon the death of Constantine in 337 he was restored to his see in Ancyra, but was expelled again in 339. It was during this second exile in 340 that he met Athanasius in Rome (Cross 1974, 869). In the period immediately following the Council of Nicea Marcellus was the major obstacle to ecclesiastical harmony (Barnard 1980, 69-70). The West was firmly convinced of his orthodoxy and said so at a council in Rome in 340 and at one in Serdica in 343. The East, however, was just as firmly convinced of his herodoxy and published four creeds at the council of Antioch in 341, all of which contained distinctly anti-Marcellan elements (Barnard 1980, 69-70; Kopecek 1979, 80-83; Kelly 1972, 263-74).

Marcellus's theology was Jewish Christian in character and is to be located on a line running through the Apologists and Tertullian (Barnard 1980, 70; Simonetti 1965, 41-42). He emphasized the oneness of God to such a degree that he maintained the existence of one, and not three, hypostaseis in the Godhead (Frs. 61, 63). The Trinity was, in his view, the result of what might be called a process of expansion in the divine being, an expansion which was tied to the unfolding of three economies (Gericke 1940, 126).

The first economy in Marcellus's system governs the era between creation and the incarnation. Strictly speak-

ing, however, the phrase "first economy" is not Marcellan. It is a term inferred from his repeated identification of the incarnation as the inauguration of the second economy (Frs. 9, 73; Gericke 1940, 126). Prior to the initial manifestation of God in creation, only the Monad existed. The Logos dwelt in a state of potentiality within the Monad and was identical with God (Frs. 71, 76-77; Simonetti 1965, 41-42). The relation between Word and God was analogous to that between human language and human reason. Before words are expressed (or activated), Marcellus observed, they exist potentially within the reason (Frs. 61, 73). When God decided to create, the Monad expanded into a Dyad. God became "father" when the Word "proceeded" (προέρχομαι; Frs. 31, 108, 121, or ἐκπορεύω; Frs. 60, 68) as a divine energy, without separation, from him. This procession took place in order that the Logos might function as God's active power in creation (Frs. 61, 121; Simonetti 1965, 41).

Marcellus's doctrine of the economies demanded that the names "God" and "Father" be consistently distinguished. The former applied to the transcendent Monad whereas the latter was an economically acquired title. Marcellus never used "father" to signify the Monad. He favored "Lord" and "God" for this purpose (Fr. 78 / 201,36; 202,4, 9). Neither did he use "almighty" (παντοκράτωρ) in conjunction with "father" as Asterius had done (Fr. 65 / 197,10).

The term "father," for Marcellus, emerged with the expansion of the Monad into a Dyad and ultimately a Triad. Marcellus repeatedly emphasized the fact that before the first economy nothing existed outside of the Monad (Frs. 60, 103-104, 121). It is only with the economic processions of the Word and Spirit that God can be called "father".¹¹ Since, however, the expressed Word is never really separated from God (i.e., the Monad), even in the second economy when the Word incarnate becomes God's "Son" it is inappropriate to speak of him as "from" (ek) God. Such an assertion would divide the Monad and overturn the homousion. The Logos can never be anything else but "in" (en) God (Fr. 103 / 207,26). Economically, it is appropriate to speak of him as "in the Father" (Frs. 60, 103 / 196,3; 207,33), and even "from" the Father (Frs. 36, 60, 67, 74, 129 / 190,30, 32; 196,3, 7; 197,27, 33; 200,6; 215,16); but he can never be said to be "from" God (Gericke 1940 116-121).

The Dyad expanded further in the second economy. This phase began with the incarnation and marked a further division, yet without separation, of Father and Logos to the extent that the latter may now properly be called "Son" (Frs. 36, 43, 48; Simonetti 1965, 41-42; Gericke 1940, 126). Because Marcellus believed that the Logos became "Son" only

¹¹More precisely, the Spirit proceeds "from (ek) the Father" (Fr. 67 / 198,3-4) and "from (para) the Son" (Fr. 67 / 198,8-11) or "from (ek) the Logos" (Fr. 68 / 198,13-14).

in the incarnation, the flesh of Christ received strong emphasis in his theology. Christ's flesh "is the beginning, source, and focal point (Mitte) of the revelation and dominion of the invisible God in time" (Weber 1965, 137). When the Logos appeared in the flesh he also took possession of the government of heaven and earth--a possession he will retain until the time when God once again becomes all in all.

The last of the economies represents the expansion of the Dyad into a Triad.¹² It is at this point that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and is poured out on the church (Fr. 61; Gericke 1940, 120-21; Kelly 1978, 241). Marcellus believed this expansion of the Monad would eventually be reversed; after the final judgment the Spirit would be reabsorbed into the Logos and the Logos into the Monad (Frs. 117, 121; Kelly 1978, 241).

Marcellus's theology was unique in a number of ways; but central to our study is his notion of icon. Marcellus held that an icon is a visible representation of an absent or invisible original. Since the Logos was invisible before the incarnation, Marcellus concluded that only the incarnate Son could be the icon of the invisible God (Frs. 91-92). This view of Col 1:15 enabled Marcellus to reinterpret all

¹²The phrase "third economy" is no more Marcellan than "first economy"; it comes from Loofs (Gericke 1940, 126).

the OT passages that were thought to refer to the pre-incarnate Logos. And chief among these was Prov 8:22 (Hanson 1982b, 100-1).

Marcellus took Prov 8:22 as a prophecy of the second economy when the Word would become flesh (Fr. 9). He agreed with Arius that "create" meant creation out of nothing. But he did not agree that it was the Logos who was "created" in v. 22. It was the flesh assumed by the Logos that once "was not," but was created "a beginning of his ways" (Fr. 11 / 187,9-11).

The phrase, "beginning of his ways for his works" referred to the ministry of Jesus. Marcellus related the "works" of v. 22 to the works mentioned in John 5:17 and 17:4 (Fr. 15). He correlated "beginning of his ways" with Jesus' claim to be "the way" (John 14:6; Fr. 13). The phrase could also imply the new creation mentioned in 1 Cor 5:17 and brought about by the Savior (Fr. 12).

The incarnate Logos was the "first-born" of Col 1:15. He was the first new man in whom God had summarily brought together everything as in one head (Frs. 5-7). By presenting Jesus Christ as the head in which everything had been summed up, Marcellus gained a transcendent and universal significance for the ministry of Jesus (Fr. 1; Weber 1965, 133). "Fellowship" ($\kappa\omicron\lambda\upsilon\omega\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha$) with the Logos is the means of human salvation.

Clearly it is our flesh which, after the disobedience (i.e., the Fall) once again becomes earth. For he says,

'earth you are, and to earth you shall return.' This flesh needed healing by fellowshipping in some manner with the holy Logos. (Fr. 21 / 188,20-23)¹³

Marcellus does not make clear what manner of fellowship he has in mind, but significantly he uses the same word, koinonia, to describe the relationship of the Son with the flesh taken from the Virgin (Fr. 20 / 188,19). The "founding before the age" in Prov 8:23, therefore, refers to the flesh of Christ because of the "fellowship" enjoyed by the flesh with the Logos. Based on Marcellus's use of "fellowship" as it applies to the relationship of the Son to his own flesh, it is safe to assume that the flesh of Christ was a common ground where divinity and humanity were joined in "fellowship" with the result that humanity was redeemed. 1 Cor 5:17, therefore, could enlighten our understanding of Prov 8:22: "since old things have passed away and everything shall become new through the renewing of our Savior," Marcellus said, "Christ our Lord proclaimed through the prophet, 'the Lord created me a beginning of his ways'" (Fr. 12 / 187,12-15).

When Marcellus turned to Prov 8:23 he seized upon the fact that in the LXX "age" is in the singular. Literally, the passage reads, "before the age he established me." "It is one thing to have been founded before the age," Marcellus

¹³The last line of text reads: ἔδει γὰρ ταυτην ἰάσεως τυχεῖν, τινὰ τρόπον κοινωνη/σα σαν τῷ ἁγίῳ λόγῳ. The variant reads: κοινωνήσασαν.

said, "and something else to have been generated before the ages" (Fr. 18 / 188,9-10). The verb "founded" finds a parallel in 1 Cor 3:11 ("For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ"). It is the flesh of Christ that Prov 8:23 portrays as being "founded before the age." That is to say, the plan of salvation--a plan rooted in the flesh of Christ--was predetermined in the mind of God (Fr. 17, 20; Weber 1965, 134; Simonetti 1965, 39).

The length to which Marcellus was prepared to go to relate Prov 8:22-26 to the fleshly manifestation of the Word in the second economy is seen in his interpretation of three phrases in Prov 8:24, 26: the making of the depths, the coming forth of the fountains of water, and the making of the earth. According to Marcellus, the last phrase denotes human flesh, which was condemned to become "earth" again after the Fall (Gen 3:19; Fr. 21). Since this "earth" must be saved "by fellowshipping in some manner with the Holy Logos," v. 26 is a prophecy of the flesh which the Logos would assume (Fr. 21 / 188,22-23; Weber 1965, 134-35). The "abysses" signify the hearts of the saints, who in their depths have the gift of the Spirit (Fr.22). Finally, the "fountains of water" stand for the apostles.¹⁴

¹⁴Here Marcellus aligns himself with an exegetical tradition that took the 12 founts of Elim (Ex 15:27) as a type of the apostles (Frs. 23-25; Simonetti 1965, 40).

Marcellus avoided calling the procession of the Logos a "generation" (Simonetti 1965, 41-42). Consequently, he could not sustain the ancient practice that related v. 25 to the generation of the Son from the Father. Instead, Marcellus took Prov 8:22-26 as a unified prophecy of the second economy. Hence no distinction could be made between "create" in v. 22 and "beget" in v. 25. What is "begotten" in v. 25 is also what is "created" in v. 22: the flesh. The "mountains and hills," before which Wisdom is said to have been begotten in v. 25, are not understood literally. The "mountains" are the Apostles and the "hills" are their successors (Fr. 27; Simonetti 1965, 40).¹⁵

With v. 27 the referent of the passage changes. Whereas vv. 22-26 speak of the fleshly, second economy, vv. 27-30 describe the expansion of the Monad into a Dyad during the first economy.¹⁶ "Before the existence of the cosmos,"

¹⁵There was an exegetical tradition that viewed the mountains and hills of the OT as types of the Apostles (Hippolytus, ben. Jac. 27; Origen, Cant. 3). Simonetti suggests that Marcellus's recourse to traditional exegesis, both here and in the interpretation of the fountains of water discussed above, is intended to mask the novelty of his interpretation of Prov 8:22-25, an interpretation that was at variance with both Arian and orthodox readings of the text (1965, 43). If Scheidweiler is correct in assigning the Pseudo-Athanasian exp. fid. to Marcellus (Scheidweiler 1954, 356), then the bishop of Ancyra changed his interpretation of Prov 8:25 later on in the controversy. There the mountains and hills are said to typify "all rational and intellectual substances" (πάσης λογικῆς καὶ νοεράς οὐσίας; exp. fid. 3 / PG 25:204C).

¹⁶Gericke calls Marcellus's exegesis of Prov 8:27-30 "philosophical" as opposed to the "unphilosophical" interpretation of the preceding verses; hence, he concludes, Mar-

Marcellus asserted, "the Logos was in the Father" (Fr. 60 / 196,3), for "God needed the preparations that were in his mind" to create (Fr. 59 / 195,30-31). "Naturally (Wisdom) said, 'when he prepared the heaven I was with him'" (Fr. 59 / 196,1-2).

Elsewhere Marcellus explains that,

the genesis of the cosmos needed an active energy. For this reason, since nothing else existed besides God (for it is generally agreed that everything has been created by him), the Logos came forth and became the maker of the cosmos, he who also had at first been created within the thoughts, as the prophet Solomon also teaches us saying: "when he prepared the heaven I was with him," and "when he made firm the fountains under the heaven, when he made sure the foundations of the earth, I was by him (and in harmony with him). It was I in whom he delighted." The Father naturally delighted in making all things with wisdom and power through the Logos. (Fr. 60 / 196,3-12)

Within this framework, then, v. 27 indicates the period when the Monad existed alone, prior to creation. Verses 28-30 depict the procession of the Logos from the Monad (without division) during the first economy (Simonetti 1965, 43).

We conclude this section by noting that Marcellus, like Eustathius, took Prov 8:22 as a prophecy of the incarnation. "Create" meant the bringing of the incarnate flesh into existence from non-existence. Marcellus interpreted the verse on the basis of his own unique theology of three

cellus's exegesis is not uniform (1940, 149). This strikes me as a rather artificial distinction. In Marcellus's mind the two sections (22-26, 27-30) signified two different events. There was no reason why their exegeses should be uniform.

economies. Within this framework, the "image of the invisible God" could not be the Logos. The "image" could only be the incarnate Son. Col 1:15, explained in this way, became the key to the interpretation of Proverbs 8. Prov 8:22-26 spoke of the second economy, of the time when the Logos, emitted from and yet immanent in God, distinctly became God's "Son" in the incarnation. Marcellus made no attempt to separate v. 22 and v. 25. They both referred to the same event: the taking of a body by the Logos. Not until vv. 27-30, in Marcellus's view, is there mention of a pre-cosmic era and the inner life of God. Prov 8:27-30 speak of the beginning of the first economy, when the imminent Logos emanated from the Father as the active agent in creation.

Summary

This chapter has examined the exegesis of Prov 8:22-30 in the responses to Arianism of the early defenders of the Nicene Creed.

1. Eustathius of Antioch interpreted Prov 8:22 as a reference to the incarnation. The text provided an occasion for him to elaborate his understanding of the two natures.
2. Of crucial importance to Eustathius's interpretation of Prov 8:22 was his reading of 1 Cor 2:6-8. A crucified Lord of Glory and a created Wisdom obviously could not signify the divine nature. Rather, they were referred

to the man, who was assumed by the Word for our sakes. The incorporation of all humanity in the Lord's man brought about salvation through the saving acts of the Word, who used the man as an instrument.

3. Marcellus of Ancyra also read the passage as a prophecy of the incarnation. His interpretive scheme, however, was not a two natures Christology, but an economic Trinitarianism which viewed the revelation of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as a progressive unfolding of economies.
4. To the second of these economies belonged the incarnation. It was at that time that the Word, immanent in and yet emitted from the Monad, gained enough distinction from the Father through the taking on of the flesh to be identified as the Son.
5. Marcellus's exegesis of our passage was unique because he split the text after v. 26 and referred everything before this verse to the second economy and everything after it either to the first economy or to the undifferentiated unity of the Monad that preceded the first economy. Like the Arians, then, he saw no distinction between "create" in v. 22 and "beget" in v. 25.
6. Both Eustathius and Marcellus attempted to undercut the Arian use of our passage by denying a cosmic interpretation of v. 22. If this verse did not refer to the creation of the world, then "created me" could not be speak-

ing of the generation of the Son. Eustathius appears to have employed the Western technique of separating the referents of Prov 8:22 and 25; he clearly assigned v. 22 to the incarnation and we have suggested that the use of "generate" in his works implies that he assigned v. 25 to the pre-cosmic generation of the Son. Marcellus tried to keep the two verses together by referring them to a single event: the creation of the incarnate flesh.

The placing of v. 22 in the context of the incarnation was an innovation in exegesis that belonged solely to these two early Nicene exegetes. As we will see in the next two chapters, Athanasius's interpretation of Prov 8:22-30 shows affinities with that of his Nicene colleagues. But a discussion of those affinities must wait until Athanasius's interpretation of Prov 8:22-30 is examined in its own right.

CHAPTER 6
ATHANASIUS'S RULES OF INTERPRETATION

Introduction

During the course of his debate with the Arians, Athanasius developed certain rules and procedures for the proper interpretation of Scripture. With regard to the exegesis of Prov 8:22ff, Athanasius spoke in the CA of interpreting according to the "time," "person," and "purpose" (what we shall call his tripartite formula) of the text. Later on, in ES 2.7-9, he said that our passage must be understood in the light of the εἰς σκοπός of Scripture. However, the shift from the tripartite formula to the rule of a single scope of Scripture did not entail any corresponding change in exegetical method or procedure. Neither did it precipitate any change in exegetical results. Athanasius offered two different interpretations of Prov 8:22-30 in CA 2 (see chapter 7). I have labeled these interpretations "Exegesis 1" (CA 2.44-60) and "Exegesis 2" (CA 2.18-43, 78-82). Athanasius read Prov 8:22 both in Exegesis 1 (according to the tripartite formula) and in ES 2.7-9 (according to the rule of one scope) as a prophecy of the incarnation of the Son and Word of God.

The Tripartite Exegetical Formula

Athanasius began Exegesis 1 with a discussion of hermeneutics (CA 2.44). Proverbs, he said, could not be interpreted literally, for they were not expressed "plainly" (ἐκ σαφούς); their sense was "hidden" (κρύπτω; 241A). The literal sense of a proverb, in other words, was not its actual meaning.

Simonetti has suggested that Athanasius borrowed this rule for interpreting proverbs from Marcellus of Ancyra (1965, 58). In Fr. 125 Marcellus noted that several non-Christian scholars had mentioned the special problems that faced an exegete of sapiential literature. The Proverbs of the "most-wise" Solomon were no different, he asserted; like all other proverbs, their meaning was not readily apparent (214,1-2).¹

Although Athanasius might have taken from Marcellus the idea that Proverbs required special handling by the exegete, his own approach to Proverbs actually displayed little variation from the exegetical practice he had used in earlier portions of CA 1 and 2. After stressing that the literal meaning of a Proverb could not be taken as its actual meaning, he explained that "we must inquire into the person (πρόσωπον), and thus religiously" (μετ' εὐσεβείας) discover

¹Marcellus accused Asterius of duplicity for reading Proverbs as though it were subject to regular rules of interpretation when he knew it was not.

the true sense of the text (CA 2.44 / 240C-D / 372).

The discovery of the "person" of a text was one element of a tripartite exegetical rule Athanasius had developed earlier in the CA for use in the exposition of Heb 1:4. His invocation of "person" as a tool to aid the reading of Prov 8:22 meant that the interpretation of our passage would be carried out according to rules and procedures he had developed in relation to Heb 1:4. We must turn our attention for a moment to his exposition of the Hebrews text (CA 1.53-63) to gain a better understanding of his exegetical method.

Athanasius began his exegesis of Heb 1:4 with the assertion that it was "right and necessary" for an interpreter to ascertain the "time" (καιρόν), "person," and "purpose" (πρᾶγμα) of a text (CA 1.54 / 124B). To illustrate the hermeneutical use of "person," Athanasius cited the Ethiopian eunuch's query whether Isaiah spoke of himself or of someone else. At first glance, Athanasius appears to align himself with the ancient and well-established tradition--which we discussed in chapter 3, and saw used by the Nicenes in chapter 5--of using prosōpon in the theatrical sense of the character or mask that an actor assumed during a play, and of ascertaining the true "speaker" or "person" of a particular OT text. In one sense that is precisely what the bishop was doing. However, for Athanasius, it was not enough to say that the historical speaker of a given

passage spoke from the prosōpon of Christ. The fact that the economy² had happened, that God had become human, meant that in the course of time Christ had worn two "masks": he had been both pre-existent Logos and incarnate Savior. The task of the exegete was to decipher which "Christ mask" the speaker was wearing in a specific text. It was necessary, therefore, to broaden the category of "person" to include the categories of "time" and "purpose" as well. In Athanasius's exegetical system it was impossible to discover a text's "person" without first determining its "time" and/or "purpose."

For the definition of "time" Athanasius chose Matt 24:3. In this passage the disciples asked Jesus to tell them when the end of the age would take place. By knowing the "time" of end-time events the disciples would not be led astray into error (CA 1.54). In this regard, then, Athanasius appears to be thinking of "time" in the sense of "already" and "not yet" distinctions. Failure to distinguish the now from the future can only lead to error, particularly with respect to the resurrection. Athanasius lists the Thessalonians (cf. 1 Thess 4:13), and Hymenaeus and Alexander (cf. 1 Tim 1:20) as examples of those who had erred in

²For Athanasius, "economy" (οἰκονομία) refers to, in Patrick Henry's words, "all the matters involved specifically in the incarnation" (1976, 22). "Economy" signified the entire dispensation of salvation centered in the incarnation of the Word "for us . . . and for our salvation."

similar fashion by being "beside (para) the time" (CA 1.54 / 125A). The Galatians, on the other hand, were "after (meta) the time" when they practiced circumcision. And the Jews "missed the person" when they failed to read such passages as Isa 7:14; Deut 18:15; and Isa 53:7 as spoken from the "person" of Christ (CA 1.54). We have shifted in the cases of the Galatians and the Jews, from "time" as a category delineated by the "already" of the present and the "not yet" of the eschatological future to "time" as a category delineated by the stages of the unfolding economy of salvation. It was on "time" in this latter sense that Athanasius placed his greatest emphasis. "Time," for Athanasius, was not a specific moment; it was an economical concept. To identify the "time" of a specific text was to discover its position vis-à-vis the economy of salvation. Did a particular passage speak of the Word incarnate or of the Word pre-existent? The answer enabled the exegete to determine whether the "person" of a given passage was the pre-existent Son or the incarnate one.

Athanasius does not define "purpose" in the context of his interpretation of Heb 1:4. In DNS 14, however, he does use a tripartite formula, but substitutes χρεῖα for pragma. He defines chreia as the annulment of death. Therefore,

He took on himself a body from the Virgin Mary; that by offering this unto the Father a sacrifice for all, He might deliver us all, who by fear of death were all our life through subject to bondage. (DNS 14 / 440B / 159)

This explanation of chreia bears a strong similarity to what

Athanasius will call "cause" (αἰτία) in his interpretation of Prov 8:22 in CA 2. We observed in chapter 3 how Origen employed the rhetorical critical techniques of Theon to discern the historicity of a given text. By questioning the possibility, credibility, and/or sufficiency of a particular assertion, the interpreter was able to discern the presence of "stumbling blocks" in the text. If an assertion could not be shown to be possible, credible, and/or sufficient, it could not be considered historical and had to be interpreted allegorically. Athanasius appropriated Origen's method, not to decide historical accuracy, nor as an excuse for allegory, but to determine a text's "time," that is, its position with regard to the divine oikonomia. Just as Origen had taught that a text contained "stumbling-blocks" which indicated whether it was to be understood exclusively in its spiritual sense, Athanasius believed that certain Christological texts had specific characteristics that classified them as economic. He said that it was a Scriptural "custom" (ἔθος) to signify the "fleshly origination of the Son" by adding the "cause for which He became man." When such a cause was lacking, and all was said "in simple diction, and with an absolute sense," the statement in question referred to Christ's Godhead (CA 2.53 / 260B / 377).

It is difficult to see at first glance how "and dwelt among us" in John 1:14 and "humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" in Phil 2:8 (the

two examples given by Athanasius) are "cause"-type statements. "Cause" for Athanasius is not so much an indicator of how an action took place as it is a qualifier of the main verb of the biblical statement. The assertion that the Word "became flesh" is qualified by "and dwelt among us." Similarly the "cause" of Wisdom's creation is "for the works." To say that a Christological text includes a "cause" is to say that somewhere within its syntax are words which bear a soteriological import. Consequently, such a text must be viewed from the perspective of Christ's salvific mission. The Word did not become flesh because it was natural for him to dwell among us; the Word assumed human nature in order to dwell among us--to redeem us. "The need of man," Athanasius says, "preceded His becoming man, apart from which He had not put on flesh" (CA 2.54 / 261B / 377).

Aitia statements, as analyzed in CA 2, look very much like chreia statements, as analyzed in DNS 14. Both types of assertions emphasize the soteriological aspect of Christ's assumption of human flesh. If I am correct in linking "cause" with chreia and chreia with pragma, Athanasius used three terms--pragma, chreia, and aitia--to make the same point. Moreover, since aitia was not an independent exegetical category, but was a component of the category "time," we may assume that pragma/chreia did not have the same significance in Athanasius's exegetical technique

that "time" and "person" had (Sieben 1974, 202-3).³ It played a secondary role in Athanasius's approach to the text and was often subsumed by the category "time" in exegetical discussions.

So far we have noticed that Athanasius's insistence on the distinction between Christ pre-existent and Christ incarnate when reading a text pushed his incarnational theology to the forefront of his biblical interpretation. In explaining the Hebrews passage, Athanasius maintained that had Christ's enemies known "the person, and the purpose, and the time of the Apostle's words," they would not "have expounded of Christ's divinity what belongs to His manhood" (CA 1.55 / 125B / 338). We see here that "time" involved oikonomia, and that "person" denoted the distinction between Christ pre-existent and Christ incarnate.

The sources of Athanasius's tripartite rule have as yet remained undiscovered. "Time," "person," and "purpose," or their equivalents, are found together only twice in the

³It might be argued that Athanasius intended to link pragma, not with "time" but with "person." Pragma would then mean "entity" rather than "purpose." Origen had used pragma in this way in reference to the Trinity: the Father and Son were two "entities" hypostatically (ὅντα δύο τῇ ὑποστάσει πράγματα; CC 8.12 / 150:200,25). Later the Synod of Antioch (354) confessed "three entities and three persons (prosōpa) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (PG 26:729B). From this angle, Athanasius might be seen as asking interpreters to consider the "time," "person," and "entity" of a given passage. Since he later substituted chreia for pragma, however, it is unlikely that he meant to use pragma in the sense of "entity."

ante-Nicene Christian literature. Tertullian, in explaining Paul's censure of Peter, says that "it was according to times (tempores) and persons (personae) and causes (causae) that (the apostles) used to censure certain practices, which they would not hesitate themselves to pursue, in like conformity to times and persons and causes" (Praes. Her. 24.3 / SC 46:120 / ANF 3.254). The triad is here used by Tertullian, not as an exegetical device, but as a means to determine the ethicality of specific actions. Certain conduct is wrong in some contexts and right in others. Paul rebuked Peter for withdrawing from contact with Gentiles when Jews were present, yet he himself maintained that he could be all things to all people in order to win them to Christ. Obviously Peter acted like a Jew at an inappropriate time, among the wrong people, and for the wrong reason.

A similar triad also appears in Origen, but this time as an exegetical tool. Referring to Jesus' statement that "God is spirit" (John 4:24), Origen says one should ask "when (quando) our Saviour spoke these words, and to whom (apud quem), and in what connexion" (quid quaereretur; PA 1.1.4 / 19,13-14 / 9). The occasion was the conversation with the Samaritan woman regarding the proper place to worship God. She incorrectly believed that some special privilege was attached to particular sacred places. Jesus dispelled this notion by insisting that God as spirit could not be found in specific material places (PA 1.1.4). By

ascertaining the who, what, and when of John 4:24, the error of conceiving God in material terms was avoided (PA 1.1.2-4).⁴

In both of the above instances, a tripartite formula was used on a single occasion to address the interpretation of a specific passage of Scripture. Neither Tertullian nor Origen elevated their triad into a rule of exegesis applicable to all Scripture. Clearly, then, the ante-Nicene exegetical tradition was not the source of Athanasius's method; his use of the tripartite formula marked a new approach to Scripture. Moreover, for the first time in Christian history opponents could be attacked not only for improper exegesis, but for using an inappropriate method of interpretation as well. Arius's reading of Prov 8:22, for example, was wrong on two counts: it violated the rule of faith and it broke the "rules" of "scientific" exegesis.

It has been suggested that the elements of Athanasius's tripartite formula are rhetorical *συνόψεις* and, consequently, that Athanasius was practicing rhetorical criticism on Scripture (Sieben 1968, 243-44). Quintilian lists the nine bases upon which every question turns as: "person,"

⁴An exegetical triad (persona, tempus, and causa) also appears in Hilary's commentary on the Psalms (Tractatus in II Psalmum 5 / PL 9:256A-B). Since this work was written in the 360's (Quasten 1978, 46-47), however, it could not have influenced Athanasius. For further discussion of the triad in Tertullian, Origen, and Hilary see Sieben (1974, 198-202).

"conjecture" or "quality," "time" (χρόνος and kairos), "place," "action" (πρᾶξις), "number," "cause," "manner" (τρόπος), and "opportunity for action." He then says some rhetoricians do not include "number" and "opportunity" in the list while others substitute pragma for "action" (Inst. 3.6.25-28). Later Greek rhetoricians pared the list of staseis to six. Nicholas, the fifth-century sophist from Myra in Lycia (Ziegler and Sontheimer 1972, 4:111-12), for example, listed the following six "elements" (στοιχεῖα) of a "narrative" (διήγησις): πρόσωπον, πρᾶγμα, τόπος, χρόνος, αἰτία, and τρόπος (Spengel 1853-56, 1:456,14-20). Though Nicholas post dates our period, it is certain that a similar list of six stoicheia was widely known and had been in use for some time (Sieben 1968, 243-44 n. 78). Theon of Alexandria, who lived in the second century C.E., included the same six elements in his discussion of narrative (Walz 1968, 1:182; Sieben 1968, 243-44).

These lists reveal that Athanasius's categories of kairos, prosōpon, pragma, and aitia were included among rhetorical staseis. Athanasius diverges from the Greek list by using kairos instead of chronos, but this is a proper substitution. According to Quintilian, kairos refers to periods of time while chronos is concerned with specific dates (Inst. 3.6.25-26). Moreover, Gorgias (ca. 483-376 B.C.) had taught that kairos was the means by which a choice or compromise could be made between two antitheses (Pal.

22).⁵ Since Athanasius needed to distinguish two distinct periods in the Logos's existence, that of pre-existence and that of incarnation, we would expect him to use kairos instead of chronos.

We should not be surprised by the fact that Athanasius's tripartite rule is rhetorical in nature. We are, after all, dealing with a section from orations against the Arians. It is likely that he had studied rhetoric, either directly through the handbooks or indirectly through the writings of other Christians who were familiar with its rules and practices (e.g., Irenaeus, Origen, and Eusebius) (Kennedy 1983, 208).⁶

⁵Gorgias, however, had a much broader notion of kairos than simply a period of time. Kairos involved a consideration of time, place and circumstance. It was closely allied with "the fitting" (τὸ πρέπον) and the two together constituted the artistic element in rhetorical theory. Since it did not tend to fall under the jurisdiction of prescribed rules, kairos as a rhetorical term was largely restricted to the classical period. "The fitting," on the other hand, became "the only provision for latitude and taste which found a permanent place in traditional rhetoric" (Kennedy 1963, 66-67).

⁶The latter alternative is the more likely. The rhetorical arts were not emphasized strongly in Alexandrian education. The evidence of papyri suggests that teachers of rhetoric stressed mimicry of model orations rather than rhetorical theory (Smith 1974, 124-127). Rhetorical education was also almost completely Greek in character; there is no evidence that any Latin rhetorical author was used widely in Alexandria, and except for declamation no Latin theories figured directly in oral discourse. "It is safe to say that any Latin rhetorical theory taught by Alexandrian teachers and learned by their students took on a Greek dress even if its undergarments came from a Roman drawing board" (Smith 1974, 113).

But if we say that the tripartite formula was merely the adaptation of rhetorical theory to biblical exegesis, we would be telling only half the story. It could be argued that Tertullian and Origen derived their interpretive formulas from the handbooks. Yet neither writer elevated these formulas into a hermeneutical system. The triad was used by Tertullian and Origen to explain particular passages in isolated circumstances. Athanasius, on the other hand, insisted that "time," "person," and "purpose" assist the interpretation of all Scriptural passages that deal with the "truths of faith."⁷ It was only when the warp of the Alexandrian tradition was combined with the weft of contemporary exigencies that the hermeneutical triad of "time," "person," and "purpose" came to serve as a general rule of biblical interpretation which required that any text be construed in relation to its position on the continuum of the history of salvation. Outwardly, at least, the triad appears to be a formal principle of exegesis. We will have to wait until after we have examined Athanasius's exegesis more carefully

⁷In the Letter to Marcellinus Athanasius differentiates a hortatory from a dogmatic reading of Scripture. He says that "the entire Holy Scripture is a teacher of virtues and of the truths of the faith" (EMP 14 / 25C / 112). Thus, while "the Lord is in the phrases of the Scriptures (EMP 33 / 45A / 129), some of the phrases speak about him, while others act as the mirror of the soul and channel grace to the readers when they turn the narrative into their own prayer (EMP 12). Athanasius's exegetical rules discussed in this study function only in the dogmatic sphere. For further discussion of Athanasius's devotional reading of Scripture see Sieben (1968, 11-121).

before we can determine whether the formula was only or even primarily a formal principle of interpretation.

Later in his life, Athanasius ceased to use the tripartite formula. He instead began to speak of the one skopos of Scripture, appealing--at least nominally--to a method of interpretation that had come into vogue with the Neoplatonist Iamblichus. In making this change, Athanasius strengthened his case against the Arians by making it clear that the theology which shaped his exegesis was, in fact, a biblical theology. This new method of interpretation was based on the principle that a piece of literature had a single theme or scope.

The Skopos of Scripture

About twenty years after the end of the first exile,⁸ Athanasius, in a letter to Serapion, maintained that the Arians were pleading Prov 8:22 as a warrant for saying "'See, He created! He is a creature!'" But in doing this they erred by "not realizing the scope of divine Scripture" (ES 2.7 / 620A / 162).

In the light of Kannengiesser's contention that the third oration is not to be attributed to Athanasius, it is unfortunate that the only "Athanasian" definition of the skopos of Scripture appears in this work. In CA 3.29 we

⁸Quasten dates the ES in 359/60 (1983, 3:57. Kannengiesser dates the letters around 358 (1982a, 992-94).

read that,

the scope and character of Holy Scripture, as we have often said, is this,--it contains a double account of the Saviour; that He was ever God, and is the Son, being the Father's Word and Radiance and Wisdom; and that afterwards for us He took flesh of a Virgin, Mary Bearer of God, and was made man. And this scope is to be found throughout inspired Scripture, as the Lord Himself has said, "Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of Me." (CA 3.29 / 385A-B / 409)

If Kannengiesser's thesis is correct, then CA 3.29 becomes a witness to the frequency with which Athanasius must have used the term skopos in his oral teaching. That is to say, by the time the third oration was written (ca. 345-55) skopos had become so identified with Athanasius that the author could use the term to "authenticate" his work. If, on the other hand, the third oration is genuinely Athanasian, then we also have confirmation in CA 3.29 for the central role skopos had come to play in Athanasius's thought by the late 340's when he returned from the second exile.

Whether or not Athanasius was the author of the third oration, the above passage accurately reflects his concept of the skopos of Scripture.⁹ He used skopos 19 times in

⁹On the question of the authorship of CA 3.29, a closer look at the text reveals that: (1) the author says he has "often" (πολλάκις) defined the scope and character of Scripture, and yet the above quotation is the only time skopos is defined in writings attributed to Athanasius. (2) CA 3.29 uses John 5:39 as a proof for the existence of one scope of Scripture. John 5:39, however, did not play a vital role in Athanasius's theology; he used it only twice, in AEL 4 and Epistola 39. The latter occurrence is of particular interest for it established the boundaries of Athanasius's canon. Yet within this context John 5:39 simply served to prove that the OT and NT were the "fountains of salvation," wherein alone is proclaimed the doctrine of god-

works of undisputed authenticity;¹⁰ and of these occurrences, four deserve closer inspection.

Near the beginning of DI Athanasius expressed concern that his reader not conclude he had wandered from the skopos of the DI (i.e., the incarnation) by discussing the creation of humanity (DI 4). Proper writing style demanded that an author make the various pieces of his work conform to his overall intention or purpose.

In the earliest known discussion of literary unity, Socrates likened a composition to

a living being, with a body of its own, as it were, so as not to be headless or footless, but to have a middle and members, composed in fitting relation to each other and to the whole. (Phaedrus 268D-E / 528 / 529)¹¹

The "head" of a work was quickly identified with the unifying theme of the work by Socrates's successors.

Plato's analogy of the musician ignorant of the principles of harmony illustrates his notion of literary unity

liness. Though it was a perfect occasion to bring up the subject of one scope, Athanasius did not do so. One cannot conclude that Athanasius did not write CA 3.29 on the basis of an argument from silence, but we should at least be careful about ascribing the passage to Athanasius.

¹⁰Lampe (1961) lists four possible meanings of the word skopos. Athanasius used the term in two ways: once in the sense of "lookout" or "watchman" (v. Anton. 32), and the rest in the sense of "end," "aim," "object," "intention," or "idea," (CG 5 (4 times), 30; DSD 6; h. Ar. 23, 79; ep. Drac. 4, 8; ep. fest. 28, 43; apol. sec. 55; ES 2.7; DI 4; ep. mort. Ar. 5; SYN 46; and ep. Pall.). In the contested works skopos appears in ES 4.8 (648C); CA 3.28, 29, 35, 58.

¹¹Text and translation used throughout this section are in Fowler 1960.

(Phaedrus 268D-E). Persons who thought they understood harmony if they could strike the highest and lowest notes on the scale deserved correction, but not harsh rebuke. Someone quite ignorant of harmony could do the same. Only "the prerequisites of harmony" had been grasped and not harmony itself. Similarly, literary unity was not the product of technique alone (Phaedrus 268C-D). In both music and literature, Plato believed, harmony was not simply a characteristic intrinsic to the work itself.¹² Unity was the product of the artist's apprehension. In a specifically philosophical manner, the artist conceived of the intelligible realm and patterned his creation accordingly (Coulter 1976, 76). In the literary field, the individual parts of a work belonged to a unified whole because they all stemmed from, and pointed back to, the conscious intention of the author to depict the intelligibles.

The Neoplatonists called the author's intention the skopos of the work. The proper business of a critic, they insisted, was to discover this intention and then use it to unlock the meaning of every narrative feature of a work (Coulter 1976, 20-21). Although this idea was not original to the Neoplatonists (allegorical exegesis had been practiced for centuries on the premise that the sentient level

¹²Aristotle disagreed; see Coulter for an excellent comparison of Platonic and Aristotelian theories (1976, 73-77)

of the text referred to the intelligible realm), no one had ever previously insisted that a piece of literature was dominated by a single intention. Neither had anyone insisted that all the parts and details of a Platonic dialogue had to be understood as conforming to one intention.¹³

Iamblichus of Chalcis developed the notion of a single scope when he recognized a tension between Neoplatonic doctrines and exegetical method. Neoplatonism's fundamental philosophical imperative was to discern how the One was in the Many at every stage of reality. Iamblichus thought this imperative could function as an exegetical device as well.

To see the Neoplatonic exegetical practice against which Iamblichus was reacting one can look to Porphyry. Porphyry had interpreted Plato on a case-by-case basis without any discernible governing rule (Ueberweg 1951-53, 1:615-16). In particular, he made no attempt to account for multiple interpretations of the same data. Plato's cave, for example, symbolized for Porphyry: (1) the visible cosmos, (2) the intelligible cosmos, and (3) the invisible powers. Nowhere did he attempt to show how these various perceptions of the cave might cohere in one conceptual structure (Coulter 1976, 80, 80 n. 9).

Nor was Porphyry bothered by the lack of unity among the parts of a Platonic dialogue. He assigned purposes to

¹³See Dillon for an examination of pre-Iamblichan commentaries on Plato (1973, 55-56).

parts of a dialogue that were not in keeping with the perceived purpose of the dialogue as a whole. Proclus, presumably borrowing the term from Iamblichus, characterized Porphyry's exegesis of particular passages as "fragmented" (μερικώς; Dillon 1973, 126).

Iamblichus's exegetical technique was truer to Neoplatonic metaphysics because it sought unity in both the levels and the parts of a given work. By solving the problem of the unity of levels, Iamblichus accounted for the multiple interpretations of the same piece of literature. In addressing the issue of the unity of parts, he found a way to justify the presence of elements in a literary work that appeared to have no clear relation to the theme of the work as a whole. His method, which resulted in an exegesis that Proclus characterized as "unified" (ὅλως) or "deeply initiated" (ἐποπτικώς; Dillon 1973, 56-57, 292-93, 295), collapsed the two problems into one by insisting that any given Platonic dialogue had a single skopos to which all levels and parts conformed.

Iamblichus's interpretive views and practice must be reconstructed from later Neoplatonist commentators. Ammonius Hermias, the student of Proclus and sixth-century head of the Neoplatonic School in Alexandria, began his commentary on the Phaedrus by referring to Iamblichus's theory of one scope for each dialogue. "There should be one subject (skopos) equally relevant to all parts," Hermias maintained,

"so that as in the case of a living organism all should be related to this one principle (πάντα τῷ ἐνὶ συντάττηται; In Phaedr. 9.6ff / Dillon 1973, 92 / Dillon 1973, 93). Consequently,

one must not declare that there are many subjects (skopoi) (of the dialogue)--for everything in the dialogue must relate to some one end, that the dialogue may be so to speak one living being--nor should one fix the subject of the whole dialogue on the basis of a part, but one must identify one subject-matter (skopos) to embrace the dialogue as a whole. (In Phaedr. 11.16ff / Dillon 1973, 92 / Dillon 1973, 93)

There can be little doubt that the above passages from Hermias expound the theory of Iamblichus (Dillon 1973, 248). The nod to Phaedrus 264C justifies there being only one subject of a Platonic dialogue since a literary work is like a living being. It should also be observed that the skopos of a particular dialogue ought to "embrace the dialogue as a whole." Anything else would be a fragmentary exposition.

What happens when part of a dialogue has a theme that is not in keeping with that of the whole dialogue? For example, Proclus observed that Timaeus 32A was mathematical in character whereas the theme of the entire Timaeus was physical. After deciding that 32A dealt with mathematics, he said, "we must turn to the physical doctrine." For,

It is not appropriate that we remain on the level of mathematics, fitting our discussion to this alone, since the dialogue is concerned with physics. Nor, on the other hand, is it appropriate that we ignore such concepts and examine only what pertains to matter. We must, instead, join the two together and constantly bind the physical to the mathematical in the same way that the realities themselves are bound together, and are of the same race and sisters by virtue of their procession

from Intellect. (Diehl 1903, 2:23,9-16 / Coulter 1976, 86)

Although Iamblichus is not specifically mentioned here, we can be certain that he is present in spirit and that the notion of binding the subjects of the parts to that of the dialogue as a whole belongs to him (Praechter 1910, 131-33).

The affirmation of the principle of one skopos does not allow the reader to run roughshod over the actual features of a literary work. No amount of insistence that the skopos of the Timaeus is physics will make 32A anything else but mathematical in character. Rather than disregard 32A, or make it an essay on physics, the solution was to join together the physical and mathematical levels, to bind them "in the same way that the realities themselves are . . . bound together by virtue of their procession from Intellect."

The model Iamblichus was using for his theory of unity was the stratified view of reality that characterized later Neoplatonism in general. All levels of reality were linked analogically to each other; each lower stratum was related to its higher neighbor as a "copy" (εἰκὼν) is related to its "model" (παράδειγμα). In comparison with subsequent Neoplatonic philosophers, Iamblichus's universe was quite simple. It consisted of four layers represented respectively by Metaphysics, Mathematics, Ethics, and Physics (Coulter 1976, 85-86).

Iamblichus's system could be compared to viewing a four story house, which had ten identically aligned bays of windows on each floor, in the dead of night. Each of the windows has its own source of illumination and in the profound darkness the viewer is unaware of any unlit window.¹⁴ If a house called the Timaeus were to be looked at under these conditions eight windows would be illuminated on the first floor (which corresponds to the level of physical reality), and on the third floor (mathematics) two would be lit directly over the unlighted windows on the first. The second and fourth floors would be completely dark. At first glance no unity could be perceived on any level. The first floor is broken, the third barely visible and the second and fourth are completely invisible in the darkness. Iamblichus would maintain that only the lack of light prevents the observation of the connections, or vertical alignments, that "bind" the floors together. If all the windows were lit, the connection between the first and third floors would become readily apparent.

We should then understand what we had not understood before, that the illuminated windows on the third floor had "analogues" above and below; that is, in the Neoplatonic formulation, that they existed in the form appropriate to their own level of reality on the other floors, too. (Coulter 1976, 88)

¹⁴This analogy is preferable to Praechter's, which likened Iamblichus's metaphysical structure to an elevator that can move the exegete from level to level as the text requires (1910, 132-34). This seems a more appropriate metaphor for Porphyry's expositions than for Iamblichus.

We can now see how the unity of the levels of reality, based on a Neoplatonic conception of the universe, enabled Iamblichus to affirm one skopos while acknowledging the presence of different scopes of particular parts of a literary work. That is to say, all the scopes are analogically related to each other. They are iconic representations of the one scope, just as the various levels of reality in the Neoplatonic universe are analogically tied to each other and all find their unity in the One. The single skopos of a Platonic dialogue can be maintained even if conflicting scopes are present in the same dialogue, for all skopoi are related within the multi-layered framework.

The same can be said about specific narrative details and their relationship to the one skopos of a work. For example, the introductory section to the Timaeus mentions that one member of the discussion-group is absent because of illness (17A). Since the theme of the Timaeus is physics, it is incumbent upon the critic to discover the relevance of the member's absence for physics. According to Proclus, Porphyry understood the passage rather literally, suggesting that only physical weakness could keep a philosopher away from such a discussion (Diehl 1903, 1:18,31-19,9). Iamblichus, on the other hand, charged Porphyry with understanding ethically (that is, in relation to the human or psychological aspect of the situation) a section of a dialogue whose overall theme was physics. Concerned to maintain the one

skopos of the whole dialogue, Iamblichus asserted, "the missing participant was absent because he was not suited to a discussion of physics," and "would willingly have been present if they had been going to spend their time examining intelligibles" (Diehl 1903, 1:19,22; Coulter 1976, 91, 139).

To summarize: Iamblichus's theory of exegesis was derived from Neoplatonic metaphysics. Just as there was unity in the multiplicity of the universe, so also there was a unity of skopos among the parts, levels and narrative detail of each Platonic dialogue. The single skopos of a work was identified as the author's intention and could be discovered in any part of a dialogue.

Athanasius apparently was aware of at least the outlines of the Neoplatonic theory of one scope when he maintained, in the DI, that he was not wandering from his skopos by discussing the creation of the world. We know that by the second decade of the fourth century, Iamblichus of Chalcis had become "an enormously revered figure" in the Roman world (Dillon 1973, 13). No doubt his exegetical theory was part of the philosophical "news of the day" in Athanasius's Alexandria. It was probably in this informal source that the bishop first encountered the ideas of Iamblichus. There is no reason to assume that Athanasius acquired anything but a cursory understanding of what the Neoplatonists were doing, particularly since he shows no substantial knowledge of

Neoplatonism in any of his works.¹⁵ I suspect that because of the popularity of Iamblichus in the Egyptian capital the term skopos, together with a general notion of its meaning, passed quickly into the vernacular of the city's erudite population. Athanasius first used skopos when he composed the DI. He later found the Neoplatonic idea of a single scope amenable to his own understanding of Scripture inherited from the Alexandrian tradition and adopted it as an exegetical technique.

As we observed in chapter 3, Origen had viewed the Bible, not as a diverse collection of ancient writings, but as the product of one Author (PA 3.1.16). Looked upon as the work of a single divine mind, Scripture also tended to be seen as having a uniform meaning. For Origen this one meaning was Christ, who was the key to the Bible's literal and spiritual senses (JN 5.6).

Athanasius too saw Scripture as the product of a divine Author and as uniform in meaning. "The Lord," he affirmed, "is in the words (ὀνόματα) of the Scriptures" (EMP 33 / 45A). The different types of literature to be found in Scripture (narrative, poetry, hymns, etc.) are likened to

¹⁵In DNS 28 Athanasius reveals a knowledge about the three principles in Neoplatonic philosophy, but, according to Meijering, no detailed knowledge of Neoplatonism is presupposed here since this is the only instance in Athanasius's works where we find a direct reference to Neoplatonic thought. It is Meijering's contention that the philosophical parallels between Athanasius and the Neoplatonists stem from Middle Platonism (1968, 6).

the gifts of the Spirit. Just as there are many gifts, but one Spirit who administers their operation, likewise, there is one Spirit who has inspired the various parts of the Scripture and has instilled within them all a "common grace" (EMP 9-10).

A weakness of Origen's approach was the possibility that salvation history could be collapsed into timeless truth with no sense of past, present, and future. Athanasius corrected this flaw by insisting that the one skopos of Scripture is a "double account" of the Savior. In other words, while agreeing with Origen that the key to scriptural interpretation was Christ, Athanasius distinguished between Christ pre-existent and Christ incarnate. It was not enough to know the "person" of a particular text, one had also to know the "time."

If we were to depict Athanasius's concept of skopos along the lines of Coulter's illustration, the Alexandrian bishop's house would have two floors with some windows lit on each. The house would be the Son and the floors would be pre-existence and economy. While all Scripture spoke of Christ as its unitary skopos, it was up to the exegete to comprehend whether the "window" lit by a particular passage was on the bottom or the top floor. The mistake of the Arians was to assume that the house had only one floor; they had failed to discern the economy. This, in turn, led to a misperception of the skopos.

By Athanasius's time oikonomia had become "the regular patristic term" for the incarnation (Prestige 1952, 67); and his use of "economy" covered all the matters that specifically have to do with the incarnation. Using Patrick Henry's analysis with regard to the Christological aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy (1976, 22-33), we might say that Athanasius's emphasis on the economy in his debate with the Arians represented a shifting of the ground on which that debate was taking place. Arius and his sympathizers had wanted only to follow the rules of theology, they wanted to talk solely about God as he is in himself. The rules were simple: God is absolutely solitary. Thus, Arius punctuates his doctrinal statement to Alexander with monas. The seduction of Arianism was its offer to apply its rule of God's solitariness neatly to all levels of the Christian revelation, including the economy. Athanasius, however, recognized that the straightforward rules of theology did not operate in the realm of the oikonomia. Within that sphere,

things do not proceed in an uncluttered, straightforward way. On the contrary, argument is constantly getting tripped up in the tangled underbrush of paradox, and it might almost be a general rubric for oikonomia that any assertion which forces the mind out beyond what it would normally accept is probably true. . . . The incarnation is a direct and, even more important, persistent challenge to the understanding. . . . (No) matter what subterfuges you employ, you will still come face up against the improbable, the implausible, by all human reckoning impossible fact of the Word made flesh.
(Henry 1976, 23)

That is why oikonomia and skopos go hand in hand. Try to

untangle the paradox of the economy and the scope of Scripture will be completely missed, for the scope bears witness to the economical paradox.

The relationship between economy and skopos is illustrated in two Athanasian writings. In defense of some of the writings of Dionysius of Alexandria, writings which at first glance seemed to anticipate Arius, Athanasius claimed Dionysius wrote these suspect passages "economically" (κατ' οἰκονομίαν; DSD 6.2 / 50,6-7), just as a physician

frequently in accordance with his knowledge applies to the wounds he has to deal with, remedies which to some seem unsuitable, with a view (skopon) to nothing but health. (DSD 6.3 / 50,8-10 / 178)

Whoever would read Dionysius correctly must not concentrate only on this or that individual section. Rather, every word must be read within the context of the author's scope or intention; only then could economic statements be distinguished from absolute ones.

In the ad Palladium we find a similar argument. This time, however, it is not a literary document but the actions of Basil the Great that are being misunderstood because of a faulty perspective. Athanasius advised the monks to consider Basil's actions within the "scope of his truth" and "economy." If they did so they would see that Basil, like the Apostle Paul, at times became weak to gain the weak (PG 26:1168D).

Oikonomia presented the paradox; skopos was the means of sorting it out correctly. Dionysius might write para-

doxically and Basil might act paradoxically; but from the angle of their respective scopes the paradoxes do not degenerate into confusion and error. A proper understanding of the skopos was the only guide through the labyrinth of the oikonomia.

Two examples from CA 2 will bring our discussion into sharper focus. In order to show that "founded" (θεμελιόω) in Prov 8:23 was capable of referring to the incarnation, Athanasius drew on Prov 3:19 ("The Lord by wisdom founded the earth"). The bishop queried, "if then by Wisdom the earth is founded, how can He who founds be founded?" The conclusion is that v. 23 "is said after the manner of proverbs" (301B / 388). But why is v. 23 "said after the manner of proverbs" and not Prov 3:19? It is because v. 23 is an economic statement whereas Prov 3:19 is not.¹⁶ Neither from the perspective of the tripartite formula nor from that of the single scope of Scripture can the language of Prov 8:23 be applied straightforwardly to the Logos. It can only be applied to him indirectly, that is, in his economic manifestation. Consequently, to say that Wisdom was "founded" signifies that Wisdom became man.

A similar situation obtains in the case of Prov 8:25. In this instance, however, the results Athanasius achieves

¹⁶Here Athanasius inconsistently applies his rule about Proverbs speaking latently instead of openly (CA 2.44). For further discussion of this inconsistency see below, pp. 297-98.

are of far more critical importance to his understanding of Prov 8:22-25 than is the exegesis of v. 23 discussed above. As we shall see momentarily, Athanasius believed that v. 25 occupied the pre-existence floor of the skopos. "Beget," therefore, could be understood quite literally as a descriptor for the mode of the Son's eternal generation from the Father; it offered a clue to the inner life of God. On this basis Athanasius was able to deem the creation language of v. 22 an inappropriate statement about the eternal Wisdom. Prov 8:22 could only be applied to the Son economically, that is to say, as a statement about the incarnation.

From a hermeneutical angle, we might say that Athanasius's view of language had some affinities with what in modern times has been called a correspondence view of language (Edwards 1972, 1:223-232). In a correspondence view of language the meaning of a text is not so much dependent on the syntactical relationships of its lexical elements, as it is on the symbols which it signifies.¹⁷ Athanasius's own notion of language closely resembles a correspondence view

¹⁷Using Wittgenstein's terms. In the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus Wittgenstein said that it was possible for the same "sign" (Zeichen) to be common to two different "symbols" (Symbole), "in which case (the symbols) will signify in different ways" (3.321; Wittgenstein 1972, 29). He goes on to say that, "in everyday language it very frequently happens that the same word has different modes of signification--and so belongs to two different symbols. . . . In the proposition, 'Green is green'--where the first word is the proper name of a person and the last an adjective--these words do not merely have different meanings: they are different symbols" (3.323; Wittgenstein 1972, 29).

when, in his exegesis of Heb 3:2, he says

terms (λέξεις) do not disparage His Nature (physis); rather that Nature draws to Itself those terms and changes them. For terms are not prior to essences (ousiai), but essences are first and terms second. (CA 2.3 / 152C / 349)¹⁸

As Athanasius went on to demonstrate in his expositions of Heb 3:2 and Prov 8:22, words could have multiple meanings for both passages were capable of sustaining two different interpretations. One exposition focused on the eternal Son while the other centered on his economic enfleshment. It was the "nature" or "essence" of Christ--that his one divine nature had existed both eternally in the bosom of the Father and incarnately in man--that enabled the exegete to treat Scriptural language as signs that derived their meaning from the symbols to which they pointed (DNS 11, 21; Torrance 1970-71, 455). As we saw above, the term "founded" could have very different meanings depending on its location in the skopos or on its "time," "person," and "purpose."

We are left with the question of whether the application of skopos to Prov 8:22 represented any profound shift in Athanasius's exposition of that passage. Clearly it did not. We will discover in chapter 7 that in Exegesis 1 Athanasius used the categories "time" and "person" to determine that the referent of the verse was Christ incarnate and not

¹⁸This view of language is similar to that found in Plato, Albinus, and Numenius (Meijering 1968, 92).

Christ pre-existent. Working from the scopic perspective in ES 2 he says that any reader of Scripture "should examine and judge when it speaks of the Godhead of the Word, and when it speaks of his human life" (ES 2.8 / 620C / 164). The exegesis of Prov 8:22 in ES 2.8 is essentially the same as that found in Exegesis 1. Initially it would appear that the appeal to skopos merely replaced the exegetical rule that "person," "time" and "pragma" have to be determined in order to correctly interpret the text. But scopic exegesis did not really replace the triad. Rather, the triad was the means by which the skopos was discovered, the field glasses through which the house was observed. The only way the interpreter could tell if she or he were looking at the first or second floor was to seek the answers to the triad in the text. In using skopos as an exegetical tool, Athanasius was complementing, not jettisoning, his earlier exegetical method (Sieben 1974, 214).¹⁹

In sum, Athanasius's understanding of skopos as a tool of exegesis was an amalgam of Neoplatonic theory and Alexan-

¹⁹Contra Pollard (1958) who speaks of six distinct exegetical principles at work in Athanasius, including the triad and skopos. Also contra Torrance (1970-71) who discerns two scopes, one of Scripture and one of the faith, at work in Athanasius's exegesis. Torrance's view is not altogether incorrect for Athanasius would certainly agree that the rule of faith was also an exegetical rule. It is doubtful, however, that he would distinguish the scope of faith from the scope of Scripture. Moreover, if Kannengiesser is correct that CA 3 is not Athanasian, Torrance's case falters for his major documentary evidence for two scopes is found in CA 3.28-29.

drian exegetical method. The use of skopos as an exegetical device signalled no significant change in Athanasius's interpretive practice from that done under the rubric of the tripartite formula. In fact, the two methods complemented each other; the determination of the "time," "person," and "purpose" of a given text aided the placing of that text within the skopos of Scripture as a whole. The skopos of Scripture was Christ, either pre-existent or incarnate. This skopos was revealed in any given part of the sacred text either absolutely or economically, depending on which attribute of the Son was being featured. Athanasius's view of language meant that the "nature" to which a text pointed (Christ pre-existent or incarnate) determined the meaning of the text itself.

Skopos provided Athanasius with a technical category of interpretation that corresponded to the way in which, as an Alexandrian, he naturally thought about Scripture. Athanasius was comfortable with this term as an expression of his approach to exegesis, and that comfort translated into frequent use. So frequent in fact that skopos became a fixed part of the Alexandrian exegetical vocabulary (Kerri-gan 1952, 93-94).

Summary

In examining the rules by which Athanasius interpreted Scripture we have noticed the following:

1. The tapestry of Athanasius's interpretation of Prov

8:22-30 was the result of the weaving together of various strands of material: Alexandrian theology, the Christian exegetical tradition, the interpretation of the passage by the Nicenes. The finished product consisted of two interpretations of the passage, Exegesis 1 and 2, in CA 2. Although he interpreted Prov 8:22-30 elsewhere in his works, Athanasius never deviated from the interpretation of the passage in the CA.

2. The interpretation of Prov 8:22-30 in the CA is accomplished by means of the "tripartite formula." A text's "time," "person," and "purpose" had to be defined if it was to be understood correctly. "Time" was not a specific moment for Athanasius, it was an economic concept. Its discovery allowed the interpreter to locate the passage on the continuum of salvation history. It also enabled the interpreter to identify the "person," either Christ pre-existent or Christ incarnate. "Purpose" or pragma (or chreia or aitia) also located the text's place in relation to the economy. If the text was economic, it would contain a "cause" or "purpose" statement, imparting information about the cause for which Christ became incarnate. If no such statement appeared in the passage, the text was speaking in reference to Christ's divinity.
3. The application of the tripartite rule to all of Scripture represented a departure from traditional use. Sim-

ilar formulas are found in Tertullian and Origen, but neither of these writers elevated the formula into a general exegetical rule. "Time," "person," and "purpose" are rhetorical staseis, and certainly Athanasius's rule is rhetorical in character. But the use of the rule was not simply the adaptation of rhetorical theory to exegetical practice.

4. Later Athanasius began to speak of the skopos of Scripture. Iamblichus had insisted that each Platonic dialogue had a single scope to which all of the parts conformed. Athanasius was apparently aware of this theory and found the notion amenable to his own understanding of Scripture. Athanasius had inherited from Origen the ideas that Scripture was the product of God and that Christ was its meaning. But this perception ran the risk of collapsing salvation history into timeless truth. Athanasius insisted that Scripture's one skopos was a "double account of the savior," i.e., skopos was the means by which economic statements could be sorted out from absolute ones. It is the "nature" of Christ (pre-existent or incarnate) that gives meaning to the "terms" of Scripture. Discover the "person" of a text and it can be interpreted correctly.
5. The application of one skopos to the interpretation of Prov 8:22 did not in any way alter the exegesis of the passage found in CA 2. Skopos, in other words, did not

replace the tripartite formula. Rather, the formula was the means by which the skopos could be discerned.

We now turn our attention to the Athanasian exegetical tapestry itself, Exegesis 1 and 2 in the CA.

CHAPTER 7

ATHANASIUS'S INTERPRETATION OF PROVERBS 8:22-30

Introduction

In the previous chapter we discussed the rules by which Athanasius approached the biblical text. In this chapter we shall examine how he applied the tripartite formula to the interpretation of Prov 8:22-30. Athanasius offered two different interpretations of the passage in the CA (what we have called Exegesis 1 and Exegesis 2). In their present position in the CA, the two exegeses testify to a redaction of the material. As we remember from the introduction (pp. 9-10), Charles Kannengiesser suggests that sometime during the two-year hiatus between the first and second exiles (337-39 C.E.) Athanasius composed a short, essentially expository treatise intended for a private monastic audience. This treatise was the original version of the CA. In it Athanasius attempted to show that the key passages in the Arian Scriptural arsenal had been misinterpreted by his opponents. This CA consisted of the present sections 11-29 and 35-64 of CA 1 and also included CA 2.2-18, 44-72 (Kannengiesser 1983b, 369-74). During the second exile (between 340-42 C.E.), however, Athanasius reworked his treatise with an eye to a wider audience than

the monastic community in Egypt and published what is now known as CA 1 and 2 (Kannengiesser 1982a, 994; Kannengiesser 1983b, 401-2; Kannengiesser 1984a, 309).

The discussion of Prov 8:22ff. occupies 75 sections of CA 2 (18-82). According to Kannengiesser's redactional analysis, Athanasius nearly doubled the length of his explanation of Prov 8:22 (adding 31 sections: CA 2.18-43, 78-82) before releasing the work for publication. This new material included a long preface to the interpretation of the passage (CA 2.18-43) and Exegesis 2 (CA 2.78-82). The exposition of Prov 8:22 in CA 2.44-60 (Exegesis 1), followed by sections concerned with the meaning of "Firstborn" in Col 1:15 and its relation to Prov 8:22 (CA 2.61-64) and with the concept of divinization (CA 2.65-72), belonged to the original treatise sent to the monks in the late 330's (Kannengiesser 1983b, 373-74). The appendix on Prov 8:23 (CA 2.73-77) was added to the original treatise sometime before the final redaction (Kannengiesser 1983b).

Kannengiesser's theory about the formation of the CA is well argued, but is too new to have achieved scholarly consensus at this time.¹ Insofar as the section on Prov

¹Indeed, Craig Blaising's recent dissertation on Athanasius's theological method has argued that "the structure of the CA can be comprehended rhetorically apart from a theory of historical redaction. . . . The broad outline of its structure fits the pattern of forensic rhetoric such as is found in other Christian polemics against heresy" (1987, 9).

8:22 is concerned, I believe his discovery of redactional seams in the material is correct. I suspect, however, that the appendix on Prov 8:23 (CA 2.73-77) belonged to the original treatise and was not a redactional addition. Furthermore, I do not believe that the long preface (CA 2.18-43) and Exegesis 2 (CA 2.78-82) were added in separate redactions. Given their similarity of subject matter it seems more likely that they were included in the treatise at the same time.

Exegesis 1

Prov 8:22

"The Lord Created Me"

Prov 8:1 identified the speaker of the section extending through v. 31 as Wisdom. Following the lead of the overwhelming majority of exegetes, and in particular those of the Alexandrian tradition, Athanasius identified Wisdom in Proverbs 8 with the Son. But, as we have seen, Athanasius's exegetical method would not allow him merely to determine that the "person" of v. 22 was the Son. Athanasius's method demanded that once the Son was identified as the "person" of the text, it was then up to the exegete to ascertain whether it was the Son pre-existent or the Son incarnate who was speaking. For Prov 8:22, Athanasius applied Origen's rule (assertions have to be credible in order to be taken literally) to decide whether Wisdom was speaking as the pre-existent Lord or as the incarnate savior. "Create" in v. 22

could not be applied to the pre-existent Son for the divine nature cannot be called a creature (CA 2.44-45; DNS 14; AEL 17). Moreover, it was not credible that the Son as creator could be included among the creatures. "Create" could only refer to the incarnate Son.

Athanasius invoked the tripartite formula to strengthen his contention that the "person" of the proverb is the Son incarnate. The "time" of v. 22 is clearly the incarnation. In Athanasius's view, Prov 8:22, Prov 9:1 ("Wisdom has built her house"), and John 1:14 ("The Word became flesh") are parallel passages; the "building" of Wisdom's house and the "creation" of Wisdom in the beginning of the ways are analogous to the Johannine assertion that the Word became flesh. Solomon, therefore, was not referring to the divine origin of the Word when he put "created me" on the lips of Wisdom; he was speaking prophetically of a creature's origin--the creation of the man Jesus (CA 2.44). From the angle of the paradox of the incarnation it is entirely fitting and proper to say the Son was "created" (DNS 14; DSD 11; AEL 17).²

Calling the Father "Lord" was also appropriate in an economic context. The Father was the "Lord" of the Son, Athanasius maintained, not because the Son was a servant, but because he took a servant's form (CA 2.50). Only in the

²According to Athanasius, the preferred term for the Son in his pre-existent state is "offspring" (gennēma), not "creature" (see below, pp. 268-69).

antilogy of incarnation could the Son--the proper offspring of the Father, and in no way his inferior--call the Father "Lord." "When He put on the creature," Athanasius affirmed, "then it was He called the Father Lord" (CA 2.50 / 253B / 375).

"Putting on the creature," however, caused no change in the Son's ontological status. The Son was "created in the beginning of ways" because the Father prepared a body for him to be the instrument of humanity's salvation (CA 2.47). Though Scripture implies otherwise, it was not the "whole (ὅλον) Word" (248A) that became flesh or curse or sin for us. Thus the "creation" of Wisdom in Prov 8:22 was an economic creation. The Word's body was "created" "for us" as the means of our renewal and deification (CA 2.47; Weber 1965, 144). Athanasius observed that creatures call God their Father by the grace of adoption without any change in their ontological status. So too does the Son, while in the flesh, call God his Lord without signifying any change in his ousia. The Son was not discussing ontology when he said it was the "Lord" who "created" him. Rather, he was alluding to the initiation of the saving economy by his incarnation (CA 2.51).

"A Beginning of His Ways"

Athanasius maintained that "beginnings" shared a common nature with the things of which they were beginnings. To call the Word a "beginning of ways," therefore, meant he

"must be such as the ways are, and the ways must be such as the Word" (CA 2.48 / 249A / 374). If, as the Arians contended, the Word was a creature and Prov 8:22 spoke of his origin from the Father, then the phrase "beginning of ways" would refer to the exalted, yet creaturely, status of the Son. As Asterius had put it, the Son was the first creature made by God and through him the rest of creation had come to be.

But if the Son were a creature, Athanasius countered, how could he be created "alone and first of all, so as to be the beginning of all" (CA 2.48 / 249B)? The Genesis creation account testified, in Athanasius's view, not to a progressive creation where individual species were brought into existence sequentially, but to a spontaneous production of all species together (CA 2.48). If it were objected that Adam was first formed alone and prior to all humanity, Athanasius maintained that although Adam was singly formed first, he carried within him the rest of the human race (CA 2.48). In a sense, then, all humanity was created at once. Because the Son existed prior to Adam (and, by extension, prior to all humanity), it is impossible to say that "beginning" in v. 22 refers to a creation of the Son as the initiation of the making of all other creatures (CA 2.49).

Heb 10:20 ("by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh") shows how the Son can be a beginning of ways. The "first

way" into Paradise had been closed by Adam's transgression. Instead of being destined for eternal bliss, humanity was now ordained to suffer death and corruption. The assumption of "created flesh at the Father's will," enabled the Son to conquer death and decay, and to become the means of a new creation (2 Cor 5:17; CA 2.65 / 285A / 384). Christ was the "beginning of ways" because he was the initiator of the new way of salvation:

that man might walk no longer according to the first creation, but there being as it were a beginning of a new creation, and with the Christ "a beginning of its ways," we might follow Him henceforth who says to us, "I am the Way." (CA 2.65 / 285B / 384)³

"For His Works"

Athanasius's interpretation of "for his works" targeted Asterius the Sophist. Asterius understood the phrase to imply "for the works' sake." Christ had been "created" so that the divine will to create the world could be accomplished. The Son was the means whereby creation, which could not tolerate direct contact with God in the creative act, could be brought into being. Athanasius agreed that "for the works" meant "for the works' sake," but the "time" and pragma of the passage ruled out Asterius's reading. The phrase was not speaking of the generation of the cosmos, but

³Notice how Athanasius avoids the use of "his" when citing this part of Prov 8:22. He does quote the text correctly on occasion, but avoids "his" when making a doctrinal point. The reason for this omission is unclear.

of human redemption in the incarnation.

From Athanasius's perspective, Asterius's case was weak because it violated the ontological *raison d'être* of creation. Creatures were made by God primarily so that they might be and only secondarily so that they might do; Adam was first ordered to exist and then to work (CA 2.51). But for God's most perfect of creatures Asterius had reversed this order. The Sophist's reading of "for the works" meant that the Son was made primarily to do, that is, to function as the instrument of creation, and only secondarily to be.

Athanasius believed the phrase "for the works" implied that the works, for whose sake the Son had been "created," already existed. Isa 49:5⁴ said the servant of the Lord was "formed," not to exist, but to act. He was to gather together the tribes of Israel, tribes that were already in existence at the time of the servant's formation. Like the servant in Isa 49:5, Wisdom in Prov 8:22 was not created into existence; Wisdom was "created" in order to redeem fallen humanity. Similarly, just as the tribes of Israel already existed when the servant was formed, so also did the works already exist when the Son was "created" (CA 2.52). Prov 8:22, then, was not a report of the bringing into existence of God's most perfect creature, but a prophecy of the

⁴"And now the Lord says, who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, . . ."

Son's future manifestation as a man in the economy of salvation.

The Son's pre-cosmic existence, according to Athanasius, was defined in John 1:1, not Prov 8:22.

The Word is not created into existence, but, "In the beginning was the Word," and He is afterwards sent "for the works" and the Economy towards them. (CA 2.51 / 256B / 376)

Before the works existed, he says, "the Son was ever." The Son did not need to be created to exist. When creation took place, and the consequences of the Fall required that God act to save his creatures, "then it was that the Word took upon Himself this condescension and assimilation to the works" (CA 2.51 / 256B / 376). Prov 8:22 could be correlated with the first chapter of John, but not with v. 1. The true parallel was v. 14. It was when the Word became flesh in the economy that he was "created."

Athanasius likens the economy to the rescue of some careless servants who had been captured by their enemy. When the servants' lord sent his own son to free them, it was necessary for the son to travel incognito as a servant to the place of their captivity. Otherwise the enemy would see the son coming and flee, leaving the place of the captives' incarceration unknown. If the son were asked why he travelled in disguise, he might reply he had been so "formed and prepared" by his father to rescue the servants. It would be impossible to infer from this statement that the Son was a servant; he was simply on a mission for his fa-

ther.

In the same way the Lord also, having put over Him our flesh, and "being found in fashion as a man," if He were questioned by those who saw Him thus and marvelled, would say, "The Lord created Me the beginning of His ways for His works," and "He formed Me to gather together Israel." (CA 2.52 / 257B / 376).

Pss 8:6 and 2:6, likewise, support Athanasius's contention that Prov 8:22 was not speaking about the origin of the Son.⁵ These verses do not assign a beginning either to the Son's existence or to his reign when they say he was "set" by God. Rather they indicate that Christ's "kingdom should shine in a human way in Sion" through the redemption of humanity from sin (CA 2.52 / 257C / 377). "Created" in Prov 8:22, "formed" in Isa 49:5, and "set" in the two passages from the Psalms all announce "His beneficent renovation which came to pass for us" (CA 2.53 / 257C, 260A / 377).

Prov 8:23

The Arians had argued that "before the age he founded me" (LXX) in Prov 8:23 signified the pre-cosmic creation of the Son by God.⁶ In effect they were saying vv. 22 and 23

⁵The LXX translation of Ps 8:6 (8:7 LXX) uses the verb, καθίστημι, which is also found in Ps 2:6. Ps 8:6 reads: "You have set him over the works of your hands." Ps 2:6 uses the aorist passive: "I have been set by him as king on Zion, his holy hill" (CA 2.52 / 257C).

⁶Athanasius's refutation of the Arian interpretation of v. 23 currently occupies a small, separate section (CA 2.72-77) toward the end of the exposition of Prov 8:22. Kannengiesser has assigned this section to the redaction of the original treatise sent to the monks during the first

were parallel expressions of the same event (CA 2.72).

As we saw above (p. 247), the refutation of the Arian reading of v. 23 depended on Prov 3:19 ("The Lord by wisdom founded the earth"). If the earth was founded by wisdom, Athanasius wondered, how could the founder also be said to have himself been founded? Again the Arian reading of the text is incredible; v. 23 must be understood economically. "Wisdom Itself is founded for us," Athanasius reasoned, "that It may become beginning and foundation of our new creation and renewal" (CA 2.73 / 301B / 388).

As was the case with Prov 8:22, Athanasius maintained that v. 23 could be understood properly solely in the context of the economy. Combining Paul's assertion that "no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3:11), with his warning that every man should "take care how he builds upon it" (1 Cor 3:10), Athanasius insisted that the foundation and what was built upon it had to share a likeness of substance for the

exile (1983b), but this arrangement of the material seems unlikely. First of all, the interpretation of Prov 8:23 is equivalent to that of v. 22 in CA 2.44-61. In other words, CA 2.73 offers nothing original to or discontinuous with Exegesis 1; there is nothing to distinguish it as a later addition. In contrast, all the other sections of CA 1 and 2 that Kannengiesser identifies as belonging to the redaction add something new to Athanasius's case and are easily recognized. Second, CA 2.77 recapitulates the argument of CA 2.44-61. Section 77 concludes with a reminder to the reader that Proverbs must have a "latent" and not a literal meaning, a rule that was cited at the beginning of the exegesis of v. 22 in CA 2.44. For these reasons, then, it is more plausible to include CA 2.73-77 with the original treatise.

edifice to have structural integrity. It was impossible, therefore, that the Word qua Word could be a foundation for the creatures, for there was none like him in existence. Only when he assumed flesh did he acquire the similarity with other beings necessary to become their foundation (CA 2.74).

Pushing the metaphor further, Athanasius observed that the foundation stone of a building pre-exists the building. It is quarried from a mountain, transported to the construction site, and set down into the earth as a foundation. Such a stone could be said to have been "founded" when brought forth from the mountain. But "founded," then, would not mean the stone began to exist, only that it began to perform a certain function. Analogously, "the Lord also did not when founded take a beginning of existence." He was "founded" when he assumed a body. So that

we, as incorporated and compacted and bound together in Him through the likeness of the flesh, may attain unto a perfect man, and abide immortal and incorruptible. (CA 2.74 / 305A / 389)

Athanasius noted that a series of "before" (pro) initiated five assertions, running from v. 23 through v. 25. He believed this use of "before" accorded "very well" with his understanding of "founded" and "created" as allusions to the economy of salvation. Our redemption in Christ was not the result of an ad hoc decision by God subsequent to the Fall. God knew our destiny and perceived that even though we were made to be good we would sin and fall from grace.

Since God is "loving and kind," the Word, by whom we were created, was "prepared beforehand" to execute the divine economy of salvation (CA 2.75 / 305B-C / 389).⁷

God elected us to salvation in the Son before the world's foundation. The Son was "founded" before the world in that he assumed the "economy which was for our sake."

The Lord Himself was founded "before the world," inasmuch as He had a purpose, for our sakes, to take on Him through the flesh all that inheritance of judgment which lay against us, and we henceforth were made sons in Him. (CA 2.76 / 308B / 389)

Before the creation of the universe there was stored up in Christ "the grace which has reached us" (CA 2.76 / 308C / 389). By grace we can transcend the boundaries of time, redeemed from the judgment of death imposed on us as a consequence of the Fall.

Though the earth and the mountains and the shapes of visible nature pass away in the fullness of the present age, we on the contrary may not grow old after their pattern, but may be able to live after them, having the spiritual life and blessing which before these things

⁷So convinced was Athanasius that vv. 23-24 spoke of the economy, he claimed the apostle was interpreting these verses when he wrote 2 Tim 1:8-10 ("but share in suffering for the gospel in the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago, and now has manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel") and Eph 1:3-5 ("Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will") (CA 2.75).

have been prepared for us in the Word Himself according to election. (CA 2.76 / 309A / 390)

Christ's "founding" before the ages is the work of a wise architect who, when building a house, considers its eventual repair. God, when preparing to create the world, considered its eventual need of repair and "founded in Christ . . . the repair of our salvation" (CA 2.77 / 309C / 390).

Here we find the main feature of Athanasius's soteriology as outlined in chapter 2. Creation can only be restored or renewed by its creator. In the context of Prov 8:23 Athanasius has expanded this point by showing that God anticipated the Fall prior to creation and provided the means of overcoming its effects (CA 2.75; Weber 1965, 149-50; Roldanus 1977, 360). Election in Christ means that sin, death, and decay are not permanent: "we shall be capable of a life not temporary," Athanasius maintained, "but ever afterwards abide and live in Christ" because he predestined us in himself to salvation (CA 2.76 / 309A / 390).

Prov 8:25

Athanasius's understanding of "created" and "founded" as they were applied to the Son by Prov 8:22-23 was conditioned, in part, by his interpretation of v.25. He had insisted in his exegesis of v. 22 that although the Son was said to be "created," he was not a creature ontologically, but an "offspring" (gennēma; CA 2.47 / 248B). "Offspring,"

which came from v. 25, was the preferred term for the Son's divine status for it expressed "what is by nature proper to the Son, that He is the Only-begotten Wisdom and Framer of the creatures" (CA 2.47 / 248B / 374). "Created" was not a statement about the Son's essence, but about his economic manifestation. It was the antonym of v. 25's "beget" (CA 2.47-48).

When Dionysius of Rome attacked those who said the Son had been "made," he used Deut 32:6 ("Is not he your father who bought you; did he not make you and create you?" (LXX)) as a proof that "created" was distinguished from "made." This technique effectively barred his opponents from appealing to Prov 8:22 as proof for their contention that the Son had been made (DNS 26). Perhaps Arius or one of his followers was aware of Dionysius's interpretation of Deut 32:6 for whenever the case for the creature-Son was made on the basis of Prov 8:22, it included an exposition of the Deuteronomy passage. The Arians got around Dionysius's use of Deut 32:6 by combining it with Deut 32:18 ("You deserted God who begot you, and forgot God who nourished you" (LXX)). In so doing, they also appeared to prove precisely what Athanasius said they could not prove in Scripture, namely that there was Scriptural warrant for saying creatures and offspring have the same nature.

Athanasius rebutted the Arian argument by carefully noting the order of the verbs in Deut 32:6 and 18: "beget"

comes last, after "create" and "make." The order, he believed, was intentional. Had "beget" been first, then there would have been reason to suppose that "beget," "create" and "make" were indistinguishable in meaning. In their present order, however, it was clear (to Athanasius, at least) that "make" accurately signified what belonged to humans by nature, "to be works and things made." "Beget," on the other hand, denoted "God's lovingkindness exercised towards men after He had created them" (CA 2.58 / 272A / 380).

"Beget," in Athanasius's view, could only properly be applied to a child, and not to a creature. When "beget" was applied to creatures, it was not applied naturally. Creatures were not God's natural children; they become God's children only by the grace of adoption. Without the adoption by grace, creatures could not properly be called God's children.

That creaturely sonship is adoptive and not natural, is evidenced by Athanasius from two passages of Scripture. In both passages the order of the verbs is crucial for the meaning of the text. In John 1:12-13,⁸ "become" precedes "begotten." Thus the sonship signified is not natural, but adoptive:

first he says "become," because they are not called sons

⁸John 1:12-13: "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born (ἐγεννήθησαν), not of blood nor of the will of flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

by nature but by adoption; then he says "were begotten," because they too had received at any rate the name of son. (CA 2.59 / 272C-273A / 380)

In Mal 2:10⁹ "created" is mentioned before "father." Athanasius concludes from this order that "from the beginning we were creatures by nature," but later were made God's children. In short, God the Creator became our father (CA 2.59 / 273A-B / 380).

For Athanasius adoption as God's children is predicated on the indwelling of the Son. "God is not our Father by nature, but of that Word in us, in whom and because of whom we 'cry, Abba, Father'" (CA 2.59 / 273A-B / 380). We noticed in chapter 2 how a soteriology of exchange enabled divine attributes to be joined with human nature and deify it. Here we see that unity with the Son imparts sonship to the degree that the Father looks upon us as he does upon Christ, that is, as his natural offspring. There is nothing inherent in creatures that makes them God's children. It is only when the created nature is infilled with the divine in the salvific exchange that creatures become God's children.

Athanasius's argument has come full circle. He began by asserting the unlikeness of the Son to the creatures on the basis of the word order of Deut 32:6, 18. He then moved to a discussion of the adoption of creatures as true offspring on the basis of the word order of John 1:12-13 and

⁹Mal 2:10 (LXX): "Did not one God create you? Is he not the one father of you all?"

Mal 2:10. And finally he concluded that adoption is only possible if the Son is unlike the creatures and is proper to the essence of the Father.

Athanasius next applied these insights to the discussion of Prov 8:22 and 25. Here also is found the movement from "create" to "beget" that marked John 1:14, Mal 2:10 and the two verses from Deut 32. "The Lord created me" in v. 22 preceded "before all the hills he begets me" in v. 25. Athanasius maintained that unless the Word was not a creature, v. 25 would be redundant. But the fact that the biblical author included v. 25 must mean that he did not intend that the Son was a creature by nature (CA 2.60).

When we recall Athanasius's exegesis of the texts from Deuteronomy, John, and Malachi, however, his argument here seems to make a better case for Arianism than for orthodoxy. In all of those texts created beings have first been made and then adopted; "create" has a literal meaning and "beget" a metaphorical one. Could this not also be the way Prov 8:22, 25 ought to be read? God first created the Son (v. 22), and then adopted him (v. 25). Why should Prov 8:22-25 be interpreted in such a way that "create" is metaphorical and "beget" literal?

The answer lies in v. 25. The postpositive conjunction, $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$, means the "beget" in v. 25 actually precedes the "create" in v. 22 in both point of time and logical order. Consequently, the succession literal-metaphorical is pre-

served because logically v. 25 belongs before v. 22. The Son is eternally "begotten" by the Father and is proper to the Father's substance. Only later, in the economy, was the Son "created" as a man.

That v. 25, and not v. 22, logically initiated the passage was also apparent in the lack of a "cause" (aitia) statement in v. 25. As we saw in chapter 6, aitia statements were indicators of an economic meaning. When such statements were missing, the "person" of the passage was Christ pre-existent and the language of the passage was straightforward and not metaphorical (CA 2.53 / 260B / 377). Athanasius offered several Johannine passages, among them John 1:1 and 10:30, as examples of the latter absolute type of passage (CA 2.54). The former type, those containing a "cause" statement, included John 1:14 and Phil 2:8.

Since Prov 8:25 contained no qualifying aitia phrase, Athanasius understood it in an absolute sense. Its language was not metaphorical, and it expressed an essential truth about the Son. Like John 1:1, Prov 8:25 proclaimed the Son's existence; it gave no reason for that existence. Its language was not economic, and therefore could be understood fairly straightforwardly. Prov 8:22, on the other hand, contained a "cause" statement and thus required greater care in discerning its meaning. Like John 1:14, it included a soteriological aitia for the creation or enfleshment of the Word (CA 2.60). Being begotten by the Father, the Son is a

different nature than the creatures, and this fact is evident in the language of Prov 8:22, 25 itself.

Therefore neither do the words which follow "created," also follow "begat me;" but in the case of "created" is added "beginning of ways," but of "begat me," He says not, "He begat me as a beginning," but "before all He begat me." But He who is before all is not a beginning of all, but is other than all; but if other than all (in which "all" the beginning of all is included), it follows that He is other than the creatures; and it becomes a clear point, that the Word, being other than all things and before all, afterwards is created "a beginning of the ways for works," because He became man. (CA 2.60 / 276B-C / 381)

Athanasius's first exegesis of Prov 8:22ff relates vv. 22 and 23 to the incarnation and vv. 25-30 to the pre-cosmic generation of the Son from the Father. Prov 8:22 could only refer to the incarnate Son because the application of the tripartite formula determined that the "time" of the passage was the era when the Word was made flesh. The "time" of a passage was fixed as the period of the incarnation if the passage also included a "cause" statement. "For the works" in v. 22 constituted such a "cause" statement. It gave the reason for the Word's creation. Conversely, Prov 8:25 did not contain a "cause." It was a direct and absolute statement about the generation of the Word within God's being. It too had a parallel in John 1, but unlike v. 22 (which was similar to John 1:14), v. 25 was paralleled in John 1:1. The "religious and orthodox sense" of Prov 8:22ff according to Exegesis 1 was that the Son was not a creature by nature, but assumed human flesh in order to save us. It was in this economic context that the Son was said to have been created.

Exegesis 2

Athanasius's second exegesis of Prov 8:22 (CA 2.78-82) was added to CA 2 at the same time as the long preface (CA 2.18-43). These two sections complement each other, and in the present shape of the second oration as a whole, they envelop Exegesis 1. As the entire section on the interpretation of Prov 8:22ff now stands, CA 2.18-43 introduces both expositions of the passage (Exegeses 1 and 2), and CA 2.73-82 (Exegesis 2) complements Exegesis 1. In order to understand Exegesis 2 it is necessary first of all to examine the long preface.

The Long Preface

The preface essentially is a refutation of Asterius the Sophist. Four of the seven extracts from the writings of Asterius in CA 1 and 2 appear in the preface.¹⁰ These are grouped into three theological assertions that form the outline of the preface. The first claim is that the Word was created before all else as a medium of God's subsequent creative activity (CA 2.24-28). Second is the contention that the Son learned to create (CA 2.28-36), and third is that there is a distinction between the Word-Son and the

¹⁰Two extracts are in CA 1.30, 32. The other one is in CA 1.5. Kopecek (1982) and Kannengiesser (1982c, 1983b) disagree about whether CA 1.5 contains one or two extracts, but Kopecek's argument for only one quotation of Asterius in CA 1.5 is the more convincing.

Father's proper Word (CA 2.37-43).

**Assertion 1: The Word is a
Created Creator**

According to Athanasius, Asterius maintained that

God willing to create originate nature, when He saw that it could not endure the untempered hand of the Father, and to be created by Him, makes and creates first and alone one only, and calls Him Son and Word, that, through Him as a medium, all things might thereupon be brought to be. (CA 2.24 / 200A / 361)¹¹

Athanasius replied that if God was capable of exercising his providence over the minutest details of his creation (Matt 6:25-30), it was certainly not improper for God to have made everything in the beginning (CA 2.25).

There was no logical basis for Asterius's allegation. Granted for the moment that the Son was, indeed, a creature, why was he alone of all creatures able to withstand unmediated creation by the Almighty? Would not the premise that created nature was unable to be created directly by God necessitate an infinite chain of mediators if God had to use a creature to create (CA 2.26)?

Asterius had apparently argued that it was possible for "like to be brought into being by like." Thus a creature Christ could create the rest of the creatures. He appealed to the fact that Moses was a man and yet was used by God to lead Israel out of Egypt and give it the divine

¹¹Athanasius also insists that Asterius was joined in this assertion by Arius and Eusebius of Caesarea.

law (CA 2.27 / 204A / 362). Athanasius observed, however, that Moses had come to minister, and not to create. Ministering was considerably different from creating. Ministry properly belonged to servants, whereas creation was the province of God alone (CA 2.27). Moreover, because there were many ministries, there also were many ministers. One Son could not have fulfilled all the ministerial needs of creation; there would have been need for many "Sons." However,

while the creatures are many, the Word is one, any one will collect (συνοπάω) from this, that the Son differs from all, and is not on a level with the creatures, but proper to the Father. Hence there are not many Words, but one only Word of the one Father, and one Image of the one God. (CA 2.27 / 204C / 363)

The Arian counter to Athanasius was that there is only one sun, which is a creation of God, and yet the sun ministers alone. Athanasius replied that while every created thing has its own unique essence (ousia), no created thing is sufficient of itself to minister alone. Regarding the sun, Athanasius pointed out that Gen 1:14-18 spoke of several lights put in the heavens by God to distinguish day, night, and the seasons of the year. Though the sun, moon, and stars were each a different substance, "the service of all is one and common," each one providing for what the other lacks, so that "the office of lighting is performed by all" (CA 2.28 / 2005B / 363). From Athanasius's perspective, to call the Word a ministering creature, meant he was unable to accomplish the ministry appointed to him without

the aid of other creatures (CA 2.38).

**Assertion 2: The Son Learned
How to Create**

The Son, Asterius maintained, had to learn how to be a creator. Athanasius's rejoinder consisted of four points. First, the Son could not be called Wisdom if he learned how to do something. Asterius's Son was "some empty thing," retaining the title Wisdom only so long as he could recall what he had learned (CA 2.28 / 208A / 363). Second, if the power to create was teachable, then God was both jealous and weak. God was jealous because he taught the creative art to just one creature rather than to all. He was weak because he was unable to create by himself, and required a laborer to do the task (CA 2.29). Third, if everything existed by God's design and will, and nothing could resist that will (Ps 115:3; Rom 9:19), then the making of the Son was a superfluous act. God's will alone should have been sufficient to bring everything into existence (CA 2.29). Finally, Asterius's Son, from Athanasius's perspective, owed his *raison d'être* to God's desire to create. If the Son was brought into existence for the sake of creating, then the proper order of subordination is reversed. The Son is subservient to the creatures (he exists only to get them into existence), rather than the creatures to the Son. On the Arian view, Athanasius explained,

we are made God's image and to His glory, but the Son is our image, and exists for our glory. And we were

brought into being that we might be; but God's word was made, . . . not that He might be; but as an instrument for our need, so that not we from Him, but He is constituted from our need. (CA 2.30 / 209A-B / 364)

**Assertion 3: The Word is Distinct
from the Father's Proper Word**

Asterius's third allegation was that there was a distinction between the Word and the Father's proper Word (CA 2.37-43). The Sophist based this idea, for the most part, on 1 Cor 1:24. Just as Origen had argued that John 1:1 taught subordinationism because it used theos without the definite article, so Asterius maintained that the use of dynamis and sophia without the definite article in 1 Cor 1:24 meant Christ was God's "power" and "wisdom" only in the sense that he participated in the essential Wisdom and Power of God. God's essential wisdom and power remained ingenerate in the divine being; the Word was not its substantive expression (CA 2.37). God, therefore, could and did have many "wisdoms," "powers," and "words," none of which were his essential Wisdom, Power, and Word. Among God's many "powers," for example, was the lowly locust, which had been divinely recognized as a "great power" of God (CA 2.37).

Athanasius admitted that Scripture did in fact speak of many words being uttered by God, but he argued that these "words" should not be confused with the eternal Word, God's Son. The many words are merely divine precepts and commands, "which God has spoken to the saints through His proper and only true Word" (CA 2.39 / 229A / 369).

The preface concludes with a catechetical section (CA 2.41-43). In it Athanasius affirms that the Word is one and proper to the Father. The Son's essential unity with the Father is the reason why he is included in the baptismal formula. If the Son were a creature his name would not belong in the ritual, and the rite would have no efficacy (CA 2.41), just as Arian baptisms are powerless to transform the initiate (CA 2.42).

It is quite obvious that this anti-Asterian essay, which now functions as the preface to the exegesis of Prov 8:22, has little in common with Exegesis 1, the section that immediately follows it. As we have seen, Exegesis 1 is primarily soteriological in character. Prov 8:22, when read in conformity with the tripartite formula, clearly is a prophecy of the economic manifestation of the Word in the incarnation. The preface, on the other hand, shows no interest in the incarnation. Its concern is with the pre-existent Son and his relation to creation. The preface lays little foundation for Exegesis 1.¹² Is it possible, then,

¹²Only in the last section, the one dealing with the assertion that the Word is distinct from the Father's proper Word, do we find a theme that is important to the interpretation of Prov 8:22 in Exegesis 1. There Athanasius proves that the Son is proper to the Father. His interpretation of "create" in v. 22, as we have seen, depended in part on the assumption that it was inconceivable that "create" could describe the mode of the Son's divine origin. But he had made his point about the Father-Son relationship in several places in the CA (e.g., 1.38-41, 46, 49; 2.2, 13-14); his working hypothesis about the inappropriateness of applying "create" to the Son did not have to depend on the brief proof of the Son's divinity contained in the preface.

that the introduction amounts to a kind of revision whose intention is to correct an overemphasis on soteriology in Athanasius's interpretation of Prov 8:22ff?

As we saw in chapter 4, Arius's theology began with the absolute oneness and freedom of God. God willed everything else, including the Son, into existence. Nothing was related to God by nature, only by will. Thus, the Son was God's greatest creature, begotten, not from his essence, but by his will, and Prov 8:22-25 was a compelling text for this theology. Athanasius's Exegesis 1, on the other hand, emphasized soteriology. Reading Prov 8:22-23 as a prophecy of the incarnation gave Athanasius the opportunity to show that a theology which conceived of the Son as a creature could not support a viable doctrine of salvation. This approach, however, did not engage the enemy at his point of strength.¹³ To provide a more balanced response to his opponents, Athanasius added sections to his original CA that addressed Arian theology directly rather than indirectly.

At the same time that he added the preface, Athanasius also included another interpretation of Prov 8:22 at the end

¹³Given Kannengiesser's theory that there was an original CA intended for private circulation among the monks, which was later redacted into the present CA 1 and 2, it is perhaps possible that the monks or Serapion recognized this weakness in Athanasius's attack and suggested he also combat Arian theology. It is possible too that Athanasius thought CG-DI fulfilled the need for a theological (as well as a soteriological) response to Arianism. If so, however, he apparently became convinced that a more direct assault, one specifically refuting Arian assertions, was necessary.

of CA 2 (78-82) that was more in keeping with the tenor of the preface.

Prov 8:22

Exegesis 2, which begins abruptly in CA 2.78, shares a taste for theology and cosmology with the preface. So close in character are these two sections, in fact, that they could quite easily have been part of a single essay now broken in two and bracketing the economic exegesis of the Prov 8:22-30.¹⁴

Athanasius had offered two interpretations of the same passage on an earlier occasion in the CA. Heb 3:2 ("faithful to him that made him"), he urged, was capable of sustaining two anti-Arian interpretations. In his first reading, Athanasius underscored the fact that "made" was sometimes used by Scripture to refer to genuine and natural children. It could, therefore, have been another way of saying that the Father-Son relationship was natural and not adoptive (CA 2.5-6).

At the same time, Athanasius insisted that "faithful" could not mean that the Son was rewarded by the Father for faithful obedience. God, he observed, was also characterized by Scripture as being "faithful." In God's case, "faithful" would not mean "believing," but "trustworthy."

¹⁴Kannengiesser, on the other hand, describes Exegesis 2 as "sort of a conclusion to the second oration as it exists today" (1982a, 985)

The same was true for the Son.

Accordingly the words, "Who is faithful to Him that made Him," implies no parallel with others, nor means that by having faith He became well-pleasing; but that, being Son of the True God, He too is faithful, and ought to be believed in all He says and does, Himself remaining unalterable and not changed in His human Economy and fleshly presence. (CA 2.6 / 160B / 351)

Reading the verse from a different angle, the context clearly showed that the "time" and the pragma of the passage pointed to the saving economy. Since Christ is described as the "apostle and high priest of our confession" in Heb 3:1, it was only when the Word became flesh and offered himself in behalf of all that he also become apostle and high priest (CA 2.7). Consequently, "made" in v. 2 indicated the origin of the flesh that was created in the virgin, and not the origin of the divine essence (CA 2.8). Neither from the "time" of the generation of the Son (the first interpretation), nor from that of his economic assumption of human nature (the second), then, could Heb 3:2 be included in the Arian list of biblical proof-texts.

Prov 8:22 was also capable of being understood from the standpoint of either the "time" of the pre-cosmic era or of the economy, and from the "person" of either Christ pre-existent or Christ incarnate. Exegesis 1, as we have seen, viewed things from the angle of the economy. The "person" in v. 22 was Christ incarnate. Prov 8:22 was a prophecy of the coming enfleshment of the Word "for us" and for our salvation. Exegesis 2, however, approached the text from

the perspective of the creation of the creatures. Here the "person" in v. 22 was Christ pre-existent.

Exegesis 2 begins with a discussion of the making of humankind in the image of God. So that creatures might not only exist, but also be good, Wisdom "condescended" to them and instilled (ἐντίθημι) an "impress and semblance of Its image on all . . . that what was made might be manifestly wise works and worthy of God" (CA 2.78 / 312B / 390). Moreover, the image of Wisdom in us is also the means whereby we are able to know the Father (CA 2.78; cp. DI 14, 15, 20, 53).

From this angle, Wisdom, contemplating the creation of her image in all creation, says that she was herself "created" in Prov 8:22. It is not that Wisdom was in fact "created"; but since her image was "created" in humans upon their creation, she can metaphorically speak of herself as "created" (CA 2.78). The parallel texts are Matt 10:40 ("He who receives you receives me. . . .") and Acts 9:4 ("Saul, why do you persecute me?"; CA 2.78, 80). The reception or persecution of a disciple is the same as receiving or persecuting the Lord himself because the Lord's impress is on the disciple. Likewise, the creation of beings stamped with the impress of Wisdom is the creation of Wisdom herself. Prov 8:22 is a testimony to the intimate interconnection of image and archetype. "The Lord created me for the works," says Wisdom, "for my impress is in them; and I have thus conde-

scended for the framing of all things" (CA 2.79 / 316B / 391).

That the archetype can speak of itself in language appropriate to the image in no way means the image and archetype are consubstantial. The placing of the image in the creatures is likened by Athanasius to a prince who built a city for his father the king and inscribed his own name on every building. The prince would do so for two reasons: (1) to give security to the city by claiming it as a province of the king, and (2) to remind the inhabitants of its founder. The fact that the prince has imprinted his name on every edifice in the city in no way means that he himself is a building. Neither is the Word a creature because his image is instilled in all creatures (CA 2.79).

Instilling Wisdom's image in humanity is called a "beginning of ways" because the image of Wisdom functions as a rudimentary knowledge of God. The quest for an understanding of heavenly things is begun with the contemplation of the image that is within. The inward look inspires a fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom. The neophyte then advances to a perception of the Framing Wisdom ($\delta\eta\mu\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\upsilon\rho\gamma\acute{o}\nu\ \Sigma\omicron\phi\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu$), which is evident in all creation. At this stage he or she will also perceive the Father because of the consubstantial relationship between Father and Son (CA 2.80).

Athanasius had described the creation of the image in humanity and its function in a similar manner in DI 11. God knew that human beings could not, without assistance, attain knowledge of his own transcendent and incorporeal reality. Consequently, God imparted his own image to them.

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. (DI 11 / 160,17-19 / 161)

In DI Athanasius showed that once humans fell, they became enmeshed in their sinfulness and it was impossible for them to regain their knowledge of God. The theme of the restoration of this knowledge was then developed by Athanasius into the "secondary cause" of the incarnation. In CA 2.81 elements of this same soteriological theme are present. Missing, however, is DI's concept of the Fall and the inability of unaided human reason to raise itself out of the quagmire of transgression. Athanasius simply says that God no longer wills that knowledge about himself should come through the image of Wisdom instilled in the creatures. Instead, the Father has made Wisdom take flesh so that through the incarnate Lord the true Wisdom might be revealed, and through him the Father (CA 2.81).

Prov 8:23-30

According to Exegesis 2, Prov 8:23 depicts the image of the Word as a stabilizing agent in creation. The "founding" of the Word before the world means that "in Its impress

the works remain settled and eternal" (CA 2.80 / 317A / 392).

Like Exegesis 1, Exegesis 2 also separated the referents of Prov 8:22 and 25; and as in Exegesis 1, so in Exegesis 2, Athanasius read v. 25 as a statement about the inner life of God. Although the Son was created "for the works," he was not himself a creature. Having been generated beforehand as an offspring, he preceded the act of creation; he was not a creature in either nature or essence (CA 2.80).

Prov 8:27-30 further demonstrated this point. Wisdom's presence with God when God prepared the heavens meant, not that the Father began to create without Wisdom, but that all creative acts took place in and through Wisdom. When it was time to create humans, the Word remained with the Father in essence while condescending to the creatures to instill his image in them (CA 81). Like Origen, Athanasius read Prov 8:30 as a testimony to the eternal existence of the Son. However, his own position as a defender of the Nicene homoousion required that he put a further query to the text: why was it that God eternally rejoiced in the Son? According to Athanasius, God rejoiced because he saw himself perfectly imaged in the Son. God, in other words, did not procure a cause of rejoicing "from without," but from "what is His own and like" (CA 2.82 / 320C / 393). Against the Arians Prov 8:30 not only proved the eternality of the Son, it also demonstrated the substantial unity of the Father and

Son as well (CA 1.20, 38; CA 2.82).

Summary

We have seen in this chapter how Athanasius interpreted Prov 8:22ff in two different, but equally anti-Arian, ways in CA 2.

1. Exegesis 1 (CA 2.44-77) was originally included with the refutation of Arianism addressed to the monks prior to the beginning of the second exile. Exegesis 2 (CA 2.18-43, 78-82) was added during the second exile when Athanasius, envisaging a wider audience for his orations than the monks, attached a long preface (which refuted three of Asterius's assertions) and another interpretation of Prov 8:22 as a complement to it.
2. Exegesis 1 located Prov 8:22 in the economy of salvation. The "creation" of Wisdom was the making of the flesh assumed by the Word in the incarnation. There were two keys to this interpretation. First, Athanasius applied Origen's rule that biblical assertions had to be credible to be taken literally. If the Son was created, the divine ousia, too, would be a creature since the Son is proper to the Father's ousia. Moreover, the creator would also be a creature. The same logic applied to the phrase "beginning of his ways." Beginnings of things share a common nature with the things of which they are the beginning. Since the Son, as God, does not share a common ousia with the creatures, he cannot be their

beginning as creatures. Rather, he is a beginning in another sense, a beginning of the new way of salvation. A second key to the interpretation of Prov 8:22 is that the phrase "for his works" is an aitia clause. Because aitia clauses signaled the need for an economic understanding of the text, Prov 8:22 could only refer to the economy.

3. The interpretation of Prov 8:23 in Exegesis 1 focused on the meaning of "founded." Prov 3:19 had said the earth had been founded by Wisdom. It was inconceivable, therefore, that the founder also be one of the things founded, much the same as it was inconceivable in Prov 8:22 that the creator also be a creature. But unlike the situation of creator-created (where there can be no commonality of substance between God and creation), the foundation and what is built upon it must be alike in substance if structural integrity is to be the result. Since the Son's nature is divine and unlike created natures, the foundation of Wisdom in Prov 8:23 cannot be creation. Only when the Son becomes incarnate and assumes flesh does he acquire the similarity of nature with creatures necessary to be called their foundation. Thus the Son was founded when he assumed a body. The series of "before's" in the Greek text of vv. 23-25 appeared to strengthen Athanasius's case for an economic reading of Prov 8:22-23. God knew humans were destined

to sin before he created them. Thus the Son was "founded" before creation as a remedy for their fall from grace.

4. Prov 8:25 in Exegesis 1 was not an economic text, but imparted information about the generation of the Son from the Father. Here Athanasius broke from the traditional Alexandrian reading of Prov 8:22-25 and separated the referents of vv. 22 and 25: the incarnate Christ was created in v. 22, but the eternal Son was begotten in v. 25. Athanasius could make this distinction for two reasons. First, "offspring" was never used in Scripture as equivalent in meaning to "creature." "Offspring," and the cognate verb "beget," denote a natural relationship, one that exists between parent and child. It would be unseemly to suggest that creatures are the natural offspring of divinity. Nevertheless, creatures are called God's offspring in Scripture. But, as Athanasius shows, the application of "offspring" to creatures does not mean they are God's children by nature; they become God's children by the grace of adoption. The exchange between divine and human nature that takes place in the incarnate Christ makes adoption by God possible for all who have the Son indwelling in them. Athanasius shows the movement from creature to adopted child in passages from Deuteronomy, Malachi, and John. Although Prov 8:22-25 seems also to exhibit this move-

ment (Wisdom is first created and then begotten), the postpositive de at the beginning of v. 25 means that in both actual sequence and logical order the Son is first begotten and then created. A second reason why Athanasius distinguished between the "create" in v. 22 and the "beget" in v. 25 was the absence in v. 25 of an aitia clause. In other words, there was no syntactical reason for reading v. 25 economically as there had been for v. 22.

5. Exegesis 2 includes the long preface at the beginning of the exposition of Prov 8:22 in the current CA 2. The preface essentially is concerned with overturning three of Asterius the Sophist's theological assertions. These were: the Word was the first thing made by God and functioned as the medium for the rest of creation, the Son learned how to create, and a distinction must be made between the Word and the Father's proper Word. It is plausible that CA 2.18-43 (the preface) and 78-82 (the discussion of Prov 8:22-30) are a redactional accretion, added to answer Arian notions of cosmology and theology.
6. The offering of two different interpretations of the same passage was not unique to the exegesis of Prov 8:22ff. Earlier in the CA Athanasius had done the same with Heb 3:2. In both instances (Hebrews and Proverbs) he interpreted the text from the "person" of Christ,

once as Christ pre-existent and once as Christ incarnate. In the case of Prov 8:22ff, Exegesis 1 and Exegesis 2 accented Christ's saving activity and stemmed from the two purposes of the incarnation discussed in DI.

7. In the DI the primary purpose of the incarnation was the redemption of fallen humanity from sin, death, and decay. Salvation from sin, death, and decay was also the main soteriological thrust of Exegesis 1. The Son was created in the body he assumed and made his own, "for the works," i.e., to redeem people from the fate they had brought upon themselves by disobedience. The secondary purpose of the incarnation according to the DI was the restoration of the knowledge of God. It was necessary for the Son to come, not only to redeem from sin and its curse, but to teach and to restore the knowledge of God in people. According to Exegesis 2, the image of Wisdom was instilled in humanity to stabilize their creation and to allow them to be good and to know God through the image.
8. In Exegesis 2, then, the "creation" of Wisdom in Prov 8:22 was actually the creation of Wisdom's image in the creatures as they were brought into being. Athanasius likened this use of "creation" to Jesus' close identification of himself with his disciples (Matt 10:40; Acts 9:4). Actions involving the disciples are the same as actions involving Christ. Such close identification

between image and archetype, however, should not be construed as substantial likeness. The Word is not a creature even though his image is in the creatures.

9. The creation of the image is a "beginning of ways" because the image is the source of the knowledge of God. The argument is reminiscent of DI 11, but the CA version omits the Fall and its consequence that unaided reason is unable to rise above transgression to a knowledge of God based on the image.
10. Regarding Prov 8:23, Athanasius reiterates his contention that the image of Wisdom is a stabilizing agent in the creatures. The interpretation of v. 25 in Exegesis 2 follows the same lines as that in Exegesis 1. The Son is generated as an offspring before creation. He is not a creature in either nature or essence. The Son's pre-existence is witnessed further in vv. 27-30. He is with the Father at the moment of creation, and had been with the Father from all eternity.
11. Like Origen, Athanasius used Prov 8:30 to prove the eternal existence of the Son. He insisted, however, that the verse also was amenable to the Nicene homo-ousion. God did not procure a cause of rejoicing from outside himself. God rejoiced because he saw himself perfectly reflected in his own proper image, the Son.

CONCLUSION

Until now we have been examining various strands that Athanasius took up and wove together in the tapestry of his exegesis of Prov 8:22-30. From the Alexandrian tradition, as it evolved from Origen, he had been taught to distinguish the hypostaseis of the Father and Son, but not to the extent that he divided or separated them and compromised the divine unity. He had also been taught to link the Son with the Father and not with the creatures, even though the Father alone was unbegotten. He had gathered from the emphases of Peter the Martyr and Alexander that Alexandrian soteriology was dependent on a fully divine savior. Only if Christ were God in every sense of the word could an efficacious exchange be effected wherein human nature could be raised to divinity. If Christ were not divine, deification would be a pipe dream, and humanity would remain trapped in sin, death, and decay without hope of escape. These were the theological strands that constituted the warp of Athanasius's exegetical tapestry.

Rowan Greer has shown repeatedly that in the patristic period theology and exegesis are closely united. "The theological views of a given writer," he says, "are in the long run his exegetical principles" (1986, 184). This is

not to say theology imposed a particular reading upon Scripture. Rather, patristic theology shaped and was shaped by the exegesis of Scripture.¹

Throughout this study we have tried to pay careful attention to the way in which theological shifts were complemented by exegetical ones as well. Peter the Martyr's disagreement with Origenism led to a new interest in exchange-type soteriology and demanded a theology of the Word that downplayed subordinationism and emphasized likeness. When the Arian controversy accelerated this development in the direction of the Nicene confession of the homo-

¹The assertion that early Christian exegesis was primarily theological looks to be in absolute contrast with modern exegetical canons. But as Greer rightly contends, "we cannot impose our modern sensibilities upon the difficulties found by the ancient church in applying the general theological framework of interpretation to the details of Scripture. If there was a debate over the proper method of interpreting the Bible, it was not because the fathers presumed that a correct and scientific method could be found. And if it was unclear what Scripture taught theologically, morally, and spiritually, it was not because moving from what the text meant historically to what it means theologically was a difficulty but because there was disagreement about detailed points of theology, ethics, and spirituality. Finally, our modern assumption that interpretation for the sake of interpretation is objective, while interpretation for the sake of the church's message is subjective, could not be farther from the point of view of the ancient church. To say that interpretation must always in principle conform to the faith of the church by no means prevents Christians in late antiquity from being concerned with interpreting Scripture quite apart from proving Christian beliefs and practices." Analogously, "the difficulties encountered by the Supreme Court in applying the Constitution of the United States have to do with the question of what principles mean in practice and not with moving from a historical reading of the Constitution to an allegorical one" (Greer 1986, 177-78).

ousion, it was only natural that new theological questions would elicit new exegetical answers from the text. Prov 8:22 had traditionally been perceived as a Christological and cosmic text; it imparted information about the origin of the Son. The theological crisis of the fourth century, particularly its probing questions about the nature of Christ's divinity, necessitated a fresh interpretation of our passage.

Athanasius read Scripture with distinct theological biases. As we have seen, his soteriology of deification demanded a fully divine savior; thus, he believed the Son was proper to the Father's essence. He also believed the essential unity of the Father and Son was clearly the teaching of Scripture. If Prov 8:22-23 seemed to say otherwise, it obviously had been heard incorrectly. Given his biases, biases which it again must be pointed out were drawn from Scripture,² it would have been impossible for him to have read our passage as Arius did. Convinced that the Son had been begotten eternally from the Father and shared the divine essence, he never could have read "created" in v. 22 or "established" in v. 23 as statements about the origin of the

²I am not suggesting here that Athanasius's anti-Arian exegesis was merely or only eisegetical. Neither do I agree with Maurice Wiles that for Athanasius the role of Scripture was secondary but significant for his theology, that Scripture simply confirmed a position adopted for other reasons (Wiles 1966, 52-53). Athanasius's theology and interpretation were so intertwined that they cannot be so neatly separated.

Son. Athanasius, therefore, asked the text what else "created" or "established" could mean. Could the verbs be understood in a way that would not violate his theological presuppositions? The Nicenes were ingenious to seize upon the incarnation as the referent of vv. 22 and 23, but there was nothing in the text itself that would elicit such a connection. The fact that the Arians could read this passage as a statement about the essence and mode of generation of the Word meant that the problem was not strictly one of exegesis.

If we accept Athanasius's observations on the subject, the Arians misinterpreted Scripture because of bad exegetical method. The rule of latent meaning that begins Exegesis 1 (CA 2.44), the tripartite formula, and the one scope of Scripture are all offered by Athanasius as examples of hermeneutical rules violated by Arian exegesis. Closer examination of the facts, however, reveals Athanasius's charges to be unfounded.

Athanasius himself violated the rule of latent meaning. His interpretation of the "beget" in v. 25 says nothing about a latent meaning. On the contrary, Athanasius argues strongly for a literal application of the verse to the Son: "beget" is a term used uniquely by Scripture for the Son's generation. Again, as we saw in the previous chapter, Athanasius, when deciphering the latent meaning of Prov 8:23, was willing to read Prov 3:19 quite straight-

forwardly and as it stood. In the cases of Prov 3:19 and 8:25 we find that Athanasius's theological agenda (that the Son properly belonged to God and was not a creature) overrode the application of an exegetical rule. If Prov 8:22-30 was to be understood correctly, v. 25 and Prov 3:19 could not have "latent" meanings. They were part of the Rosetta Stone that would unlock the "latent" (i.e., orthodox) meaning of Prov 8:22-23. The rule of latent meaning, then, was not a generally applicable rule, but was discriminately applied when theological exigencies demanded. Since theological perspective determined that the rule would be used selectively, the Arians cannot really be faulted if their theology did not allow them to apply the rule to the same passages that Athanasius's theology permitted him to apply it. Athanasius cited the rule at the beginning of Exegesis 1 clearly for apologetic purposes. It made his interpretation of v. 22 appear to be founded on sound exegetical principles while exposing the Arian reading of that verse to scorn. It also concealed the fact that exegetical method was not really the issue of the debate at all.

Greer suggests that theology was also "of great importance in the formulation of exegetical methods" (1973, 5). Indeed, "without denying that exegetical method was an issue for the fathers, we may conclude that the more important question for them was the theological function of interpretation" (Greer 1986, 184). When we look at the tripartite

formula and the rule of one skopos, we see that Athanasius's theology was the most important factor in the shaping of his approach to Scripture.

Like the rule of latent meaning, Athanasius's tripartite formula and rule of one skopos appear to be standard exegetical rules objectively applied to Scripture. We noticed that kairos, prosōpon, and pragma were taken from a list of common fourth century rhetorical staseis, and that the rule of one scope was borrowed from the Neoplatonists. But were the tripartite formula and the scopic principle really standard exegetical rules? Would Arius have recognized them as such? Again, we are forced to ask, was the debate really about exegetical method?

Our discussion of Athanasius's tripartite formula makes clear that the formula was not used as a method of exegesis in a formal sense. The third category, pragma, is not as well defined as "time" and "person"; it seems to be a subset of "time" rather than an independent category. Moreover, Athanasius cannot arrive at a name for this third category. Sometimes it is pragma, other times it is chreia, and if our analysis in chapter 6 is correct, still other times it is aitia. Sometimes the formula also is applied incompletely. In CA 2.8 Athanasius uses only "time" and "person." In CA 2.7 "time" and "purpose" (chreia) appear without "person," while in DNS 14 the entire triad appears,

but "person" is in the plural.³

Hermann Sieben suggested that Athanasius's use of the triad be likened to a "Faustregel," a rule of thumb, as opposed to a strict method of interpretation. It signifies that whenever Athanasius approaches a particular text, especially a controversial one, he does so with a distinct heilsgeschichtliche "preunderstanding" (Vorverständnis), one in which the "person" and the "time" determine the place of the text in relation to the economy (Sieben 1968, 245).

Once again theology has intruded into our discussion of exegetical rules. It was brilliant apologetics on Athanasius's part to incorporate rhetorical staseis into an exegetical rule. It gave his interpretation an objective and impartial quality; Scripture interpreted under generally accepted rules of rhetorical criticism would yield an orthodox reading of the text. But rhetoric had little to do with the rule. The formula was an expression of Alexandrian episcopal theology in the realm of biblical exegesis. Athanasius's soteriology was predicated on the notion that God

³In the face of this evidence it might be argued that Athanasius never intended the formula to be a rule applicable to the exegesis of all Scripture. Athanasius, however, claims that the rule is applicable to all Scripture and must be applied if the text is to be read properly. "Now it is right and necessary," Athanasius says, "as in all divine Scripture, so here, faithfully to expound the time of which the Apostle wrote, and the person, and the point; lest the reader from ignorance missing either these or any similar particular, may be wide of the true sense. (CA 1.54 / 124B / 338)

had become human to deify the race. Thus it was incumbent that his exegetical method handle passages of Scripture that seemed to speak of the Son as less than fully God. For Athanasius, this method was the economy. In the economy, attributions of weakness or unlikeness to the Son, for example, are real attributions, but they have no effect on his divine nature.

When the prince becomes a pauper, his filthy clothes are really his; but they do not alter his identity or nature as the prince. (Greer 1986, 187)

To sort out which attributions belong to the divine nature and which to the human, Athanasius devised the tripartite formula. The formula allowed him to distinguish between the "now" of the incarnation and the "always" of the divine being (Kannengiesser 1983b, 211-12). When approaching the biblical text, one had to ascertain the "time" and the "purpose" or "cause" of the action of the "person" of a particular passage in order to establish its place in the movement of salvation history. The tripartite formula, consequently, was a reflection of Athanasius's own chronological understanding of the history of the Logos, that the Son ever existed and became incarnate (Greer 1986, 187). Moreover, Athanasius's chronological understanding accounts for his use of only four (i.e., "time," "person," "purpose," and "cause") of the six rhetorical staseis as an exegetical rule. "Topics" (τόποι) and "style" (τρόπος) offer no help in discerning a text's place in relation to the economy.

From Athanasius's perspective, discussions of style and topics were irrelevant to understanding Scripture.

The same observations apply to Athanasius's use of the rule of one skopos. Here again he cleverly hid his theological presuppositions behind the cloak of objectivity. The notion of one skopos was an accepted theory of Neoplatonic literary interpretation. But in Athanasius's hand skopos had more to do with expressing his fundamental belief in the full divinity of Christ than it did with contemporary literary critical theory. We once again find his notion of a saving economy shaping the definition of his exegetical rule. By asserting that the scope of Scripture was a "double account" of the Savior--that it was eternal God who had become man--Athanasius appropriated Neoplatonic exegetical method for his own theological purposes.

Both the formula and the rule of one skopos, then, expressed the basic Alexandrian insight that God became human to save us (Sellers 1954, 39). The formula took a salvation-historical approach to the text. "Person," "time," and "purpose" located the text within the flow of God's saving activity. The rule of one skopos was also fundamentally salvation-historical. It assumed that Scripture contained a "double account" of Christ: that he was ever God and became man. It was the interpreter's task to apply the skopos at every point of the text to give an orthodox balance to unorthodox assertions based on particular

passages of Scripture.

Arius would never have devised the tripartite formula as a method of interpretation. He had no need of an economy to explain attributions to the Son that were less than divine in character. The Son was a creature; he should exhibit creaturely characteristics. Arius might have accepted skopos, but he would not have defined it as a double account of the savior. Arius's scope of Scripture would have resembled his confession of faith to Alexander, that God was "alone. . . ."4

The warp, then, of Athanasius's exegetical tapestry of Prov 8:22-30 was Alexandrian theology. His exegetical method was simply the expression of this theology applied to

⁴It has been commonly assumed that Arianism had no firm biblical basis for its doctrine. Gwatkin, for example, maintained that Arianism "assumed the usual philosophical postulates, worked by the usual philosophical methods, and scarcely referred to Scripture except in quest of isolated texts to confirm conclusions reached without its help" (1900, 20). Pollard, too, scored Arianism for being essentially unscriptural when he said "it was the theology which was based on the soundest exegetical principles, which understood most clearly the true relation between Scripture and Tradition, and which sought to take most seriously the theology of the Bible that was victorious . . . and became established as the orthodox theology of the Church" (1958, 414-15). The above viewpoints, however, can only spring from bad historical method. First of all, as we saw in chapter 4, we do not possess enough of the Arian exegetical framework to even begin to pass judgment on it as a biblical theology. Secondly, we must never assume that the winners of an intellectual debate, solely by virtue of winning, were right and their opponents wrong. Recent scholarship has begun to redress the wrongs of the past and to highlight the biblical foundations of Arianism. In this regard see Gregg and Groh (1981, 1-130).

the realm of biblical hermeneutics. Again we are compelled to point out that Athanasius can in no way be accused of eisegesis because his theology was determinative for his exegesis. Rather theology and interpretation mutually informed each other. Scripture had ground the lenses of the theology by which Athanasius perceived Scripture.

The weft of his tapestry consisted of several colors of threads, but weaving them into the tapestry required great dexterity. A dominant color of thread, for example, was anti-Arianism. His chief, if not his sole objective was to remove Prov 8:22-23 from the Arian arsenal of proof-texts. It is important to remember that in interpreting these verses, Athanasius was invading hostile territory. Prov 8:22-23 loomed as a menacing Arian stronghold that stood defiantly against the Nicenes' oft repeated charge that Arianism had no basis in Scripture.

Athanasius's main task was to render the passage harmless to his cause, to devise an interpretation of it that would negate its apparent support for Arianism. He had to prevent Prov 8:22 from serving as the focus for an alternate reading of Scripture, one that might undercut or obliterate the interpretation he had woven around such key Johannine passages as 1:1, 14; 10:30; 14:9-10.

The importance of Prov 8:22 to the Arian cause forced Athanasius to interpret the passage on his opponents' terms. He could not hope to recover this text if he did not meet

the Arian interpretations of it head-on. First of all, he would have to lay aside time-honored Alexandrian methods of interpretation. Athanasius was an astute practitioner of the allegorical method, as is evidenced by his commentary on the Psalter. The nature of Arian exegesis, however, prohibited the use of allegory as an exegetical method. What few examples of Arius's interpretation we have available to us portray him as a literal-minded and sober reader of the Bible. Just as a theology with a Son who was less than fully God could not defeat Arius, biblical hermeneutics that failed to challenge Arian exegesis on the literal level of Scripture could not hope to be successful in the struggle for the hearts and minds of Christian people.

Athanasius's approach to the text resembled a literal exposition. He paid careful attention to textual detail, and with the principle of one skopos avoided seeking the meaning of Scripture apart from Scripture itself. Athanasius, in other words, constructed his arguments directly from the text. Nevertheless, his division of Prov 8:22-30 into prophetic and realistic narrative was conditioned by a prior theological decision and had no basis in the textual details themselves. Although this theology was assuredly biblical and reflected the religious sensitivities of the majority of fourth century Christians, it could not be derived literally from Prov 8:22. Athanasius's exegesis looked like literal interpretation, but it really was not.

Second, his anti-Arian motive forced him to discuss the passage in Exegeses 1 and 2 in the "Arian" order. As we have seen, Arius reversed a traditional Alexandrian approach to the passage. This approach began with v. 25 and used the "beget" in that verse to interpret the "create" in v. 22. Arius, however, insisted that the verses be read in their textual order, and thereby allowed "create" to define "beget." Athanasius's interpretation, unlike that of earlier Alexandrians, separated the referents of vv. 22 and 25; but it retained the Alexandrian tendency to give primacy to v. 25 when reading the passage. Since, however, he was primarily concerned to overturn Arianism, he began his exposition of the passage with v. 22, not v. 25. In other words, Athanasius was constrained by the nature of the debate to follow his opponents' agenda in the discussion of this controversial text.

Prov 8:25 brings up another aspect of the effect waging an anti-Arian war had on Athanasius's interpretation of Scripture: he had to jettison a long-standing Alexandrian interpretation of our passage. Earlier in our study, we noticed that several exegetes, including Origen, read the passage as a seamless narrative of the generation of the Son from the Father. Arius remained in this tradition by maintaining that vv. 22-25 spoke of the pre-cosmic generation of the Son. He betrayed it when he described this generation as a creation of God's perfect creature. Athanasius dis-

covered that he could not attain his apologetic objective and, at the same time, maintain a unity of reference for vv. 22-25. He was able to salvage Origen's proof for the Son's eternal generation, based on vv. 25 and 30, but only if he read vv. 22-23 not as narrative but as prophecy, not as an account of the Son's generation but as an anticipation of the economy of salvation.

By putting "created" and "beget" in contrast, Athanasius broke with the Alexandrian exegetical tradition that took these verbs as complements. Instead, he wove together Eastern and Western strands in this part of his exegetical tapestry. Athanasius retained Origen's notion that v. 25 was a proof for the eternal existence of the Son. But to Origen's interpretation he added two ideas from Dionysius of Rome (which Dionysius himself had apparently borrowed from Tertullian): (1) that the referents of Prov 8:22 and 25 were separate distinct events, and (2) that v. 25 was grounded in the inner life and being of God, separate from the divine decision to create (see pp. 139-41).

A final thread in Athanasius's exegetical tapestry was the early Nicene interpretation of Prov 8:22ff by Eustathius of Antioch and Marcellus of Ancyra. Who first thought of linking v. 22 with the incarnation as a way to overturn the Arian exegesis of the passage is unknown, but the Nicenes owed whomever it was a great debt of gratitude. Precisely this exegetical twist was foundational for Athanasius's own

reading of the passage, and consequently for the refutation of Arian claims to Prov 8:22.

Athanasius was aware of the writings of both Eustathius and Marcellus. It seems likely that Athanasius got the idea of separating vv. 22 and 25 from a Western source, perhaps Dionysius. But the fact that Eustathius's interpretation used this device to gain a Nicene understanding of the text no doubt gave Athanasius greater confidence to adopt it. Athanasius was aware of Eustathius's use of 1 Cor 2:8's notion of the crucified Lord of Glory to interpret Prov 8:22's created Wisdom, although it did not play a major role in his own interpretation of our passage. In DNS 13 he chides the Arians for having a wrong understanding of Prov 8:22. Had they understood its religious and orthodox sense, "they would not have blasphemed the Lord of Glory."

From Marcellus, Athanasius perhaps took the idea that 1 Cor 3:11 could be used to interpret Prov 8:23. As we recall from chapter 5, Marcellus used the Pauline depiction of Jesus Christ as a foundation to assert that the "founding" of Wisdom was the creation of Christ's flesh. In Exegesis 1, Athanasius used 1 Cor 3:11 in a similar way, but added 1 Cor 3:10 to the discussion. There had to be a similarity of substance, he argued, between the foundation and what is built upon it. Hence the founding mentioned in v. 23 was the assumption of flesh by the Word (see above, pp. 265-66).

Although Athanasius appropriated some of the exegetical techniques of his fellow Nicenes, his use of their works was sparing. This may be due to the fact that by the time the CA appeared in its final form both bishops had been severely discredited in the East. Though not a reason in itself for wariness--Athanasius was, after all, himself discredited in the East at the time the CA appeared--I suspect Athanasius agreed with the assessment of his fellow Eastern bishops in this matter. Both Eustathius and Marcellus were accused of erring on the side of Sabellius in their doctrine of God--something no true descendent of Origen and Dionysius (and Athanasius was certainly that) could look on with equanimity. The difference in theological outlook nuanced the exegeses of Eustathius and Marcellus in ways that were foreign to Alexandrian theology and exegesis.

Laying aside for the moment the unanswerable question of whether or not Eustathius was a Sabellian, his interpretation of Prov 8:22 still would not have rung quite true in Athanasius's ears because he read Prov 8:22 within the framework of developing Antiochene two-natures Christology. Thus, he was very careful to distinguish between the Word and the man assumed by the Word in the incarnation. Eustathius's Christology was an early expression of an Antiochene Christology which would reach its apex in the thought of Theodore of Mopsuestia and its nadir in that of Nestorius. Antiochene emphases, however, were not Alexandrian ones.

Athanasius's soteriology demanded an intimate union between divine and human in Christ (CA 3.35) and rested on his conviction that the Word had genuinely made the actions of the human Christ his own. Agreeing with Eustathius that Christ's body was an "instrument" (*ὄργανον*) of salvation, Athanasius would have disagreed with Eustathius over the unity of subject in Christ. In CA 3 we find testimony of Athanasius's insistence that the divine Word performed both Christ's divine and Christ's human actions:

when we see Him doing or saying aught divinely through the instrument of His own body, we may know that He so works, being God, and also, if we see Him speaking or suffering humanly, we may not be ignorant that He bore flesh and became man, and hence He so acts and so speaks. For if we recognize what is proper to each, and see and understand that both these things and those are done by One, we are right in our faith, and shall never stray. (CA 3.35 / 397B / 413)

Thus began a Christology in Alexandria that would discover its greatness in Cyril of Alexandria and its baseness in Dioscorus.

Again, although he loyally defended Marcellus there was no way that Athanasius, as the steward of the Alexandrian tradition, could ever hold to the scheme of the three economies and its concomitant economic Trinitarianism. Particularly offensive must have been Marcellus's reading of Prov 8:25. This verse had been one of the linchpins of the Alexandrian doctrine of the eternal hypostatic generation of the Word. Marcellus, of course, could never hold such a doctrine; the generation of the Word was simply an expansion

of the Monad into Dyad, an expansion that would ultimately be retracted back into the Monad. Consequently, v. 25 was tied to v. 22, and both referred to the assumption of flesh by the Logos. Athanasius, however, remained fully Alexandrian on the issue of the interpretation of v. 25, even though it meant he had to give up reading vv. 22 as an account of the Son's generation from the Father.

This, then, was the exegetical tapestry of Prov 8:22 which Athanasius wove in the CA. It was fundamentally Alexandrian in its theology and approach to Scripture, and it depicted the text in an anti-Arian and Nicene fashion. The religious and orthodox sense which it found in vv. 22-30 was that the eternal Son of the Father, who shared with the Father the very essence of divinity in every sense of the word, became man for us and for our salvation so that we might become the children of God and partakers of the divine nature.

APPENDIX

THE SEPTUAGINT TEXT OF PROVERBS 8:22-30

22. κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ,
23. πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐθεμελίωσέν με ἐν ἀρχῇ,
24. πρὸ τοῦ τὴν γῆν ποιῆσαι καὶ πρὸ τοῦ τὰς ἀβύσσους ποιῆσαι,
πρὸ τοῦ προελθεῖν τὰς πηγὰς τῶν ὑδάτων,
25. πρὸ τοῦ ὄρη ἐδρασθῆναι,
πρὸ δὲ πάντων βουνῶν γεννᾶ με.
26. κύριος ἐποίησεν χώρας καὶ ἀοικήτους
καὶ ἄκρα οἰκουμένα τῆς ὑπ' οὐρανόν.
27. ἡνίκα ἡτοίμαζεν τὸν οὐρανόν, συμπαρήμην αὐτῷ,
καὶ ὅτε ἀφώριζεν τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ θρόνον ἐπ' ἀνέμων.
28. ἡνίκα ἰσχυρὰ ἐποίει τὰ ἄνω νέφη,
καὶ ὥς ἀσθαλεῖς ἐτίθει πηγὰς τῆς ὑπ' οὐρανόν
29. καὶ ἰσχυρὰ ἐποίει τὰ θεμέλια τῆς γῆς,
30. ἤμην παρ' αὐτῷ ἀρμόζουσα,
ἐγὼ ἤμην ἣ προσέχαιρεν
καθ' ἡμέραν δὲ εὐφραινόμεν ἐν προσώπῳ αὐτοῦ ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ,

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