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*The Development of*  
**Athanasius's Early Pneumatology**

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Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2015

# Abstract

## The Development of Athanasius's Early Pneumatology

Kevin Douglas Hill

Athanasius of Alexandria wrote over seven dozen works, the majority of which contain at least one reference to the Holy Spirit. Yet, previous studies have primarily concentrated on Athanasius's *Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit* (ca. 359–361), leaving a lacuna in our knowledge of Athanasius's prior pneumatology. By exploring the period from Athanasius's election as bishop (328) to the completion of the third *Oration against the Arians* (ca. 345), this thesis seeks to help fill this gap.

Part I focuses on Athanasius's pastoral works, including his *Festal Letters* and *Against the Pagans—On the Incarnation*. Chapter 1 considers the reasons behind Athanasius's relative silence about the Spirit in *Pagans—Incarnation*. Chapters 2 and 3 explore the pneumatology of Athanasius's pastoral works written before and after 340, respectively. This first half of the thesis argues that by the mid-330s, Athanasius had begun to establish core pneumatological perspectives that he would maintain for the rest of his career, including the belief that the Spirit is necessary for salvation.

Part II examines Athanasius's three *Orations*, giving particular attention to *Orations* 1–2 (ca. 340). This part of the thesis argues that Athanasius seems to consciously hold five main tenets about the Holy Spirit. To Athanasius, the Holy Spirit is eternal, uncreated, united to the Son, worthy of worship, and essential for salvation. These points laid the foundation for what was to come in *Serapion*.

Together, Parts I and II challenge the perception that Athanasius's understanding of the Holy Spirit did not develop until *Serapion*. Without the pneumatological perspectives that he established in the 330s and 340s, Athanasius would not have been prepared to take the next steps of confessing the Holy Spirit's divine nature and role in creating the world.

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# Abbreviations

Abbreviations for Athanasian works are listed in Appendix A and the Bibliography. Other patristic abbreviations are based on G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961) and Albert Blaise, ed., *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1954). Unless noted, all references to the Old Testament follow the standard Masoretic Text numbering. References to the Septuagint follow the numbering of Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935).

## 1. General

BE	Benedictine Edition of Athanasius's <i>Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit</i> (reprinted in PG 26.529A–676C)
ET	English Translation
LXX	Septuagint
TLG	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Graecae</i>
TM	Translation modified

## 2. Periodicals

<i>JECs</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>JThS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i> (New Series)
SP	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
<i>SJTb</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
ZAC	<i>Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum</i>

### 3. Series

ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
AW	Athanasius Werke
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series Two
PG	Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca
PPS	Popular Patristics Series
SC	Sources chrétiennes

### A Note on Style

The majority of this thesis was written in Calgary, Alberta. I have therefore chosen to use Canadian and North American conventions, including Canadian spelling.

Following the growing scholarly consensus on the matter, I regard “Arianism” as a polemical construct devised by Athanasius and Marcellus of Ancyra. Consequently, unless otherwise noted, I intend for “Arian,” “Arians,” and “Arianism” to refer to Athanasius’s depiction of this construct.<sup>1</sup>

In those instances where I quote from NPNF, I have replaced archaic words with contemporary English equivalents. Also, unless required by grammar, divine pronouns and certain words that were sometimes capitalized for the sake of piety, such as “Baptism,” now occur in the lower case. The bibliography lists the critical editions and translations of primary sources used. On the rare occasion where passages from Scripture are quoted independently of particular patristic writings, these follow the New Revised Standard Version.

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<sup>1</sup> On the problems associated with these terms and related categories, see Rowan Williams, review of “The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God,” by R. P. C. Hanson, *SJTb* 45 (1992): 101–2, who observes that “the time has probably come to relegate the term ‘Arianism’ at best to inverted commas, and preferably to oblivion—with all its refinements of early, late, neo or semi.”

## **Declaration**

This work has been submitted to the University of Durham in accordance with the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It is my own work, and none of it has been previously submitted to the University of Durham or to any other university for a degree.

Word count of main text including footnotes: 99,095.

## **Copyright**

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent. Information derived from it should be acknowledged.

## Acknowledgements

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models of exemplary parenting, which I can only hope to imitate. My in-laws, Roger and Arlene, also helped us through the entire journey, and I am grateful for them. Additionally, my brother, Keith, gave much-appreciated encouragement. Further, I wish to thank my aunts and uncles who supplied meals, baby-sitting, and other help along the way. Finally, I wish to thank my wife, Ashley, who blesses me on a daily basis with love and friendship. I am eternally grateful for her. She recently gave birth to our daughters: Piper, Hattie, and Winnie—who fill our lives with joy, laughter, and the wonderful new meaning that comes from being a parent. Δόξα Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ καὶ Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι, καὶ νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Ἀμήν.

## Preface

### What Does Vienna Have to Do with Alexandria?<sup>1</sup>

Recently, while watching an interview of the American pianist Jonathan Biss, I was reminded of what first sparked my fascination with Athanasius of Alexandria over a decade ago—and of what has sustained my interest since then. When Biss was asked what it is about Beethoven that inspired him to devote the next nine years of his life to recording Beethoven’s piano sonatas,<sup>2</sup> Biss revealed that it was not due to Beethoven’s genius or musical mastery. For Biss, the inimitable appeal of Beethoven is his personality. Whether one wishes to experience Beethoven’s personality or not, the force of the composer’s personality reaches through his music and seizes his listener. As Biss explains:

In addition obviously to the mastery of Beethoven, which is enormous but maybe not greater than Bach, or Mozart, or Schubert, to use a few examples, he has a personality which is, I think, stronger and more belligerent than any other master at that level. There’s something in Beethoven’s music that grabs ahold of you and doesn’t let go. And even though his music covers an amazing amount of territory in terms of language, and if you look from

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Tertullian, *Praescr.* 7. Beethoven spent the majority of his career in Vienna, living there from 1792 until his death in 1827.

<sup>2</sup> So far, the first four albums have been released: Ludwig van Beethoven, Piano Sonatas nos. 5, 11, 12, 26, Jonathan Biss, on *Beethoven: Piano Sonatas Vol. 1*, Onyx Classics, 2012, CD; Ludwig van Beethoven, Piano Sonatas nos. 4, 14, 24, Jonathan Biss, on *Beethoven: Piano Sonatas Vol. 2*, Onyx Classics, 2013, CD; Ludwig van Beethoven, Piano Sonatas nos. 15, 16, 21, Jonathan Biss, on *Beethoven: Piano Sonatas Vol. 3*, Onyx Classics, 2014, CD; Ludwig van Beethoven, Piano Sonatas nos. 1, 6, 19, 23, Jonathan Biss, on *Beethoven: Piano Sonatas Vol. 4*, Onyx Classics, 2015, CD.

Opus 1 to Opus 135 these pieces don't have on the surface much in common with one another other, but every one of them grabs you in that way. That is the hallmark of Beethoven.<sup>3</sup>

I would say nearly the same thing about Athanasius.<sup>4</sup> Neither Athanasius's thought nor his rhetoric surpasses that of his best predecessors, contemporaries, and successors. Yet, Athanasius's works possess a unique charm. Athanasius's lively faith, indefatigable spirit, and strong personality immediately manifest themselves to the reader. Therefore, what makes Athanasius and Beethoven both particularly engaging is that when we encounter their works, we experience the vitality behind the works. To listen to Beethoven is to encounter Beethoven. To read Athanasius is to encounter Athanasius.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Biss, interview by Jeffrey Brown, *PBS NewsHour*, February 10, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> However, I suspect Beethoven's genius excelled that of his contemporaries. Athanasius, on the other hand, is one of a several luminous early fourth-century writers. It is regretful that we do not have more extant material from Asterius, Marcellus, and other marginalized voices.

<sup>5</sup> One key difference in the style of these figures, however, is that while Beethoven's compositions are usually filled with surprising twists and turns, Athanasius's works are characterized by the repetition of propositions and the recycling of arguments—a sign, perhaps, of Athanasius's rather limited education.

## Introduction

On the night of February 8, 356, five thousand soldiers under imperial orders invaded the Alexandrian Church of Theonas and seized Athanasius, the current bishop of Alexandria.<sup>1</sup> Overwhelmed by the situation, Athanasius went into shock and collapsed to the church floor—Athanasius was dead.

This was how the soldiers surrounding Athanasius initially interpreted his collapse. To them, Athanasius's motionless body indicated the absence of life. The reality, however, was quite different. Athanasius was playing dead and planning his escape. At the opportune moment, he arose and fled into the night, beginning his third exile.<sup>2</sup> This story highlights how greatly perception can differ from reality.

This thesis seeks to fill a gap in current scholarship by exploring the development of Athanasius's early theology of the Holy Spirit, which I regard as the period from Athanasius's election as bishop of Alexandria (328) to the completion of his *Oration against the Arians* (ca. 345).

One of the central claims in the thesis is that the pneumatology of Athanasius's early works has commonly been misinterpreted.<sup>3</sup> Although

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<sup>1</sup> The Church of Theonas, located near the western outskirts of the city, appears to have been Athanasius's church of choice until the centrally located temple, the Caesarion, was donated by Constantius (II) and converted into a cathedral. On the early churches in Alexandria, including the Church of Theonas, see Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 206–12.

<sup>2</sup> The account of events here follows the fanciful narrative provided in Athanasius's *History of the Arians* 81, combined with details from *Defence of His Flight* 24.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that I consider “pneumatology” to encompass all

this misperception is neither as extreme nor dramatic as the misperception about Athanasius's body in the Church of Theonas, there are some similarities. Both misperceptions interpret quietness on Athanasius's part as a sign of something negative. To the guards, Athanasius's silence indicated that his body lacked life. Yet, Athanasius's body was, of course, completely alive. To many modern readers of Athanasius's works, Athanasius's limited remarks about the Spirit in works before the *Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit*, particularly in his most famous works, *Against the Pagans—On the Incarnation* and the *Life of Antony*, suggest that he essentially lacked a theology of the Holy Spirit before *Serapion* (ca. 359–361). However, in this thesis I argue that, from at least 329 onwards, Athanasius's thought was not devoid of pneumatological reflection. Moreover, by the early 340s, Athanasius had developed the core or foundation of the “mature” pneumatology that he would articulate in *Serapion*.

My argument challenges the commonly accepted narrative that Athanasius's understanding of the Holy Spirit did not truly develop until the late 350s, when he was faced with the pneumatological questions raised by the “Tropikoi.”<sup>4</sup> The most common form of this narrative suggests that Athanasius previously gave little thought to the Spirit because Athanasius, like his contemporaries, was focused on matters related to Christ.<sup>5</sup> This narrative is often accompanied by the assumption

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discussions about the Holy Spirit. This goes against the tendency in modern scholarship to delimit “pneumatology” to inquiry into the Spirit's nature and relationship to the Father and Son. Therefore, the thesis uses the language of “pneumatology” and “theology of the Holy Spirit” interchangeably.

<sup>4</sup> On the “Tropikoi” and the context of *Serapion*, see below, pp. 180–183.

<sup>5</sup> A particularly bold example of this occurs in Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanan, vol. 4 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1898), 112: “The fact that Athanasius did not in the first instance think of the Spirit at all, regarding which also nothing was fixed at Nicaea, is simply a proof of his intense interest in his doctrine of the Son.”

that scholarly inquiry into Athanasius's understanding of the Holy Spirit should focus on the question of the Spirit's divinity.

This "late-development narrative" frequently appears in general and specialized studies. Numerous books on Christian history and theology tell forms of this narrative.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, studies specifically on Athanasius or early Christian pneumatology, which influence the broader historical monographs, often adopt this narrative.<sup>7</sup> For example, in his monograph on 1 and 2 Cor. and the pneumatologies of Athanasius and Basil of Caesarea, Michael Haykin expresses this narrative when he contrasts Athanasius and Basil according to their interest in the Spirit. Haykin writes: "For, whereas Athanasius's theology of the Spirit was developed really only towards the end of his life, Basil's career can be described as a life-long preoccupation with the subject and person of the Holy Spirit."<sup>8</sup> The implication of this is clear: Athanasius's understanding of the Spirit did not develop until he was stimulated by the "Tropikoi."

The notion of orthodoxy being driven by heresy was championed and nuanced by Maurice Wiles,<sup>9</sup> who advanced a more skeptical version of the

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<sup>6</sup> For example: Myk Habets, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 70; Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought: From the Beginnings to the Council of Chalcedon* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 299; Bernhard Lohse, *A Short History of Christian Doctrine: From the First Century to the Present*, trans. F. Ernest Stoeffler (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 61–62; J. R. Palanque, G. Bardy, P. de Labriolle, G. de Plinval, and Louis Brehier, *The Church in the Christian Roman Empire*, trans. Ernest C. Messenger, vol. 1 (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, 1949), 321; Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 112.

<sup>7</sup> For this narrative in early Christian pneumatology before Athanasius, see Henry Barclay Swete, *On the Early History of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: With Especial Reference to the Controversies of the Fourth Century* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1873), 5–46.

<sup>8</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 104.

<sup>9</sup> See Maurice Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine: A Study in the Principles*

late-development narrative of Athanasius's pneumatology. While all scholars would surely agree that Athanasius's pneumatological doctrines in *Serapion* were influenced to some degree or another by the questions raised by the "Tropikoi," Wiles contended that Athanasius's doctrines had been determined by his reaction to these "heretics."<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the theology of the Spirit in *Serapion* was not only a late development, but it was also potentially uncharacteristic of Athanasius's previously undeveloped pneumatology.<sup>11</sup>

### Scope and Method

*Serapion* contains by far Athanasius's most sustained discussion of the Holy Spirit, and this, combined with the fact that it was written during Athanasius's mature years, has led many studies to focus almost exclusively on *Serapion*. While the importance of *Serapion* is undeniable, the value of Athanasius's other works for pneumatological studies has been underestimated. When one reads through the *Athanasiana* as a whole, particularly chronologically, it becomes apparent that the Holy

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of *Early Doctrinal Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 18–40. On development as a response to the views of the "Arians" and the "Tropikoi," see *ibid.*, 31–36.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 31–33.

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Coakley summarizes the viewpoint of Wiles in a similar manner: "The production of these arguments about the Spirit at a comparatively late stage in Athanasius's theological career, and for the purposes of seeing off a new heresy, might again cause someone like Wiles to wonder whether they are truly distinctive of his output: why was the Spirit ignored, indeed mentioned only fleetingly in the doxology of the *On the Incarnation*?" Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay "On the Trinity"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 137. This quotation occurs in a chapter that revises and builds on Sarah Coakley, "Why Three? Some Further Reflections on the Origins of the Doctrine of the Trinity," in *The Making and Remaking of Christian Doctrine: Essays in Honour of Maurice Wiles*, ed. Sarah Coakley and David A. Pailin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 29–56.

Spirit is mentioned regularly throughout Athanasius's career and in works of various genres. Indeed, my own textual analysis reveals that of Athanasius's seventy-five authentic works, forty-seven works (63%) contain at least one reference to the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> Although many of these occurrences are brief, they should not be dismissed too quickly.

In a short article published in 1981, Charles Kannengiesser demonstrated that brief or often overlooked references to the Holy Spirit, such as those found in the *Festal Letters*, can provide new insights into the history and content of Athanasius's pneumatology.<sup>13</sup> Apart from this revealing but dated study, references to the Holy Spirit in Athanasius's pastoral works have received little scholarly attention. No study has yet to seriously examine the pneumatology of these works alongside the rest of Athanasius's corpus. As a result of this omission, current accounts of the development of Athanasius's pneumatology have significant historical gaps in their narratives and an incomplete, if not skewed, description of Athanasius's understanding of the Spirit and the related doctrine of sanctification.<sup>14</sup>

As noted, the aim of this thesis is to help fill the gap in our knowledge about the content and development of Athanasius's early theology of the Holy Spirit. Because of this aim, the majority of the thesis discusses material written between about 329 and 345, which includes Athanasius's early *Festals*, *Pagans–Incarnation*, and *Orations* 1–3. The scope of the thesis is therefore intentionally delimited in four main ways.

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<sup>12</sup> For a table of references, see Appendix A below, p. 317.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Kannengiesser, "Athanasius of Alexandria and the Holy Spirit Between Nicea I and Constantinople I," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 48, no. 3–4 (1981): 166–80. Several of Kannengiesser's analyses of the *Festals* assume compositional dates that have since been significantly revised. Further, at the time Kannengiesser denied Athanasian authorship of *Orations* 3—a perspective he would later abandon. These factors skew some of his arguments and warrant a new study.

<sup>14</sup> See below, p. 92n34.

First, the thesis gives greater attention to *Orations* 1–2 over 3. This is because of their composition date and theological content. *Orations* 1–2 are the earliest *Orations*, most likely written around 340, with *Orations* 3 being finished by about 345.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, as we will see, apart from one important development in *Orations* 3,<sup>16</sup> *Orations* 1–2 contain what I regard as “core” tenets about the Holy Spirit. These tenets served as the foundation upon which Athanasius developed his pneumatological arguments and propositions in *Serapion*, including his unequivocal confession of the Spirit’s divinity and role in creation, which represent the largest pneumatological developments in *Serapion*. Consequently, discussing *Orations* 3 in the same detail as 1–2 is not necessary.

Second, because our focus is on Athanasius’s early pneumatology, the thesis says little about Athanasius’s works from the 350s, such as *On the Decrees of Nicaea*, *Defence of Dionysius*, and *On the Synods of Ariminum and Seleuceia*, which contain only incremental developments regarding the Spirit.

Third, the thesis’s discussion of *Serapion* is not intended to be exhaustive. Previous studies of Athanasius’s theology of the Holy Spirit have focused on these letters, and thus my treatment of *Serapion* is only intended to show that the pneumatological tenets established in the *Orations* provided the foundation for the pneumatology expressed in *Serapion*.

Fourth, the thesis intentionally avoids discussions about the procession of the Spirit and the *filioque* because these are not subjects that

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<sup>15</sup> On the provenance of the *Orations*, see below, pp. 147–152.

<sup>16</sup> For our subject, the most important development that occurs in *Orations* 3 is about the distinction between the three persons. On this distinction, see Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 115–117. I would supplement Ayres’ account with *Orations* 3.15, where Athanasius affirms the unity and plurality of the Trinity.

Athanasius discusses in his early works. The most relevant material regarding these questions occurs in *Serapion*, but, as others have noted, Athanasius's views are ambiguous and focused on other issues.<sup>17</sup>

In terms of method, I aim to fill the noted gaps in our knowledge by interpreting Athanasius's relevant passages within their historical and literary contexts. This attention to context follows the methodological recommendations that Johan Leemans makes in his bibliographical article on Athanasian scholarship from 1985 to 1998. Leemans's article is the spiritual sequel to Charles Kannengiesser's bibliographical summary of the prior decade, wherein Kannengiesser critiqued theological studies for neglecting literary criticism. Leemans repeats Kannengiesser's message: "I think Kannengiesser's critique is still valid today with regard to much of the literature. Far too often studies give a reconstruction of (part of) Athanasius's theology and buttress it more or less thoroughly with some important texts, mostly from [*Pagans-Incarnation*] or the [*Orations*]." <sup>18</sup>

To avoid this pitfall, Leemans suggests more scholars follow the commentary approach employed Craig Blasing.<sup>19</sup> "Such a careful close reading with attention for the context, both literary and polemical, is an essential prerequisite for an adequate understanding of Athanasius. Otherwise, we risk to understand only our reconstruction of Athanasius."<sup>20</sup> Despite its strengths, Blasing's commentary method

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<sup>17</sup> Adolf Martin Ritter, "Der Heilige Geist," in *Athanasius Handbuch*, ed. Peter Gemeinhardt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 316–17. For an example of the ambiguity in *Serapion*, compare Xavier Morales, "La préhistoire de la controverse filioquiste," *ZAC* 8, no. 2 (2004): 325–31 with John R. Meyer, "Clarifying the Filioque Formula Using Athanasius's Doctrine of the Spirit of Christ," *Communio* 27, no. 2 (2000): 386–405.

<sup>18</sup> Johan Leemans, "Thirteen Years of Athanasius Research (1985–1998): A Survey and Bibliography," *Sacris Erudiri* 39 (2000): 172.

<sup>19</sup> Craig Alan Blasing, "Athanasius of Alexandria: Studies in Theological Contents and Structure of the *Contra Arianos*, with Special Reference to Method" (PhD thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1987).

cannot be identically repeated here because it would require writing a comprehensive commentary of each work relevant to Athanasius's theology of the Spirit. Nevertheless, I believe the method's merits can be garnered by following Blaising's key insight of recognizing the importance of interpreting Athanasius's statements in light of their literary contexts.

This emphasis on context requires discussing the elements of Athanasius's thought that shape his pneumatology. For example, Athanasius's statements about the Spirit in the *Orationes* cannot be accurately understood outside of their larger Christological and polemical context. Likewise, Athanasius's remarks about the Spirit in the *Festals* occur as parts of larger arguments about the proper observation of Easter and the meaning of Passover, the Law, and the New Covenant. Therefore, these and other contexts are discussed in the process of examining Athanasius's remarks about the Holy Spirit in order to promote contextually faithful interpretations of Athanasius's pneumatology.

### Outline of Chapters

The thesis is comprised of two main parts. Part I, consisting of Chapters 1–3, focuses on Athanasius's pastoral works. Chapter 1 confronts the “elephant in the room.” *Pagans-Incarnation*, often regarded as one of Athanasius's earliest writings, contains over 38,000 words; however, it only refers to the Holy Spirit three times. As mentioned, this fact has frequently been interpreted as a sign that Athanasius lacked a theology of the Holy Spirit when he wrote *Pagans-Incarnation*. However, is this the best interpretation of the data? Chapter 1 argues that Athanasius's relative silence about the Spirit in *Pagans-Incarnation* is better understood in light of his rhetorical purposes for *Pagans-Incarnation*. Athanasius wrote the

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<sup>20</sup>Leemans, “Thirteen Years,” 173.

work in order to demonstrate the reasonableness of the “cross,” and he omits subjects that are not directly relevant to this demonstration. Consequently, Athanasius’s limited references to the Spirit in *Pagans-Incarnation* should not be taken as proof that he lacked a theology of the Spirit. Instead, in order to assess the state of Athanasius’s early theology of the Holy Spirit, we must look at what he says about the Spirit in other early works.

Chapter 2 seeks to determine what we can know about Athanasius’s theology of the Holy Spirit from the period before 340. Apart from *Pagans-Incarnation*, Athanasius’s early pastoral works are our only witnesses to his pneumatology from this period. The chapter argues that by 329 Athanasius was developing a soteriology that included roles for the Holy Spirit. After considering these roles and their relationship to Athanasius’s theology of Easter and salvation, the chapter also investigates Athanasius’s inclusion of the Holy Spirit in his early Trinitarian doxologies. This chapter supports Chapter 1’s argument by showing that Athanasius did not lack a theology of the Spirit in the 330s (which is when he most likely wrote *Pagans-Incarnation*). Further, it argues that by 340 his theology included the tenet that the Holy Spirit is essential for salvation.

Chapter 3 studies Athanasius’s remarks about the Holy Spirit in works written from 340 until Athanasius’s death in 373. The chapter argues that throughout Athanasius’s lifetime, Athanasius’s pastoral works are remarkably consistent in terms of their theology of the Holy Spirit. However, this is not to say the works are entirely without development. In his *Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms*, Athanasius adds new details about the Spirit’s role in the inspiration of the Scriptures. Further, there is also an important development in Athanasius’s Trinitarian doxologies, which reflects Athanasius’s engagement with the “Tropikoi.”

Part II of the thesis focuses primarily on the *Orations*, with a

secondary section devoted to briefly discussing *Serapion* in order to show that the “core” of Athanasius’s mature pneumatology was established in the *Orations*. The *Orations* contain both Athanasius’s first discussions about the Trinity and also numerous arguments that develop views on the Holy Spirit’s relationship to the Father and Son. For this reason alone, they are invaluable for studying the history of Athanasius’s pneumatology; however, their significance increases when the pneumatology that Athanasius develops here is compared with the pneumatology in *Serapion*.

Chapter 4 begins by exploring Athanasius’s polemical reason for writing the *Orations*. The opening portion of the chapter builds on the work of Sara Parvis and David M. Gwynn, arguing that Athanasius wrote the *Orations* in hopes of regaining his position as bishop of Alexandria by arguing that his exile was the result of his opponents conspiring against him so they might promote the heresy of “Arianism.” I provide textual support for this perspective by tracing Athanasius’s account of the blasphemies of “Arianism.” From this analysis, it becomes apparent that Athanasius has expanded the theological focus of “Arianism” and Arius’s *Thalia* to include Trinitarian issues that were current in the late 330s and early 340s. The chapter then examines the “new” Trinitarian arguments that Athanasius associates with “Arianism.” Here I outline the theology of the Trinity that Athanasius promotes in the course of these arguments, and I discuss its pneumatological significance. I argue that Athanasius’s depiction of the Trinitarian “blasphemies” of “Arianism” and Athanasius’s polemical Trinitarian arguments imply that the Holy Spirit is eternal, uncreated, united to the Son, and worthy of worship. The remainder of the chapter briefly looks at *Serapion*, and it argues that, with two exceptions, the pneumatological views expressed in *Serapion* repeat, clarify, and make small improvements upon the four pneumatological tenets established in the *Orations* and the previous tenet, established in the early pastoral works, that the Spirit is essential for salvation.

Chapters 5–7 supply additional evidence for this argument. Chapter 5 provides an overview of how Athanasius connects the Holy Spirit to salvation, followed by a detailed account of Athanasius’s understanding of Christ’s anointing with the Holy Spirit. I argue that this aspect of Athanasius’s soteriology confirms my claim in Chapter 2 that Athanasius truly believes that the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is necessary for salvation.

Chapter 6 continues my overarching argument that the pneumatology in the *Orations* provides the foundation for *Serapion*. It contributes to this argument by exploring the principles behind Athanasius’s understanding of adoption and deification in the *Orations*. As we will see, Athanasius believes humans are adopted and deified through union with the Son. Athanasius uses participation language to describe how human beings receive these gifts. This language and its underlying principles provides the logic behind this aspect of Athanasius’s vision of salvation. These principles and logic not only help us understand Athanasius’s soteriology, but they also have major implications for Athanasius’s theology of the Holy Spirit. Chapter 6 argues that these principles, along with Athanasius’s understanding of the Spirit’s work in salvation, show that Athanasius regards the Holy Spirit as a being who is uncreated, eternal, and deserving of worship.

Chapter 7 completes the project of supplying additional support for the pneumatological argument made at the end of Chapter 4, which claimed that Athanasius’s Trinitarian arguments in the *Orations* have significant implications for the Holy Spirit. Building on the arguments of Chapters 5 and 6, this chapter claims that the other pneumatological implication noted in Chapter 4, namely that the Spirit is united to the Son, is in fact consciously believed by Athanasius in the *Orations*. To support this claim, the chapter argues that Athanasius’s understanding of salvation as a united activity of the Trinity demonstrates that, for

Athanasius, the Spirit is eternally and inseparably united to the Son. As we will see, Athanasius understands the economic pattern of the Trinity to be a reflection of the eternal reality. The Trinity's united activity in the economy of salvation originates from and reveals the Trinity's eternal and perfect unity in eternity.

PART I

# **Athanasius's Pastoral Works**

## The Problem of Pneumatological Reticence in *Pagans-Incarnation*

### Introduction

#### *Problem*

Although it is commonplace among historians of Christian doctrine to observe that Athanasius mentions the Holy Spirit only a handful of times in *Pagans-Incarnation*, no historical study has dedicated more than a few sentences to exploring the reason for Athanasius's relative silence about the Spirit, and the question remains open.<sup>1</sup> However, despite the apparent lack of scholarly interest in the subject, how we explain the lack of pneumatological content in the double apology can have significant implications for how we narrate the history of Athanasius's doctrine of the Spirit.

On the one hand, if we explain Athanasius's limited remarks on the Spirit as the result of him possessing an impoverished doctrine of the Spirit, then *Pagans-Incarnation* may drive our narrative. Indeed, as a result of this explanation, we will be inclined to present the history of Athanasius's theology of the Spirit as the story of pneumatological development *ex nihilo*. For example, we might argue that Athanasius did not begin to integrate the Spirit into his theology until he began writing *Orations* 1–2 (ca. 340).<sup>2</sup> If we are particularly skeptical, we might even

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<sup>1</sup> Athanasius references the Holy Spirit in *Pagans* 7, 14; *Incarnation* 57. For information on translations and critical sources, see the bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> On the provenance of the *Orations*, see below, pp. 147–152.

suggest that until *Serapion* (ca. 359–361),<sup>3</sup> Athanasius’s remarks about the Spirit were always ad hoc reactions driven by opportunity and necessity rather than genuine belief and theological integration.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, if we take a more cautious view, recognizing that Athanasius’s pneumatological reticence could be due to a number of other factors, then the influence of *Pagans-Incarnation* on our narrative will be quite different. Rather than telling us that Athanasius did not yet have an understanding of the Holy Spirit, *Pagans-Incarnation* will remind us that we must approach the task of narrating Athanasius’s pneumatology with care. According to this view, multiple scenarios can account for Athanasius’s reticence, which would suggest that we should base our narrative on additional evidence, such as Athanasius’s other early works.

Regardless of whether we take a skeptical or cautious position on Athanasius’s pneumatological reticence, it is clear that how we account for Athanasius’s reticence will shape how we tell the history of Athanasius’s pneumatology, which in turn shapes the history of Athanasius’s broader thought, its relation to Athanasius’s contemporaries, and the larger history of fourth-century Trinitarian doctrine.

Therefore, this chapter seeks to determine the most likely reason for Athanasius’s relative silence about the Spirit in *Pagans-Incarnation*. By understanding the reason for Athanasius’s reticence, we can determine what, if anything, it indicates about the state of Athanasius’s theology of the Holy Spirit, and we can let this information shape our historical narrative of his pneumatology accordingly. As such, this chapter also begins the first of two chapters dedicated to exploring the pneumatology of Athanasius’s earliest writings (written before 340). Chapter 2 adds

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<sup>3</sup> On the provenance of *Serapion*, see below, p. 180.

<sup>4</sup> Indeed, some readers might even argue that Athanasius’s theology of the Spirit in *Serapion* is ad hoc, spurred by necessity and subsequently abandoned. My overarching argument in this thesis will show, however, that this position is untenable.

weight to the argument of Chapter 1 by showing that Athanasius had a theology of the Holy Spirit in works contemporaneous with *Pagans-Incarnation*.

#### *Argument*

This chapter argues that the lack of pneumatological content in *Pagans-Incarnation* should not be taken as proof that Athanasius lacked a theology of the Spirit at the time he wrote the double apology. The lack of pneumatological content may be explained by the work's literary purpose, which is to provide a defence of the reasonableness of the cross.

Athanasius omits subjects that he considers nonessential for his apologetic argument. He regards pneumatology as a subject that is extraneous to his argument about the cross, and thus he omits it. Therefore, I would argue, any claim that Athanasius lacked a theology of the Holy Spirit when he wrote *Pagans-Incarnation* should be based on more than Athanasius's reticence about the Spirit in this cross-centred apology.

Three sections support this perspective. Section 1 explains the double apology's literary purpose in more detail and in light of its historical context and audience. Together, these sections suggest that Athanasius was primarily concerned with writing a coherent apology of the cross. Athanasius was not attempting to write a systematic or dogmatic account of the doctrine of God. Sections 2 and 3, comprising the majority of the chapter, provide a new account of the literary structure of *Pagans-Incarnation*. This account contends that almost all of the material in *Pagans-Incarnation* contributes to one of two primary apologetic arguments. The first argument, developed mostly in *Pagans*, contends that the cross was necessary because it was the only solution for humanity's loss of rationality and knowledge of God. The second argument, developed in *Incarnation*, complements the first by arguing that only the cross could restore human beings to immortality. These apologetic

arguments reflect Athanasius's literary purpose for *Pagans-Incarnation*, and their centrality suggests that they determined the work's theological content and subjects.

## 1. Date and Purpose of *Pagans-Incarnation*

### *Composition Date*

Although the argument of this chapter does not depend on assigning a particular date to *Pagans-Incarnation*, the argument is supported by what I consider to be the most probable historical context for *Pagans-Incarnation*. Therefore, this section will briefly address the perennial question of the double apology's date. In the process, I will add a new argument in favour of an early date.

We have no external sources of information on the circumstances surrounding the composition of *Pagans-Incarnation*. Answers to the questions of when, where, why, and to whom the treatise was written must therefore be based solely on internal evidence. Some readers have suggested that Athanasius wrote the treatise while he was very young, perhaps in his early twenties.<sup>5</sup> The young Athanasius may have written the work “wanting to show he has read the books of his teachers, and wishing to satisfy his φιλομάθεια [love of learning].”<sup>6</sup> Of course, there are other explanations for the treatise's rather “bookish” tone. If Athanasius was writing during his first exile, he may have wished to highlight his educational credentials in hopes of improving his reputation amidst the controversy. However, I find this explanation unlikely. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, during Athanasius's first exile, Athanasius focused on systematically creating a narrative about “Arianism,” which he used to shift the focus of his deposition from personal to theological matters. This

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, E. P. Meijering, *Orthodoxy and Platonism in Athanasius: Synthesis or Antithesis?* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 108–112.

<sup>6</sup> Meijering, *Orthodoxy and Platonism*, 112.

project required considerable literary output in order for it to be established and maintained, and thus I find it improbable that Athanasius would write the apologetic-focused *Pagans-Incarnation* during this period—especially since the work makes no mention of the “Arians.” Athanasius could have easily included his conspiracy narrative in *Pagans-Incarnation* by comparing his opponents to pagans,<sup>7</sup> which would have further reinforced his narrative. Therefore, based on Athanasius’s literary style and lack of mention of later controversies, I find it more likely that he wrote the work while he was still a relatively young man—perhaps shortly after his controversial appointment as bishop of Alexandria in 328.<sup>8</sup>

One further piece of evidence for ascribing an early date to *Pagans-Incarnation* has received little attention—the potential social benefits of its composition. Christian apologetic works such as those by Origen and Athanasius’s antagonist, Eusebius of Caesarea, were well known and respected in the empire. These works not only provided Christians with counters to various arguments against the faith, but they also demonstrated the piety and learnedness of their authors. It is not difficult to imagine that Athanasius, recognizing these facts, realized that he could accrue similar benefits by writing an apology of his own. This apology could provide Christians in Egypt and abroad with an alternative to the popular apologetic work of Eusebius of Caesarea, whose separation of the Word from the identity of the one true God conflicted with Athanasius’s more inclusive form of monotheism.<sup>9</sup> By writing his own apology,

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<sup>7</sup> For example, Athanasius frequently accuses “Arianism” of following pagan Greek perspectives. See *Orations* 1.18, 1.30, 1.33, 1.34, 2.14, 2.22, 2.28, 2.43, 3.16, 3.35.

<sup>8</sup> Athanasius was born in the last decade of the third century. The date that I suggest for *Pagans-Incarnation* would mean that he wrote the apology when he was in his late twenties or early thirties, which seems more reasonable than attributing the work to his early twenties.

Athanasius could potentially reduce the chance of Eusebius's works influencing the theology and social views of Egyptian clergy and other learned Christians.

This motive fits particularly well with the initial years of Athanasius's time as bishop. As we have noted, Athanasius wears his learning on his sleeve in *Pagans-Incarnation*. An apologetic work of his own could bring Athanasius recognition as a teacher, quash criticisms of his youth, and further legitimize his claim to the see of Alexandria.

The opening of *Pagans*, where Athanasius explains reasons for writing the treatise, provides additional evidence for this scenario. Although the truth about God has been revealed through the testimony of creation, Christ, and the Scriptures, Athanasius's audience apparently desires additional written instruction about this matter (*Pagans* 1). Significantly, Athanasius says they are eager "to hear of it from others," and he acknowledges that "there also exist many treatises of our blessed teachers composed for this purpose;" however, after referring to these other works, he makes the interesting claim that "we do not now have the works of these teachers to hand" and thus "we must expound for you in writing what we have learnt from them" (*Pagans* 1).

Studies attempting to determine the provenance of *Pagans-Incarnation* often see Athanasius's statement about lacking books as an indication that he wrote the work while away from Alexandria. This perspective is built on the assumption that Athanasius would have lacked access to books while in exile. However, there are problems with this notion—particularly regarding Athanasius's exiles in Trier and Rome.

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<sup>9</sup> In addition to this theological grievance, Athanasius's relationship to Eusebius had also surely been strained by the debates that took place around the Council of Nicaea, since Eusebius supported Arius and Athanasius supported Alexander. On Eusebius of Caesarea as a supporter of Arius at this time, see, for example, Sara Parvis, *Marcellus of Anycra: The Lost Years of the Arian Controversy 325–345* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 40–41, 45–46, 75.

While in Trier, Athanasius enjoyed a close relationship with the city's most powerful resident, Constantius II, and Trier was a thriving city due to its status as an imperial residence.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, when Athanasius fled to Rome, he did so at the invitation of Pope Julius, whom Athanasius befriended. Therefore, against the “no books” theory, it seems likely that if Athanasius had wished to consult particular books, he could have privately gained access to these with the aid of Constantius in Trier and Julius in Rome.

Other studies have interpreted Athanasius's phrase about not having the books at hand as a literary device intended to justify the composition of the work in light of the facts that numerous other apologies already exist and God also reveals himself through the Scriptures and creation.<sup>11</sup> This approach is more plausible than the theory that Athanasius lacked books because of being in exile. It could be, therefore, that Athanasius is downplaying his actual access to books in order to explain why he does not simply summarize or copy parts of these previous works.

Although my larger argument does not depend on assigning a particular date to *Pagans-Incarnation*, an early date seems most likely. Hereafter I will assume that the work was written sometime between Athanasius's appointment as bishop (May, 328) and the Council of Tyre (335).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> On Trier, see Robert R. Chenault, “Rome Without Emperors: The Revival of a Senatorial City in the Fourth Century CE” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008), 178–82.

<sup>11</sup> E. P. Meijering, *Athanasius: Contra Gentes; Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984), 2–3.

<sup>12</sup> From the Council of Tyre onwards, Athanasius became more focused on defending himself from personal charges, which led to the creation of his narrative about Arianism. On this focus, see Chapter 4 below.

*Audience and Purpose*

Although we should not automatically assume that every author has a clear audience and purpose in mind,<sup>13</sup> in the case of *Pagans–Incarnation* we can see that Athanasius is writing to Christians, whom he wishes to provide with a new defence of the reasonableness of the cross.

Athanasius reveals that his primary intended audience is Christian by addressing the work to a “friend” (μακάριε) who supposedly loves Christ (*Pagans* 1).<sup>14</sup> Several theories about this “friend” are plausible given the ambiguity throughout *Pagans–Incarnation*. It is possible that this “friend” is a merely a fictional figure or rhetorical device.<sup>15</sup> Alternatively, Athanasius could be writing to a specific person or community, or even to multiple persons or communities within different geographical and social contexts. Whatever the case may be, Athanasius clearly assumes he is writing to a Christian audience. In addition to his use of φιλοχριστώ, Athanasius discloses that he wishes to bolster the recipient’s existing faith in Christ, so “you may have an even greater and fuller piety towards him” (*Incarnation* 1).

Athanasius’s overt purpose for writing *Pagans–Incarnation* is pastoral. As we have seen, he announces that he is writing the work for the sake of the audience’s faith (*Incarnation* 1). After declaring that “knowledge of religion and of the truth about the universe does not so much need instruction from men as it can be acquired by itself” through the works of

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Michael Frede, “Eusebius’ Apologetic Writings,” in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians: Pagans, Jews, and Christians*, ed. Mark J. Edwards, Martin Goodman, and Simon Price (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 234.

<sup>14</sup> Μακάριε has sometimes been taken as a reference to a particular person named Macarius, though this has not found widespread support. On the subject of μακάριε see the summary in James Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), 51n20.

<sup>15</sup> Pierre Thomas Camelot, *Athanasie d’Alexandrie: Contre les païens*, 3rd ed., SC, vol. 18 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1983), 12.

the Word in creation and in the economy of salvation (*Pagans* 1), Athanasius accedes to his “friend’s” supposed request for written instruction on the subject. Athanasius agrees to discuss “a little of the Christian faith” and expound the truth of the “sacred and divinely inspired Scriptures.” However, despite Athanasius’s focus on teaching, *Pagans–Incarnation* is not primarily a catechetical work but rather a pastorally motivated apology. Athanasius makes this clear from the beginning of *Pagans*. Athanasius immediately explains the reasons for his exposition—to prove the reasonableness of Christianity, so that “no one may regard the teaching of our doctrines as worthless, or suppose faith in Christ to be irrational. Such things the pagans misrepresent and scorn, greatly mocking us, though they have nothing other than the cross of Christ to cite in objection” (*Pagans* 1). Here, Athanasius asserts that the primary reason for disbelievers’ objections revolves around Christianity’s claims surrounding Jesus’s death and resurrection—“the cross” (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23). Consequently, Athanasius’s positive apologetic arguments focus on demonstrating the reasonableness of the cross.

With this background in place, we can now briefly examine the primary arguments and perspectives presented in *Pagans–Incarnation* as a whole. I aim to show that Athanasius’s pastoral-apologetic purpose most likely determined the subject matter and theology expressed in the double apology, *Pagans–Incarnation*.

## 2. The Argument of *Pagans*

### *Two Core Arguments*

Athanasius reveals the two main arguments of *Pagans–Incarnation* in the work’s introduction. Athanasius starts out by identifying the cross as the pagans’ primary reason for disbelief (*Pagans* 1). He then counters their mockery of the cross by arguing:

It is particularly in this respect that one must pity their insensitivity, because in slandering the cross they do not see that its power has filled the whole world, and that through it the effects of the knowledge of God have been revealed to all. For if they had really applied their minds to his divinity they would not have mocked at so great a thing, but would rather have recognized that he was the Saviour of the universe and that the cross was not the ruin but the salvation of creation. For if, now that the cross has been set up, all idolatry has been overthrown, and by this sign all demonic activity is put to flight, and only Christ is worshipped, and through him the Father is known, and opponents are put to shame while he every day invisibly converts their souls—how then, one might reasonably ask them, is this still to be considered in human terms, and should one not rather confess that he who ascended the cross is the Word of God and the Saviour of the universe? (*Pagans* 1)

This section introduces two main arguments against those who reject the cross. The first argument appeals to the proselytizing effectiveness of the cross, which Athanasius attributes to the cross revealing the knowledge of God. Pagan conversion from the worship of demons to the worship of the Creator provides proof of this revelation. As a result of the revelation of God through the cross, “all idolatry has been overthrown, and by this sign all demonic activity is put to flight, and only Christ is worshipped, and through him the Father is known, and opponents are put to shame while he every day invisibly converts their souls.” In short, this argument claims that the cross is reasonable because it restores human beings to the knowledge of God. Knowledge of God is crucial for salvation because, as we will see, Athanasius believes that it protects human beings from death and corruption.<sup>16</sup> Further, the knowledge of God that is revealed through the cross is not abstract. The Word’s incarnation, death, and resurrection vividly reveals the unfathomable philanthropy of God. God the Father loved humanity so greatly that he was willing to send his beloved Son to the cross for the salvation of human beings. In

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<sup>16</sup> See below, pp. 51–52.

this way, human beings can once again know God as their loving Creator, who is worthy of praise and obedience.

This argument about the knowledge of God is complemented by a second argument, which Athanasius alludes to in the paragraph above and then develops at length in *Incarnation*. The second argument claims that faith in the cross is justified because the cross “was not the ruin” of Christ’s created body “but the salvation of creation” (*Pagans* 1). This argument maintains that the cross is reasonable because it brings the restoration of immortality to human beings through Christ’s death and resurrection.

I contend that the development of these arguments provides the structure for all but a few sections of *Pagans-Incarnation*. Previous studies have proposed various structures for *Pagans-Incarnation*,<sup>17</sup> but I believe the coherence of each part, and of the treatise as a whole, becomes most clear when we read it in light of these two arguments. In effect, Athanasius dedicates *Pagans* to developing the “restoration of the knowledge of God” argument, which he then completes in *Incarnation*. The majority of *Incarnation*, in turn, focuses on the “restoration of immortality” argument.

The remainder of this section shows that Athanasius dedicates *Pagans* to the development of his first argument. By tracing the content and claims of the remainder of *Pagans*, I demonstrate that nearly every part of the work contributes to this core argument. In describing humankind’s creation according to the image of God, its loss of the knowledge of God,

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<sup>17</sup> See Charles Kannengiesser, *Athanase d’Alexandrie: Sur l’incarnation du Verbe: Introduction, texte critique, traduction, notes, et index.*, SC, vol. 199 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1973), 52–66; Camelot, *Athanase d’Alexandrie: Contre les païens*, 14–17; Karen Jo Torjesen, “The Teaching Function of the Logos: Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, XX–XXXII,” in *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments*, ed. Robert C. Gregg (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1983), 213–21; Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius*, 51–67.

and the idolatrous consequences of this loss, Athanasius highlights humankind's need for the cross to restore them to the knowledge of God.

*Theological Anthropology*

Following his introductory remarks in *Pagans*, Athanasius begins the body of the text with an account of the creation and fall of the human race.

This account offers an explanation of why the saving works of the cross—namely, the restoration of immortality and the knowledge of God—were necessary, providing support for both core arguments. Athanasius sees the creation of human beings as unique from other creatures because only humans were formed according to the image of God. He writes:

[God] has made mankind in his own image through his own Word, our Saviour Jesus Christ; and he also made man perceptive and understanding of reality through his similarity to him, giving him also a conception and knowledge of his own eternity, so that as long as he kept this likeness he might never abandon his concept of God or leave the company of the saints, but retaining the grace of him who bestowed it on him, and also the special power given him by the Father's Word, he might rejoice and converse with God, living an idyllic and truly blessed and immortal life. For having no obstacle to the knowledge of the divine, he continuously contemplates by his purity the image of the Father, God the Word, in whose image he was made, and is filled with admiration when he grasps his providence towards the universe.

(*Pagans* 2)

In Athanasius's account, the human race originally possessed happiness and immortality on account of its unique relationship of similitude with the image of God.<sup>18</sup> God the Father, working “through

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<sup>18</sup>In *Pagans-Incarnation*, Athanasius presents human being as creatures that are simultaneously like and unlike all other created beings. As with all creatures, human beings owe their existence to God, who created them through his Word. Consequently the nature (φύσις) of human persons resembles that of other created beings. It is originate (γενητός), brought into existence from nothing (ἐξ

his own Word,” made human beings according to the Word, who is the Father’s own image (cf. Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4; Heb. 1:3). Here, as throughout *Pagans-Incarnation*, Athanasius maintains the preposition used in Gen. 1:26–27, emphasizing that God made human beings “according to” (κατ’) his image; God did not give human beings his image.<sup>19</sup> Instead of intrinsically possessing the divine image, human beings participate in God’s image through grace.

In *Pagans-Incarnation*, Athanasius employs the language of participation to explain the relationship between creation and the grace of the Word. The Word graciously gives human beings a share in his natural rationality, existence, and imaging of the Father.<sup>20</sup> The appeal of

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οὐκ ὄντων), corruptible (φθαρτός) because of its origination from nothing, and given life and subsistence through the Word (*Pagans* 35, *Incarnation* 3–5). Yet human beings are also distinct from the rest of creation. They alone have been formed according to the image of God (κατ’ εἰκόνα) (*Pagans* 2, 8, 34; *Incarnation* 3, 6, 7). For Athanasius, the human race’s formation according to the divine image distinguishes it from all other beings because this formation implies that human beings were created to image their Creator. As such—as creatures that are both created from nothing and also formed according to the divine image—human beings possess an essential identity and place in the universe of that is uniquely paradoxical. On the one hand, human beings are creatures by nature. They have been created from nothing, and as such they are naturally corruptible—they are naturally pulled back towards non-existence. Their existence therefore entirely depends on God, who creates and sustains them. On the other hand, humans are icons of the Image of God. They have been formed “according to the image of God”—according to the Word, who is “the exact Image of his Father” (*Pagans* 41; Cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; Heb. 1:3) and “the Image of the invisible God” (*Pagans* 41; Col. 1:15).

<sup>19</sup> Régis Bernard, *L’image de Dieu d’après Athanase* (Paris: Aubier, 1952), 27.

<sup>20</sup> The grace of participation overcomes human beings’ natural epistemological limitations because it allows them to share in and actively experience and use attributes that are proper to the Word. Participation language also enables Athanasius to distinguish the Word’s natural possession of these properties from the human experience of them. Both uses are evident in *Pagans* 46. Athanasius says the Son “is the Father’s Power and Wisdom and Word, not being so by participation (μετοχή), nor as if these qualities were imparted to him from

participation language for Athanasius appears to be twofold. First, through the influence of Origen and other Platonizing Biblical interpreters, such language was by then an established part of Greek theological terminology.<sup>21</sup> Second, and most importantly, participation language remained flexible. It could be adapted to express complex Biblical ideas, such as humanity's formation according to the divine image, which required nuanced language capable of articulating contingency, similarity, and distinction. As Khaled Anatolios observes, participation language can be used to indicate and preserve a relationship of both opposition and similarity.<sup>22</sup> Through participation, the participant receives a share in and a similitude to the form; but, the participant simultaneously remains distinct from the form. In turn, the form necessarily transcends the participant in the act of giving a share in itself to the participant. Participation therefore implies a degree of similitude, and similitude implies a degree of participation.

The unique grace of participation in God's image (the Word) empowers the human person, making that person capable of considering divine things, including the Word and, through the Word, the Father. It is crucial to note that, for Athanasius, humanity's imaging of God primarily occurs in the human soul, which, like the Word of God, is immortal and rational (*Pagans* 8, 34).<sup>23</sup> As such, if the soul is kept pure,

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without... [Those] who partake (μετέχοντας) of him... are made wise by him, and receive power and reason in him."

<sup>21</sup> On participation in earlier writers, see below, pp. 246–250. See also David L. Balás, *Μετουσία θεοῦ: Man's Participation in God's Perfections according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa*, *Studia Anselmiana*, vol. 55 (Rome: Libreria Herder, 1966), 6–12; Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), especially 147–52.

<sup>22</sup> Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 51–52.

<sup>23</sup> This association of the image of God with the human soul and its rationality is not new in the fourth century, but it is expressed in very similar terms in

then it possesses a real similarity to the Word (and therefore also to the Father, whom the Word perfectly images). Indeed, the pure soul resembles the Word to such a degree that it is said to reflect the Word “as in a mirror” (*Pagans* 34; cf. 8). When contemplated by the human mind, this reflection brings about real knowledge and contemplation of the Word and, through him, the Father. As long as human beings preserve their divine likeness through purity, avoiding the obstacles of sensual desire, they can enjoy the blessed life God intended for them, namely, a life characterized by immortality and the happiness that comes from the everlasting contemplation of God.

*The Loss of the Knowledge of God*

After this brief introduction to how human beings were created, Athanasius turns his attention towards demonstrating why humans required the salvation achieved through the cross. Athanasius, summarizing what lies at the heart of humanity’s problem, writes:

In this way then, as has been said, did the Creator fashion the human race, and such did he wish it to remain. But men, contemptuous of the better things and shrinking from their apprehension, sought rather what was closer to themselves—and what was closer to them was the body and its sensations. So they turned their minds away from intelligible reality and began to

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Eusebius of Caesarea’s *Preparatio Evangelica*, which Athanasius surely knew at the time of writing *Pagans-Incarnation*. Eusebius writes: “Rather does the rational and immortal soul and the impassible mind in man’s nature seem to me to be rightly spoken of as preserving an image and likeness of God, inasmuch as it is immaterial and incorporeal, and intelligent and rational in its essence, and is capable of virtue and wisdom” (*p.e.* 3.10). Also: “[We] have been made in our soul after the image and likeness of God. And in reference to this man is also regarded as having the nature of a ruler and a king, and is the only one of the creatures upon earth that has powers of reasoning, creating, judging, and legislating, and is capable of learning arts and sciences. For only the soul in man is an intelligent and rational essence, in which the other animals on earth do not participate” (*p.e.* 7.17).

consider themselves. And by considering themselves and cleaving to the body and the other senses, deceived as it were in their own interests, they fell into selfish desires and preferred their own good to the contemplation of the divine. Wasting their time thus and being unwilling to turn away from things close at hand, they imprisoned in the pleasures of the body their souls which had become disordered and defiled by all kinds of desires, and in the end they forgot the power they had received from God in the beginning. (*Pagans* 3)

Following the general narrative of Gen. 2 and 3, Athanasius's account portrays the initial history of human beings as a tragedy. God the Father gave humans the opportunity to enjoy everlasting happiness through the contemplation of the divine, but, as Athanasius continues, "at the urging of the serpent" the first human "abandoned his thinking of God and began to consider himself" (*Pagans* 3). Rather than remaining in contemplation of God, the first humans were deceived by the devil into reorienting their rational powers away from God.

In *Pagans* 4–5, Athanasius explains that the soul, being the "charioteer" of the body (*Pagans* 5), is mobile (εὐκίνητος) by nature and constantly in motion (*Pagans* 4). As such, the first souls believed that as long as they were in motion they were living according to God's will, "not realizing that [the soul] had been created not simply for movement, but for movement towards the right objective" (*Pagans* 4). Consequently, they turned their contemplative abilities and bodily senses away from God (and from "the good," which Athanasius describes as "reality" because "it has its exemplar in God").<sup>24</sup> They focused instead on their bodies, devising ways to abuse their abilities for the enjoyment of selfish bodily pleasures (*Pagans* 4); Athanasius considers these activities to be "evil" and

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<sup>24</sup> On the possible Middle-Platonic background for this aspect of Athanasius's thought, see Meijering, *Orthodoxy and Platonism*, 10–13, who interprets our verse in light of this background. "[*Pagans* 4.4] clearly says therefore that the good things are real, because they are created after the ideas which are God's thoughts."

“unreal” because they do not have their origin in God.<sup>25</sup> In contrast, he understands rationality to be the state in which the soul knows God the Father through the contemplation of the Word and governs itself according to reason.<sup>26</sup> As a result of misusing their abilities in this way, these souls enslaved themselves to the pursuit of debased bodily pleasures, forgetting their formation according to the image of God that had graced them with a rational soul. Thus when these souls abandoned their movement towards God, they also effectively abandoned their rationality.

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<sup>25</sup> For Athanasius, this movement away from the consideration of God is the definition of sin and evil because it robs human beings of their communion with God, making humans—who were created according to the image of God—no better than animals. Further, as humans turn away from God, they inevitably focus on finite pleasures, which leads to greed, murder, and other harmful activities. See also the discussion of “sin as movement” in M. C. Steenberg, *Of God and Man: Theology as Anthropology from Irenaeus to Athanasius* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 174–77.

<sup>26</sup> While contrasting the rationality of humans with animals, Athanasius equates irrationality with ignorance of God and self-governance according to physical desires. Rationality, on the other hand, involves knowing God and judging sense perceptions according to reason and realities beyond the individual person. At its most basic level, rationality distinguishes humans from animals, for it implies that the human “can reason about what lies outside himself, and think about absent things, and recall his reasoning and judge and choose the better arguments. But irrational animals only see what is at hand, and only make for what they can see, even if they thereby come to harm. Man, however, does not rush on what he sees, but judges with his reason what he sees with his eyes” (*Pagans* 31). Rationality, however, as the mind’s capacity to consider and contemplate realities beyond oneself, ultimately entails knowledge and contemplation of the Word and the Father. The soul is immortal and has been given the power to consider things that are immortal and “above the earth” for the sake of beholding God (*Pagans* 33; cf. *Pagans* 8). Each of us has the road to the knowledge of God “within us” (*Pagans* 30). Athanasius identifies this road as our soul’s rationality and intelligence, and he argues that one could only deny this potential by denying the very existence of the soul or its rationality (*Pagans* 30).

*Consequences of Losing the Knowledge of God*

Apart from the occasional supplementary expositions on the formation and fall of human beings, the remainder of *Pagans* describes the consequences of humankind's abandonment of rationality and loss of the knowledge of God. By abandoning their contemplation of God and using their sensory abilities for pleasure, humans discovered that such pleasures are fleeting. Rather than turning back to God, however, humans "began to adopt such an attitude towards [these pleasures] that they were afraid of losing them," and this, in turn, inspired fear of death, because death would bring an end to the enjoyment of bodily pleasures (*Pagans* 3). The fleeting quality and finite quantity of these pleasures also evoked greed. The soul could not be fully satisfied by bodily pleasures, and thus "desiring and not obtaining satisfaction, it learned to murder and commit injustice" as it attempted to obtain for itself as much pleasure as possible, through whatever means was necessary (*Pagans* 3). In *Pagans* 5, Athanasius expands on this theme, showing that the pursuit of pleasure involves misusing the body and harming other persons, and that these evils "have no cause save the turning away from better things."

In *Pagans* 6–7, Athanasius highlights another consequence of humankind's loss of rationality and the knowledge of God: certain human beings, aware of the presence of evil in the world but unaware of Christ, have concluded that evil must be a substantive reality created by a god. Athanasius of course rejects this view, arguing that it contradicts Scripture and reason. Thinking first of gnostics, Athanasius refutes this position by arguing that if evil truly exists, then either God is not the creator of all things or God is the creator of evil. Turning to Marcionites, Athanasius acknowledges that some heretics have avoided these conclusions by proposing a solution that annuls Christianity's claims to monotheism: there are two Creators—one of good things and one of evil things.

The remainder of *Pagans* amounts to an extended refutation of Greek

and pagan idolatry. This idolatry is a consequence of the irrationality characteristic of fallen human beings, who have lost the knowledge of God. The refutation begins in *Pagans* 11–29, where Athanasius attempts to demonstrate the inadequacy of these idols, arguing that it is not right for human beings to worship “gods” who are characterized by the basest of human behaviours (11–12; 14; 16–18), comprised of immobile, lifeless wood and stones (13; 15–16), formed by irrational artists and poets (13; 19–22), considered local deities (23–24), associated with practices that make their worshippers less than irrational animals (25–26), or are corporeal parts of the universe (27–29). Next, in *Pagans* 30–34, Athanasius criticizes idolatry on the basis of the human soul. He contends that idolatry cannot be justified because the soul, being formed according to the image of God, provides humankind with the ability to know its Creator. Lastly, Athanasius dedicates the rest of *Pagans* (35–47) to refuting idolatry on account of God’s self-revelation to humanity. Here Athanasius argues that there is no excuse for idolatry because the Father and the Word have revealed themselves through the harmonious order of the universe (35–47), which is also testified to in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Athanasius concludes *Pagans* by reminding his readers of humankind’s predicament prior to the incarnation of the Word. Although human beings were created according to God’s image, and given every opportunity to preserve (and later regain) their knowledge of God, they ignored these opportunities, acting instead like “completely blinded fools” (*Pagans* 47), “worshipping creation instead of the creator” (Rom. 1.25) and living as those who deserved “great shame and merciless danger” because “although they knew the road of truth they did the opposite to what they knew” (*Pagans* 47). In this manner, *Pagans* ends as it begins, with a focus on the importance of the knowledge of God.

### 3. The Arguments of *Incarnation*

#### *A Change of Focus*

With the opening of *Incarnation*, Athanasius begins a gradual transition from the focus in *Pagans* on the loss and restoration of the knowledge of God to the subject of the loss and restoration of immortality, which becomes the primary theme of *Incarnation*. Athanasius starts out by summarizing the content of *Pagans* in a manner that further supports my argument about the purpose of *Pagans*. He describes *Pagans* as a treatise “regarding the error of the Gentiles concerning idols and their superstition, how their invention was from the beginning, and that out of wickedness human beings devised for themselves the worship of idols,” which also contains “points regarding the divinity of the Word of the Father and his providence and power in all things, that through him the good Father arranges all things, by him all things are moved, and in him are given life” (*Incarnation* 1). For Athanasius, *Pagans* was meant to demonstrate the necessity of the cross by highlighting the evil and irrationality that arose as a result of humans forgetting their Creator and replacing him with gods of their own invention.

Having summarized *Pagans*, Athanasius proceeds by anticipating a theme that he will return to later in *Incarnation*: the cross is mocked by unbelievers because of its weakness, but this very weakness shows the power of God, for it was through the powerless cross that Christ did the “impossible” (ἀδύνατα) in defeating death, overthrowing idolatry, and revealing God. Athanasius argues that mockery of Christ’s crucifixion ultimately promotes the worship of Christ because:

The more [Christ] is mocked by unbelievers by so much he provides a greater witness of his divinity, because what human beings cannot understand as impossible, these he shows to be possible, and what human beings mock as unseemly, these he renders fitting by his own goodness, and what human beings through sophistry laugh at as merely human, these by his power he shows to be divine, overturning the illusion of idols by his own

apparent degradation through the cross, invisibly persuading those who mock and disbelieve to recognize his divinity and power.

(*Incarnation 1*)

The apparent degradation of the cross presents a stumbling block to so-called wise persons who are too proud to believe that God could work in this way. However, to those who believe, the apparent powerlessness of Christ on the cross proves the power of God and strengthens their faith. This is because the cross shows that God was able to do the impossible through the most unlikely of means.

Athanasius's transition from the focus in *Pagans* on rationality and knowledge of God to the subject of mortality continues in *Incarnation 2–7*. In *Incarnation 2*, Athanasius introduces the subject of cosmogony, which leads to a second account of the creation of the universe and the fall of human beings.<sup>27</sup> He observes that the various Greek cosmogonies rob God of his glory as Creator, teaching that the universe was formed through spontaneity,<sup>28</sup> preexistent matter,<sup>29</sup> or a creator other than the Father of Christ.<sup>30</sup> Athanasius proceeds to contrast these views with his understanding of creation. In *Pagans*, Athanasius's account of creation and the fall emphasizes the significance of the rationality of the human soul due to its formation according to the image of God, which gave humans the ability to know God. The nature of this account helps to set up Athanasius's argument for the need to restore rationality and the knowledge of God. In *Incarnation 3*, the account of the creation and the fall reaffirms humanity's rationality, but it places more emphasis on matters related to human mortality and immortality. The account begins

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<sup>27</sup> On the first account, see above, pp. 40–45; *Pagans* 2–5.

<sup>28</sup> Athanasius attributes this to the Epicureans. Cf. the denigrative account in Aelian, *fr.* 61.

<sup>29</sup> Attributed to Plato. See *Tim.* 31b–33a.

<sup>30</sup> Athanasius is thinking of Marcionism, which is described similarly in Eusebius of Caesarea, *b.e.* 4.11; Origen, *princ.* 2.4.3; Irenaeus, *haer.* 2.1.

by again linking humanity's rationality to its formation according to the image of God:

[God] seeing that by the principle of [humanity's] own coming into being it would not be able to endure eternally (καὶ θεωρήσας ὡς οὐχ ἰκανὸν εἶη κατὰ τὸν τῆς ἰδίας γενέσεως λόγον διαμένειν αἰεὶ), he granted them a further gift, creating human beings not simply like all the irrational (ἄλογα) animals upon the earth but making them according to his own image, giving them a share of the power of his own Word (μεταδοὺς αὐτοῖς καὶ τῆς τοῦ ἰδίου Λόγου δυνάμεως), so that having as it were shadows of the Word and being made rational (ἵνα ὥσπερ σκιάς τινας ἔχοντες τοῦ Λόγου καὶ γενόμενοι λογικοὶ), they might be able to abide in blessedness, living the true life which is really that of the holy ones in paradise.

(*Incarnation 3*)

As in *Pagans*, Athanasius at least partially defines the formation of human beings according to the image of God in terms of the experience of rationality, and describes this rationality as a participation in the Word's own rationality.<sup>31</sup> Human rationality is again associated with the preservation of immortality.

#### *The Restoration of Immortality*

From here, the subject of immortality becomes central to Athanasius's account of the creation and fall of human beings. God created humans with free choice, and he desired for them to use their contemplative abilities to remain in paradise and in relationship to himself. God also recognized that free choice involved risk. Humans could use their contemplative powers to focus on bodily pleasures, which would lead

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<sup>31</sup> The English use of "Word" and "rationality" for λόγος and λογικός of course hides the cognate relationship between these Greek words. The language of participation indicates that humans do not intrinsically possess rationality; their experience of rationality is contingent on their relationship to the Word. For more on participation, see above, pp. 41–43, and Chapter 6.

them to invent evil. The implicit problem with this option is that allowing humans to live forever after abandoning God and discovering evil would ultimately result in a world filled with unending horror.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, according to Athanasius, God, being wise and good, established the law of death to protect humans from this scenario. Consequently, if the first humans “guarded the grace” of their rational powers and their formation according to the image of God, using it only for good, they would preserve their immortality, living the angelic life with God. On the other hand, if they turned from God, becoming evil, “they would know that they endure the corruption of death according to nature (γινώσκουσιν ἑαυτοὺς τὴν ἐν θανάτῳ κατὰ φύσιν φθορὰν ὑπομένειν), and no longer live in paradise, but thereafter dying outside of it, would remain in death and corruption (μένειν ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ καὶ ἐν τῇ φθορᾷ)” (*Incarnation* 3 TM).

Here, Athanasius introduces an important theme in *Incarnation*—that death is accompanied by corruption. Athanasius describes his understanding of this relationship in the subsequent section, which discusses the fall of human beings. He writes:

For the transgression of the commandment returned them to the natural state (τὸ κατὰ φύσιν), so that, just as they, not being (οὐκ ὄντες), came to be, so also they might rightly endure in time the corruption unto non-being (τὴν εἰς τὸ μὴ εἶναι φθορὰν). For if having a nature that did not once exist (τὸ μὴ εἶναι ποτε), they were called into existence by the Word’s advent and love for human beings, it follows that when human beings were bereft of the knowledge of God and had turned to things which exist not—evil is non-being, the good is being, since it has come into being from the existing God—then they were bereft also of eternal being. But this, being decomposed, is to remain in death and corruption (μένειν ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ καὶ τῇ φθορᾷ). For the human being is by nature mortal (θνητός), having come

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<sup>32</sup> In this scenario individuals could subject one another to every evil imaginable for the sake of attempting to satisfy their corporeal desires. Exploited persons would never be able to escape from these unchecked terrors—not even through death, since there is no death.

into being from nothing (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων γεγονώς). But because of his likeness (ὁμοιότητα) to the One who Is, which, if had guarded through his comprehension (κατανοήσεως) of him, would have blunted his natural corruption (φύσιν φθοράν), he would have remained incorruptible (ἔμεινεν ἄφθαρτος).

(*Incarnation* 4)

Human beings, having been created by God out of nothing, are naturally pulled towards this nothingness. However, by the grace of participation in the Word and contemplation of God, humans were initially protected from this draw towards non-existence.<sup>33</sup> However, when humans turned their contemplation from God to themselves and sensual things, they forfeited everything that anchored them to goodness and life; consequently, they are pulled back towards the nothingness from which they came. In *Incarnation* 10, Athanasius contrasts this understanding of death accompanied by corruption with the almost sleep-like death (not accompanied by corruption) that human beings now experience as they await “the general resurrection of all” from the dead.

This second account of the creation and fall of human beings provides the justification for Athanasius’s claim that humans required

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<sup>33</sup> To Athanasius, the Word is capable of sustaining human beings because he is incorruptible. On Athanasius’s understanding of incorruptibility, it is important to note that, as Louis Bouyer, *L’Incarnation et l’Église-Corps du Christ dans la théologie de saint Athanase* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1943), 37, observes, “L’ἀφθαρσία n’est pas simplement le fait de ne pas mourir: elle est la propriété d’une vie qui n’a en elle-même aucune raison de cesser jamais d’être, qui se définirait au contraire comme de l’être à l’état pur, si l’on peut dire.” Incorruptibility is not a negative term, meaning merely the inability to perish. Instead, it is a divine quality, proper to the eternal Creator. This aspect of incorruptibility is expressed well in Johannes Roldanus, *Le Christ et l’homme dans la théologie d’Athanase d’Alexandrie* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 59–60. Roldanus writes: “[Αφθαρσία] elle est une expression synonyme de comprendre Dieu comme celui qui, seul, est et vit réellement et qui, par là, peut donner existence et vie.” As such, incorruptibility should be associated with life more than death.

salvation from death and corruption. After reminding readers of the evil actions that followed humanity's turn away from God (*Incarnation* 5), Athanasius devotes the subsequent five sections to explaining how the incarnation of the Word occurred as a philanthropic response to humanity's need for rescue from death and corruption (*Incarnation* 6–10).

In his first discussion about the Word's philanthropic response, Athanasius presents his famous "divine dilemma" argument (*Incarnation* 6–7). God, Athanasius says, had made the law proclaiming that if human beings transgressed his commandment they would die. After humans disobeyed his commandment and began to die, God was placed in a difficult position (by human standards, at least). If God revoked the law of death, it would invalidate his statement about death, which by extension would make him appear to be a liar (*Incarnation* 6, 7). On the other hand, "it was supremely improper that the workmanship of God in human beings should disappear either through their own negligence or through the deceit of demons" because this would make God appear to be weak (*Incarnation* 6). The only apparent solution—repentance—would temporarily halt human sin, but it would still make God appear inconsistent, leaving humanity marked by corruption and deprived of being in the image of God (*Incarnation* 7). Consequently, Athanasius argues, there was only one solution that would solve all of these problems—the incarnation of the Word.

Through the course of *Incarnation*, Athanasius describes the incarnation of the Word in several ways. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine these here, but it is important to grasp his basic logic regarding the Word's incarnate presence and experience. Athanasius frequently uses forms of ἐνανθρωπήσαντα (literally, "enhumanization") to speak of the incarnation, which expresses the notion of the Word coming to be "in" a human being for the sake of humanity's salvation.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>As John Behr notes, Athanasius connects the incarnation with the cross.

Athanasius says that in the incarnation the Word “takes for himself a body and that not foreign to our own (καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἀλλότριον τοῦ ἡμετέρου)... from a spotless and stainless virgin” (*Incarnation* 8).

As a result of the Word coming to humanity in this way, being joined to a body, the Word was able to address the problems that had become inherent to humankind. In *Incarnation* 8–10, Athanasius summarizes the Word’s intentions for his incarnation, death, and resurrection. The Word desired that:

On the one hand, with all dying in him the law concerning corruption in human beings might be undone (its power being fully expended in the lordly body and no longer having any ground against similar human beings), and, on the other hand, that as human beings had turned towards corruption he might turn them again to incorruptibility and give them life from death, by making the body his own and by the grace of the resurrection banishing death from them as straw from fire.  
(*Incarnation* 8)<sup>35</sup>

Athanasius credits the Word with resolving two specific problems—guilt under the law, requiring the death of all, and corruption in death. Motivated by his love for humankind, the Word resolved these by taking a body that is like (ὁμοιον) other human bodies but of the Virgin, and then offering it “to the Father.” For Athanasius, Christ’s death pays the debt required by the law of death, and his death and subsequent resurrection rescues the human body from the corruption that accompanied death.

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Athanasius “uses the word ‘incarnation’ in a broader sense than has since become customary in theology.... ‘Incarnation’ does not simply refer to the birth of Jesus from Mary... but rather refers to this birth when seen from, and then described in, the perspective of the Cross.” See John Behr, *The Nicene Faith* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2004), 1:184–85.

<sup>35</sup> See also the similar summaries in *Incarnation* 9, 10. Cf. Augustine, *ep.* 140.15 for a different use of the straw and fire imagery.

In sections 10 and 11, Athanasius makes an important thematic transition. As we have seen, in *Incarnation* 6–10, Athanasius focuses on explaining how the incarnation of the Word occurred as a loving response to humanity’s loss of immortality. At the end of *Incarnation* 10, Athanasius provides a summary of the effects of Christ’s death and resurrection that is very similar to the text that was just quoted (*Incarnation* 8). Athanasius explains again that Christ’s sacrifice fulfilled the law of death and his resurrection ended the corruption accompanying death. Athanasius then writes, “this, therefore, is the first motive (αἰτία) for the incarnation of the Saviour” (*Incarnation* 10 TM). So, in *Incarnation*, Athanasius considers the abolition of corruption and fulfillment of the law of death to be one of the two principal motives for the Word’s incarnation.

At the beginning of this chapter, I claimed that Athanasius uses two arguments in *Pagans-Incarnation* to explain the reasonableness of the cross—one concerning immortality and one concerning rationality and the knowledge of God. In the quotation above (*Incarnation* 10), Athanasius explicitly identifies themes associated with the restoration of immortality as the “first motive” for the incarnation. Later, in *Incarnation* 16, Athanasius explicitly identifies the restoration of the knowledge of God as the other “motive” for the incarnation.

#### *The Restoration of the Knowledge of God*

In *Incarnation* 11–19, Athanasius returns to the subject of the knowledge of God. First, Athanasius says that God created human beings to be distinct from animals, which is why God initially provided them with the ability to know him, their maker. Whereas animals are “irrational creatures” because they lack the knowledge of their creator, human beings have been made according to God’s “own image and according to this likeness, so that understanding through such grace the image, I mean the Word of the Father, they might be able to receive through him a notion

of the Father, and knowing the Creator they might live the happy and truly blessed life” (*Incarnation* 11).<sup>36</sup>

Then, repeating the broad ideas outlined in *Pagans* about humanity’s fall, the loss of the knowledge of God, and the invention of idols (*Incarnation* 11), Athanasius proceeds to explain how the cross offered the solution to this loss. Although “the grace of being in the image was sufficient to know God the Word, and through him the Father,” God “anticipated also their carelessness” and revealed himself through created things, so that they might know him even if their attention “descended gradually to lower things” (*Incarnation* 12). Athanasius lists various ways in which God revealed himself before the incarnation, including through the law, the prophets, the “heavens,” and the harmony of the universe. Yet, despite these opportunities, human beings were focused on bodily things and “sated themselves even more with evils and sins, so that they no longer appeared rational, but from their ways of life were reckoned irrational” (*Incarnation* 12). Therefore, because human beings were now focused entirely on bodily things, it was necessary for the Word to appear in a body so that he, being the image of God, might reveal to them the Father and, through his works, demonstrate his own identity as the Word of God (*Incarnation* 15; 16–18).

Although the Word revealed his identity in many ways during his lifetime, the most dramatic revelation occurred as a result of the cross. Following the narratives in the Synoptic gospels, Athanasius claims that “all creation confessed that he who was made known and suffered in the body was not simply a human being but Son of God and Saviour for all. For the sun turned back and the earth shook and the mountains were rent, and all were awed” (*Incarnation* 19).<sup>37</sup> Creation’s response to the

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<sup>36</sup> Unlike several of his predecessors, Athanasius does not distinguish between God’s image and likeness. See Bernard, *L’Image de Dieu*, 27–29.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Matt. 27:45–54; Mark 13:33; Luke 23:44–45.

Word's death showed "the whole of creation to be his servant, witnessing in fear the advent of the Master. In this way, then, God the Word showed himself to human beings by his works" (*Incarnation* 19 TM).

From here, Athanasius proceeds to reiterate the content of *Incarnation* 6–10, though in summarized form (*Incarnation* 20–21). It is important to note that Athanasius admits he is repeating himself, but he reasons that "it is better to submit to the blame of repetition than to omit anything that should be laid down" (*Incarnation* 20). This shows that Athanasius is careful to include everything that he considers to be relevant for his purposes in *Pagans-Incarnation*. By extension, he has omitted any subjects that he considers to be extraneous to his argument, such as the subject of the Holy Spirit.

Following this summary, Athanasius takes up the questions and objections raised by four groups. First, he addresses critics outside of the church whose arguments against the reasonableness of the cross appear to have troubled Athanasius's audience. Athanasius counters each objection with arguments about why Christ's death had to occur through the cross (*Incarnation* 21–24). Second, Athanasius responds to earnest Christians who also wonder if the cross was necessary. Athanasius provides a list of outcomes that, he believes, could only have been accomplished by the cross. Through the cross, the Word bore "the curse," paid the ransom of death, drew Jews and Gentiles to himself, purified the air from demons, overthrew the devil, and opened the way to heaven (*Incarnation* 25).<sup>38</sup> The cross also allowed the Word to demonstrate his victory over death by means of rising from the dead and appearing to his disciples (*Incarnation*

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<sup>38</sup> On the purification of the air and preparation of the way to heaven, which David Brakke calls the "myth of heavenly ascent," see David Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 153–54. On the subject in *Antony*, see *ibid.*, 217–26; Jonathan L. Zecher, *The Role of Death in the Ladder of Divine Ascent and the Greek Ascetic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 83–85, 91–95.

26, 30), and by working invisibly in individuals, persuading mortals to no longer fear death and idolaters to abandon all magic, demons, and idolatry (*Incarnation* 27–29, 31–32).<sup>39</sup> From here, Athanasius responds to the objections of the Jews, who, he claims, fail to see that the Scriptures predicted the incarnation, the cross, and the resurrection (*Incarnation* 33–40). Finally, Athanasius tackles the objections of the Greeks, who reportedly think it is absurd that the Word should have taken a human body. Athanasius argues once again that the incarnation—which Athanasius associates with the entire mission of the Word, including his teaching, death, and resurrection—was the only solution to humanity’s loss of immortality and the knowledge of God (*Incarnation* 41–45). Athanasius follows this up by then comparing the work of Christ to that of other gods. He argues that the legitimacy of Christianity and the superiority of Christ over these so-called gods have been proven by the fact that throughout the world humans are abandoning idols, magic, and war, and are now dedicating themselves to chastity, peace, and the worship of Christ (*Incarnation* 46–53).

The next section, *Incarnation* 54, contains Athanasius’s famous dictum that the Word “was made man that we might be made God.” This statement has become the paradigmatic expression of deification for many students and teachers,<sup>40</sup> yet, its meaning has often been determined by

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<sup>39</sup> Athanasius argues that if Christ had remained dead, then these changes of attitude and behaviour would not have occurred since “the dead can effect nothing” (*Incarnation* 31).

<sup>40</sup> Many introductory accounts of deification use Athanasius’s famous dictum as the basis for their discussion of the subject in the patristic period. For just one of many possible examples, see the popular textbook Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 5th ed. (West Sussex: Blackwell, 2011), 339.

The prominence of Athanasius’s dictum has inspired numerous studies of his doctrine of deification. A useful note about the scholarly treatment of the term itself occurs in Nathan K. K. Ng, “A Reconsideration of the Use of the Term ‘Deification’ in Athanasius,” *Coptic Church Review* 22, no. 1 (2001): 34–42. The

readers' preexisting notions of what deification entails rather than by a careful study of the dictum's literary context. Although an in-depth study of the statement is beyond the scope of this thesis, the statement's original primary meaning can be discerned from a brief summary of *Incarnation* 54.

In *Incarnation* 54, Athanasius begins to conclude his defence of the reasonableness of the cross. As his defence winds down, he emphasizes his two central points by alternating his discussion between them, switching from one to the other multiple times in the first half of section 54. Athanasius starts this pattern with his argument about the knowledge of God. Christ and the cross are praiseworthy because God has revealed himself to humanity through them, meaning human beings have regained their knowledge of God. Next, Athanasius reiterates his argument about immortality, writing that "by death incorruptibility has come to all" (*Incarnation* 54). Then, returning to his argument about the knowledge of God, he claims that "through the incarnation of the Word the universal providence, and its giver and creator, the very Word of God, have been

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best summary occurs in Russell, *Deification*, 166–88, although the account in Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. James Millar, vol. 3 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1897), 290–95, is valuable because of its influence on subsequent studies. See also the French spiritual predecessor to Russell's work, recently translated into English, Jules Gross, *The Divinization of the Christian according to the Greek Fathers*, trans. Paul A. Onica (Anaheim: A&C Press, 2002). There have also been several doctoral dissertations and theses written on the subject. The most useful include Keith Edward Norman, "Deification: The Content of Athanasian Soteriology" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1980); John R. Meyer, "The Soteriology of Saint Athanasius of Alexandria: The Conformation of the Christian to Christ" (PhD diss., University of Navarre, 1992), 189–289, 304–8; Daniel E. Wilson, "A Comparison of Irenaeus' and Athanasius' Respective Descriptions of Deification in Relation to Adolf Harnack's History of Dogma" (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005); Viacheslav V. Lytvynenko, "The Doctrine of God and Deification in Athanasius of Alexandria: Relations and Qualities" (PhD thesis, Charles University, 2014).

made known.” After this, he famously states that the Word “was made man that we might be made God” (ET: NPNF), which he immediately follows with another statement about the knowledge of God: “He manifested himself through a body that we might receive an idea of the invisible Father.”

Continuing his alternating pattern, Athanasius returns to the subject of immortality. Athanasius writes: “And he endured the insults of human beings, that we might inherit incorruptibility” (*Incarnation* 54). Midway through section 54, having alternated between the subjects of immortality and the knowledge of God five times, Athanasius ends the pattern. To conclude the pattern, he states that the works of the Word are innumerable, being far greater and more numerous than even what his list indicates.

Next, in *Incarnation* 55, Athanasius reiterates his revelation argument for the last time, declaring that the conversion of pagans to faith in Christ proves that Christ is the true Son and Word of God. Finally, Athanasius concludes the treatise with two exhortations. First, his audience must study the Scriptures to confirm and supplement his teachings in *Pagans-Incarnation*. Second, these Christians must imitate the virtuous lives of the saints so they can be raised into heaven on the day of judgment.

Athanasius’s famous dictum that the Word “was made man that we might be made God” occurs in the middle of Athanasius’s rhetorical pattern of alternating between the subjects of immortality and knowledge of God. In the ancient world, Greek, Jewish, and Christian writers treated immortality as the distinctive attributes of the divine being(s).<sup>41</sup> Given the strong association of immortality with divinity, it is not unlikely that

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<sup>41</sup> Immortality is central to the doctrines of deification held by Irenaeus and Cyril of Alexandria. On the subject in Paul, Irenaeus, and Cyril, see Ben C. Blackwell, *Christosis: Pauline Soteriology in Light of Deification in Irenaeus and Cyril of Alexandria* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), especially 100–109, 255–57.

Athanasius intended for his dictum about deification to be interpreted primarily as a statement about humanity's restoration to the divine quality of immortality. This interpretation makes the most sense of the dictum, given its context within Athanasius's alternating discussions about immortality and knowledge of God. If Athanasius's dictum is primarily about immortality, then Athanasius's pattern is consistent from beginning to end (*Incarnation* 53). Therefore, I would argue that when Athanasius writes that the Word "was made man that we might be made God," Athanasius understands this deification to first and foremost involve the restoration of human beings to the state of God-like immortality.

### Conclusion

If the content of *Pagans-Incarnation* was primarily determined by the aim to demonstrate the reasonableness of the cross, then we should not expect the work to include material on tangential matters. In the previous two sections of this chapter, I argued that Athanasius uses two parallel arguments to justify faith in the cross. These focus on the restoration of immortality and the restoration of knowledge of God. Both of these arguments address humankind's need for salvation from its problems and claim that the cross was the only means by which these problems could be resolved, making the cross necessary and therefore reasonable.

Therefore, the relative absence of pneumatological material in *Pagans-Incarnation* should not surprise us. Discussing matters that are not immediately useful for supporting these arguments would obscure Athanasius's argument and therefore detract from his purpose for the work. Athanasius was not writing a catechetical work intended to outline the beliefs of the Christian church, nor was he attempting to provide a philosophical exposition of the faith, nor was he writing an *apologia* addressed to non-Christian audiences. Consequently, he had no need to

provide catechesis on baptism,<sup>42</sup> exposition on the relationships between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or a defence of the Christian understanding of the Spirit in relation to previous Greek and Jewish perspectives.

As I argued above,<sup>43</sup> Athanasius was writing a pastoral work, and his intention was only to demonstrate the reasonableness of the cross to Christians. This, it seems to me, is the most likely reason why *Pagans-Incarnation* contains only a handful of references to the Holy Spirit. Athanasius's three references to the Holy Spirit are the kind of references that we would expect to see in a pastoral work written to encourage Christians. Two of these references occur in the context of introducing the prophetically inspired Scriptures (*Pagans* 7, 14), and the final reference occurs in the concluding doxology (*Incarnation* 57).<sup>44</sup> By writing to those inside the church, Athanasius could assume his audience possessed at least a basic knowledge of the Holy Spirit acquired through participation in worship and the liturgy, listening to sermons and Scripture, and perhaps receiving catechesis about Pentecost.

My argument here, therefore, is that the relative absence of the subject of the Holy Spirit in *Pagans-Incarnation* should not be interpreted as an indication that Athanasius lacked an understanding of the Holy Spirit in relation to either God and creation or the economy of salvation. Athanasius's priority is to show that the cross was necessary in order to provide human beings with the salvation that they required, which he believes will, in turn, prove the reasonableness of the cross.

Towards the end of *Incarnation* Athanasius acknowledges that much more could be written about the incarnation, but he says that it is better

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<sup>42</sup> In catechetical literature, the ritual of baptism was often associated with the gift of the Holy Spirit. See, for example, Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.* 3.

<sup>43</sup> See above, pp. 32–37.

<sup>44</sup> As we will see in Chapter 2, these kinds of references to the Holy Spirit are what we find in many of Athanasius's other pastoral works, such as the *Festal Epistles*.

to focus on only a few subjects and leave his readers to consider the rest for themselves (*Incarnation* 54). This approach, I suggest, reflects his broader attitude towards the subjects that he chose to discuss in *Pagans-Incarnation*. Athanasius recognizes that providing a comprehensive catechesis on Christ and the faith would require a substantially larger treatise, and thus he chooses to include only matters that would serve his primary literary aim of showing the reasonableness of the cross.

Athanasius's approach also explains the absence of other subjects that we know were important to and understood by Athanasius. For example, from early on in his career Athanasius's affairs were hindered by the Meletians, whom he regarded as enemies of the faith. Yet, Athanasius makes no clear reference to the Meletians. Further, we know that by the 330s Athanasius had begun to interact with monastic communities and promote ascetic values. Yet, despite the presence of these themes in Athanasius's early thought, they are also largely excluded from *Pagans-Incarnation*.

The fact that these and other themes are also absent from the double apology provides further support for my claim that Athanasius was writing a pastoral treatise with a specific intention in mind and that he intentionally omitted tangential matters, regardless of their importance in his own thought. He omitted these subjects because he wished to keep his treatise focused on the matter at hand, namely the demonstration of the reasonableness of the cross. Therefore, I would suggest, while it is possible that Athanasius did not yet possess any sort of developed views on the Holy Spirit, claims that Athanasius lacked a pneumatology should be based on more than his reticence about the Spirit in *Pagans-Incarnation*.

In order to assess Athanasius's early theology of the Holy Spirit, we must turn to other sources. The most important evidence concerning Athanasius's early theology of the Holy Spirit occurs in Athanasius's

pastoral texts written before 340, which we will examine in the next chapter.

## Pneumatology in the Early Pastoral Works

### Introduction

Athanasius's early pastoral works, which I define as those written before 340, contain his earliest extant references to the Holy Spirit. The majority of his references to the Spirit occur in the *Festal Letters*, but Athanasius also includes the Spirit in his works on virginity and in the concluding Trinitarian doxology of *Incarnation*.<sup>1</sup> Together, this makes these pastoral contexts the best witnesses to Athanasius's early theology of the Holy Spirit. Yet, these contexts have been omitted from almost every study on Athanasian pneumatology.<sup>2</sup> The reason for this neglect is due to the

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<sup>1</sup> We cannot be certain of the composition date of the works on virginity. Brakke proposes an early date for *ep. virg. 1*, but he acknowledges that it is uncertain. *ep. virg. 2* and *Virginity* may have been written later in Athanasius's life, but their dates are even less certain. For the sake of caution, I assume the dates of all three works on virginity cannot be known. See David Brakke, "The Authenticity of the Ascetic Athanasiana," *Orientalia* 63 (1994): 17–56

<sup>2</sup> Athanasius's remarks about the Spirit in the *Festal Letters* and the works on virginity are absent from Swete, *Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*; Adolf Laminski, *Der Heilige Geist als Geist Christi und Geist der Gläubigen: Der Beitrag des Athanasios von Alexandrien zur Formulierung des trinitarischen Dogmas im vierten Jahrhundert. Jht.* (Leipzig: St. Benno-Verlag GMBH, 1969); Jean Pierre Mercier, "Le Saint-Esprit d'après Saint Athanase" (PhD thesis, Lille, 1969); Theodore Campbell, "The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Theology of Athanasius," *SJTb* 27, no. 4 (1974): 408–40; George Dragas, "Holy Spirit and Tradition," *Sobornost* 1 (1979): 51–72; Haykin, *Spirit of God*; Meyer, "Clarifying the Filioque"; Morales, "La préhistoire de la controverse filioquiste"; Xavier Morales, *La théologie trinitaire d'Athanasie d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2006); Ritter, "Der Heilige Geist". To my knowledge, Charles Kannengiesser's article

pastoral works' textual preservation, literary style, and theological content. The textual preservation of the *Festals* and works on virginity in ancient languages is worse than works such as *Pagans-Incarnation* and the *Orations*. Rather than being preserved in their original language of Greek, the *Festals* and works on virginity are preserved primarily through Coptic and Syriac translations, making them less accessible.<sup>3</sup> Further, their literary style and content is pragmatic. They focus on moral exhortation rather than theological catechesis. Consequently they contain no discussions about the nature of the Holy Spirit or the relationships between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which makes their theological value less apparent. Despite their neglect by scholarship, these works contain remarks that show that from an early stage in Athanasius's career, Athanasius understood the Spirit to be integral to salvation, asceticism, and worship.

This chapter begins by outlining the argument and paschal theology of *Festal* 1. This context provides the background necessary for properly interpreting Athanasius's statements about the Holy Spirit in *Festal* 1, and

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"Athanasius of Alexandria and the Holy Spirit Between Nicea I and Constantinople I": 166–180, is the only study that explores the pneumatology of the early *Festal Letters*; however, Kannengiesser's analyses are based on a chronology of the letters that is no longer considered accurate.

<sup>3</sup> Short quotations from the *Festals* are preserved in Armenian and Greek. In Greek, we also have a large portion of *Festal* 39. Our best witnesses to the *Festals* are Syriac and Coptic translations, although these are not completely preserved. On the letters' transmission, see Alberto Camplani, *Atanasio di Alessandria: Lettere festali—Anonimo: Indice delle Lettere festali* (Milano: Paoline, 2003), 18–24; Timothy Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 183–85.

For English translations of the Syriac, see NPNF 4; for French translations of the Coptic, see L. T. Lefort, *Lettres festales et pastorales en copte*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, vol. 150 (Louvain: Durbecq, 1955). The closest we have to a critical translation is Camplani, *Lettere Festali*, which offers an overview, chronology, and Italian translation of each letter.

it is also valuable for understanding pneumatological content in subsequent *Festals*. Next, with this background in place, sections 2 through 5 examine Athanasius's references to the Holy Spirit in *Festal 1* and subsequent pastoral works. Together, these sections highlight key themes in Athanasius's early understanding of the Spirit. These themes will then be used in Chapter 3 to trace the degree of continuity and development in the views that Athanasius expresses about the Spirit in his later pastoral works.

### 1. Argument and Paschal Theology of *Festal 1*

In *Festal 1*, written in 329,<sup>4</sup> Athanasius develops an argument about the observation of Easter that is both exhortative and catechetical.

Athanasius's argument urges his audience to celebrate Easter, the greatest feast of the church, with proper ethical and spiritual preparation. The argument also explains the feast's relationship to the Jewish Passover. We will trace *Festal 1*'s argument here before discussing its pneumatological content for two reasons. First, Athanasius's explanation of the Easter feast in *Festal 1* is developed gradually and with detail, and it is free of anti-Meletian and anti-"Arian" polemic. These qualities make *Festal 1* the ideal introduction to Athanasius's subsequent *Festals*, which assume many of the same perspectives on the observation of Easter. Second, Athanasius's purpose for *Festal 1* is pastoral, and his remarks about the Spirit are shaped by his purpose, larger argument, and paschal theology.

#### *Festal Typology*

Athanasius begins his argument by observing that the Scriptures frequently call God's people to observe various feasts, fasts, and other

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<sup>4</sup> This thesis follows Camplani's chronology of the *Festals*. See Camplani, *Lettere Festali* and "Sulla cronologia delle lettere festali di Atanasio: La proposta di R. Lorenz," *Augustinianum* 27, no. 3 (1987): 617–28.

spiritual occasions (*Festal* 1.1–2). The Jewish Scriptures command Israel to observe the Levitical feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Exod. 23:14), and they contain multiple accounts of trumpets summoning Israel to other feasts, wars, and solemn occasions. Similarly, Paul’s letters exhort Christians to live in a state of constant spiritual readiness “in season and out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2) because it is now “the day of salvation” (Isa. 49:8; 2 Cor. 6:2); Athanasius explains that the Levitical feasts and other Jewish occasions described in the Scriptures were commanded by the Law, and that the “awakening and terrible” sounds of trumpets were necessary to call Israel to these occasions “because he [Israel] was then but a child” (*Festal* 1.2). This explanation leads Athanasius to his first main point: the feasts required by the Law, like the Law itself, were shadows of the good things to come through Christ. More specifically, they were shadows that prefigured the annual feasts of the Christian church, such as Pentecost and Easter.

This theme of shadows and typology is pertinent to Athanasius’s upcoming remarks about the Spirit, and the theme will also reappear in Athanasius’s subsequent *Festals*, so Athanasius’s explanation is worth quoting. Athanasius explains:

For the law was admirable, and the shadow was excellent, otherwise, it would not have wrought fear, and induced reverence in those who heard; especially in those who at that time not only heard but saw these things. Now these things were typical, and done as in a shadow. But let us pass on to the meaning, and henceforth leaving the figure at a distance, come to the truth, and look upon the priestly trumpets of our Saviour, which cry out, and call us, at one time to war, as the blessed Paul says; “We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities, with powers, with the rulers of this dark world, with wicked spirits in heaven” (Eph. 6:12). At another time the call is made to virginity, and self-denial... Sometimes the call is made to fasting, and sometimes to a feast. Hear again the same [Apostle] blowing the trumpet, and proclaiming, “Christ our Passover is sacrificed; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness” (1 Cor. 5:8). If you would listen to a trumpet much greater than

all these, hear our Saviour saying; “In that last and great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink” (John 7:37). For it became the Saviour not simply to call us to a feast, but to “the great feast,” if only we will be prepared to hear, and to conform to the proclamation of every trumpet.

(*Festal* 1.3)

Following texts such as Col. 2:16–17 and Heb. 8:5, 10:1,<sup>5</sup> Athanasius proposes a typological interpretation of the Law and its prescribed feasts. He explains that these things, although good, were intended to be temporary because they prefigured what was to come through Christ.<sup>6</sup> Athanasius then narrows his attention, focusing on the Law’s feasts and observations rather than the larger question of the Law itself. He identifies these as types (τύποι) of the feasts and observations brought by Christ.<sup>7</sup> The past wars were types of the Christian spiritual warfare described in Eph. 6:12; the fasts were types of the calls to virginity and self-denial that were to come; and the feast of Passover was a type of the church’s great Easter feast commemorating the death and resurrection of

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<sup>5</sup> Col. 2:16–17: “Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.” Heb. 8:5: “They offer worship in a sanctuary that is a sketch and shadow of the heavenly one; for Moses, when he was about to erect the tent, was warned, ‘See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.’” Heb. 10:1: “The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.”

<sup>6</sup> Athanasius’s focus on the Law and the Jewish feasts as temporary shadows is similar to that of Eusebius. See Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 101. Barnes observes that Eusebius emphasizes the superiority of the new spiritual law over the old Law to a much greater degree than Origen. This point is also true of Athanasius’s treatment of the Law.

<sup>7</sup> Athanasius uses “types” and “shadows” synonymously “for a prefiguration of the ‘truth’,” Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius*, 134.

Christ, the true sacrificial Lamb.

*Catechesis on Observing the Easter Fast*

Athanasius proceeds in *Festal* 1.4–5 to offer catechetical remarks on the proper observation of the feast of Easter, which is preceded by a period of fasting. Quoting from various Scriptural texts, Athanasius emphasizes the importance of the fast and offers guidelines for its observance. The fast prepares Christians for the celebration of Easter by ensuring that they approach the Easter feast with sincerity, and it involves both the body and soul. The body must participate in a period of physical fasting, and the soul must abstain from sin and seek the spiritual food that is available through faith in Christ. As we observed in *Pagans-Incarnation*, Athanasius believes the soul is intended to guide the body. Therefore, outward physical fasting is to be driven by the soul’s choice to follow Christ rather than sinful desires.

Athanasius warns that many people miss the inward element of the fast. These people “crowding to the fast, pollute themselves in the thoughts of their hearts, sometimes by doing evil against their brethren, sometimes by daring to defraud” (*Festal* 1.4). Such people have failed to keep the inward fast from evil thoughts and deeds, and thus their outward fast is meaningless. These people are like the Pharisee described in Luke 18. Although Pharisees fasted from food twice a week, “the boast of fasting did no good to [that] Pharisee... because he exalted himself against the publican” (*Festal* 1.4). Easter requires fasting from pride and other inward evils. Athanasius’s audience is to approach Easter with holiness, obedience, and humility, otherwise they risk being expelled from the people of God.<sup>8</sup>

Keeping the Easter fast also has soteriological implications that relate

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<sup>8</sup> *Festal* 1.4: “Every soul that shall not humble itself, shall be cut off from the people” (Lev. 23:29).

directly to whether Christians will be welcomed into heaven in the life to come. As we have seen, the fast requires Christians to inwardly “fast” by turning away from evil. Athanasius treats this as an act of repentance. When Christians keep the fast by repenting from evil, they receive forgiveness for their past sins. Athanasius writes, “such a fast as this obtain[s] pardon for souls” (*Festal* 1.5). Further, by keeping the Easter fast, Christians live in a manner that not only leads to the forgiveness of sins but also prepares them to be accepted into heaven. Athanasius’s full quote reads, “For not only does such a fast as this obtain pardon for souls, but being kept holy, it prepares the saints [namely, faithful Christians], and raises them above the earth” (*Festal* 1.5). One implication of this is that when Christians practice the Easter fast (and then celebrate the feast), they temporarily experience the eternal celebration of Christ that occurs in heaven and awaits the faithful in the life to come. Another implication of this is that when a Christian is truly prepared for the Easter feast because he or she properly kept the fast, this person is also prepared for the next life. Whether the person lives to see Christ return or dies and experiences the general resurrection, the person is ready to pass the coming judgment and be welcomed into heaven. In short, if those whom God welcomes to the earthly feast remain faithful, then God will also welcome them to the eternal feast in heaven.<sup>9</sup>

Fasting in this manner is not an easy endeavour, and Athanasius attempts to encourage his audience by reminding them of people from previous generations who successfully kept similar fasts. Exemplars such as Moses and Elijah were sustained by divine food.

Athanasius identifies the exemplars’ reception of divine food as

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<sup>9</sup> This point is also supported by Athanasius’s use of Phil. 4:5 and Matt. 24:44 in *Festal* 1.9. The implication of these warnings in the context of *Festal* 1.9 is that the standards required for observing the Easter feast are standards that should also ensure acceptance into heaven.

contemplation of God. This emphasis on contemplation is reminiscent of what is found *Pagans*,<sup>10</sup> but in *Festal* 1.6 Athanasius speaks of this sustaining contemplation in more concrete, pragmatic terms—perhaps due to the letter’s strong pastoral nature. Athanasius teaches that Christians can receive divine food (and thus be sustained during the fast) through activities such as prayer, physical fasting, obedience to the will of God, and contemplation of God and the Scriptures.<sup>11</sup>

*Catechesis on the Fulfillment of the Passover*

In *Festal* 1.7, Athanasius returns to his exhortative argument and catechesis about the meaning of Passover. He tells his audience that it is time for them to prepare for the Easter feast. Although the Jews are also preparing for Passover, they do so incorrectly because the true Passover Lamb has come, and the validity of the Jewish feast ended with the abomination of desolation in the Temple of Jerusalem and the subsequent destruction of the city (*Festal* 1.7–8). Athanasius supports this opinion by

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<sup>10</sup> This similarity further suggests an early composition date for *Pagans-Incarnation*. On contemplation in *Pagans*, see above, pp. 43–45. As Andrew Louth notes in *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 75–76, Athanasius’s emphasis on deifying contemplation virtually disappears after *Pagans*.

<sup>11</sup> One unusual characteristic of the *Festals* is that although Athanasius is focused on Easter—and often on the subject of spiritual nourishment—he says very little about the sacrament of the Eucharist. (One of Athanasius’s clearest references to the Eucharist occurs in *Festal* 5.5.) This holds true even when Athanasius mentions that the Jews received divine food by eating the lamb at passover (*Festal* 1.7), which would seem to be an ideal occasion to introduce the subject of the Eucharistic. This characteristic has also been observed in Matthias F. Wahba, “The Doctrine of Sanctification in Relation to Marriage according to St. Athanasius” (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 1993), 118. Wahba suggests Athanasius may have usually omitted the subject because the letters are focused on reporting the date of Easter and the conduct that is appropriate for the feast. It could also be that Athanasius assumed his readers would naturally associate the feast with the Eucharist, although we cannot be certain of this.

quoting the first verses of Nahum's prophecy concerning the fall of Nineveh (Nah. 1:15–2:1 LXX). Athanasius claims that these verses speak of the fall of Jerusalem, the resurrection of Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the end of the Jewish Passover, which was the "shadow" of the Easter feast. He writes:

And not from me should these things be learned, but the sacred voice of the prophet foretold, crying; "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that brings good tidings, and publishes peace" (Nah. 2:1 LXX); and what is the message he published, but that which he goes on to say to them, "Keep your feasts, O Judah; pay to the Lord your vows. For they shall no more go to that which is old; it is finished; it is taken away: He is gone up who breathed upon the face, and delivered you from affliction." Now who is he that went up?  
(*Festal* 1.8)

Athanasius argues that the Jews cannot identify "he that went up" because this man is neither Moses nor Samuel, but Jesus, the Messiah and Saviour. As we will see below, Athanasius presents Christ as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Nah. 2:1 LXX. Nahum's reference to ascension predicts Christ's resurrection; Nahum's statement about breathing predicts the gift of the Holy Spirit; the prophecy itself signals the end of the shadow, including the Law and its feasts. Athanasius then points to the abomination of the Temple and the destruction of Jerusalem as proof of his point about the consummation of the shadow.

With these points apparently proven, and the core of Athanasius's argument established, Athanasius presents his conclusion: the shadows and types contained in the Old Testament have been fulfilled in Christ. The observation of the passover, therefore, finds its fulfillment and perfection in the church's Easter celebration of Christ, the "true lamb that was slain" (*Festal* 1.9). An important implication of this is that when the church celebrates Christ as the true paschal sacrifice, the church's

earthly worship reflects the worship occurring in heaven. Christ's sacrifice is final and everlasting—there is no need for additional sacrificial lambs. Therefore, Christ's sacrifice is celebrated forever, both on earth and in heaven. To put this another way, when Christians properly observe the feast in their local parishes, they participate in a liturgical event that transcends earth—they participate in the “great feast” that the saints enjoy with Christ in heaven. This, therefore, is one of the reasons why Athanasius insists that preparation for the Easter feast is so important—and why he believes that those who properly celebrate Easter will be welcomed into heaven. The feast of Easter on earth and the eternal feast celebrating Christ's sacrifice in heaven are, in fact, one and the same reality. Thus to be prepared for the former is to also be prepared for the latter.

Lastly, Athanasius concludes the letter by including four elements that become common in subsequent letters. First, he adds a moral exhortation about the correct observation of the Easter feast. Here, as in many of his letters, the exhortation references “the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:8). Second, Athanasius also credits the Holy Spirit, the “new wine,” with empowering Christians to properly keep the feast. Third, he announces the date of Easter, reminds readers of Pentecost, and urges his audience to act on their faith by helping those in need. Lastly, he gives thanks to God through a doxology.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Throughout his career, Athanasius retains this relationship between the Easter feast on earth and the eternal feast in heaven. Here is a summary of points that Athanasius makes in the *Festals* that support this claim: When Christians rightly keep the feast, they will be counted worthy of heaven (*Festal* 2.7; 6.1; 7.5–6; 7.10); the feast is eternal—there is only one sacrifice, thus the church celebrates the same sacrifice every year and also forever in heaven (*Festal* 4.3); when Christians celebrate the feast on earth, they participate in a celebration that is also done by the angels in heaven (*Festal* 10.11); Old Testament saints such as Samuel and Elijah, having died, now celebrate the Easter feast in heaven (*Festal* 14.1); the church's celebration of the Easter feast is done out of gratitude for

*The Theological Character of the Letter*

Athanasius's language in *Festal* 1, as throughout his pastoral writings, is highly Scriptural but not technical. Like Origen before him, Athanasius recognizes that he must exercise care when writing for the masses.<sup>13</sup> As a result of this, while writing the pastoral *Festal Letters*, he restricts himself to Biblical language, and, even with this concession, he generally avoids expounding on texts.<sup>14</sup> However, this should not be taken to mean that Athanasius's discourse in the *Festals* is theologically shallow.<sup>15</sup> Athanasius sees the Scriptures as a unified whole, with a metanarrative of creation, fall, and redemption running throughout.<sup>16</sup> This metanarrative governs Athanasius's Easter-centred typological interpretations of the Old Testament,<sup>17</sup> and it is helpful for understanding *Festal* 1.7–9. In

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Christ's sacrifice and eager anticipation for the eternal joy that awaits Christians in heaven (*Festal* 19.8).

<sup>13</sup> Origen and Athanasius both adjusted their language while writing in public pastoral contexts, choosing to avoid technical terms if possible. However, they also tailored their theological pedagogy to suit their audience. For Origen, this meant concealing his views on universal salvation when writing to a general audience; for Athanasius, this meant sometimes toning down anti-Arian polemic. On Origen, see Mark S. M. Scott, "Guarding the Mysteries of Salvation: The Pastoral Pedagogy of Origen's Universalism," *J ECS* 18, no. 3 (2010): 354–68.

<sup>14</sup> According to Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius*, 272n5, "Individual texts are not normally commented on or expounded; rather, they are simply incorporated as either *exempla* or exhortations to virtue."

<sup>15</sup> Pace Eduard Schwartz, *Zur Geschichte des Athanasius* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1959), 188, who said that the *Festals* are merely a "conglomeration of homiletic trivialities combined with wholesale biblical citations." ET: David Brakke, "Jewish Flesh and Christian Spirit in Athanasius of Alexandria," *J ECS* 9, no. 4 (2001): 454.

<sup>16</sup> The most important recent work on Athanasius's use of Scripture, *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria*, omits a detailed analysis of the *Festals* because they are no longer extant in Greek; but its author, James D. Ernest, has demonstrated the significance that metanarrative plays in Athanasius's use of Scripture. On metanarrative, see Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius*, 125, 131–51.

Athanasius's metanarrative, God intended for the Jewish rites and rituals to be temporary. At the appropriate time, they would be fulfilled by Christ, whom they symbolically prefigured. This narrative governs Athanasius's interpretation of the Jewish festivals and the Old Testament commandments surrounding them. Further, for Athanasius, this metanarrative serves as an interpretive paradigm that enables Athanasius to interpret Old Testament texts creatively yet also safely, since every interpretation must cohere and relate to the "safe" metanarrative of creation, fall, redemption.

Further, as we will have seen by the end of Chapter 3, the theology of the Holy Spirit that Athanasius expresses in the *Festals* becomes remarkably consistent. This consistency is not due to Athanasius repeating certain Scriptural texts that relate to the Holy Spirit. Instead, it is due to him coming to associate the Holy Spirit with particular roles in the economy of salvation and the Christian life, including roles relevant to the celebration of Easter. The primary example of these Easter-related roles is empowering Christians to observe Easter with the proper moral and spiritual conduct. This role is introduced in *Festal 1*, which is a particularly interesting witness to Athanasius's early pneumatology because in it he introduces several pneumatological perspectives—including two that he seems to experiment with in *Festal 1* but subsequently abandon.

## 2. The Holy Spirit and the New Covenant (*Festal 1*)

### *A Sign of the New Covenant*

While interpreting Nah. 2:1 LXX, Athanasius not only provides us with an excellent example of his practice of using the creation-fall-redemption metanarrative as an interpretive paradigm, but he also introduces the first of the two pneumatological perspectives that will appear in this early work

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 134, 356.

but not in most of Athanasius's later works. Athanasius's interpretation connects the Holy Spirit with the redemption portion of the creation-fall-redemption metanarrative, in general, and the arrival of the New Covenant, in particular. This latter connection, to the New Covenant, does not feature in Athanasius's subsequent works.

As noted above, Athanasius views Nah. 2:1 LXX as a prophecy about what events must occur in order for the "shadows," including Old Testament rites, to be fulfilled and then done away with. In this section he presents the gift of the Holy Spirit to Christ's disciples as a sign of the beginning of the New Covenant. He writes:

The sacred voice of the prophet foretold these things, crying; "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that brings good tidings, and publishes peace" (Nah. 1:15 LXX), and what is the message he published, but that which he goes on to say to them, "Keep your feasts, O Judah; pay to the Lord your vows. For they shall no more go to that which is old; it is finished; it is taken away: He is gone up who breathed upon the face, and delivered you from affliction" (Nah. 2:1 LXX)... But if you would hear the true matter, and be kept from Jewish fables, behold our Saviour who went up, and "breathed upon the face," and said to his disciples, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). For as soon as these things were done, everything was finished. (*Festal* 1.8)

Athanasius's interpretation of Nah. 2:1 LXX as a prophecy predicting the Johannine account of Jesus's post-resurrection appearance and breathing of the Holy Spirit on the disciples (John 20:19–22) introduces an element of the fall-creation-redemption narrative that is omitted from the Word-focused narrative presented in *Pagans-Incarnation*: the presence of the Holy Spirit with the church is a sign that the Old Testament shadows have been fulfilled in Christ and that the new "day of salvation" has begun (*Festal* 1.1). Further, Athanasius identifies the gift of the Spirit as one of the key events that brought an end to the old rites. Athanasius writes:

[As soon as Jesus] said to his disciples, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22)... everything was finished, for the altar was broken, and the veil of the temple was rent; and although the city was not yet laid waste, the abomination was ready to sit in the midst of the temple, and the city and those ancient ordinances to receive their final consummation.  
(*Festal* 1.8)

Although Athanasius does not use covenantal language here, it is clear that what he is describing is the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. The Old Testament Law has been replaced with a new ethic established in Christ; the group regarded as God’s people is no longer Israel but those who follow Christ.

After *Festal* 1, Athanasius does not repeat either this perspective or his interpretation of Nah. 2:1 LXX.<sup>18</sup> Athanasius’s approach to Nah. 2:1 does not reoccur until about twenty years later, in Cyril of Jerusalem’s *Catechetical Lectures*.<sup>19</sup>

While we are on the subject of the New Covenant, it is worth noting that in *Festal* 1 and Athanasius’s other early pastoral works, Athanasius’s remarks about the Spirit focus on the Spirit’s contributions to what we might call the “New Covenant” phase of the economy of salvation. As we will see, apart from references to prophecy, Athanasius says very little about the Spirit working before the coming of Christ. Further, when

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<sup>18</sup> One likely explanation for this disappearance is suggested by our observations from Chapter 1. The themes Athanasius includes in his writings are primarily determined by his rhetorical purposes—meaning, the theme does not reoccur in Athanasius’s subsequent writings because he was focused on matters that it did not relate to.

<sup>19</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem interprets the verse in a relatively similar manner in *Catech.* 17.12. Like Athanasius, Cyril sees the verse as a prophecy that was fulfilled by John 20:22. Yet, Cyril, recognizing that John 20:22 can create confusion over what was unique at Pentecost, writes that Jesus gave the disciples the Spirit only in part in John 20:22 because they were not yet ready for the fullness of the Spirit (which was given later, at Pentecost).

Athanasius does mention the Holy Spirit's role in inspiring the Old Testament prophets, Athanasius primarily raises the subject in order to talk about how the Holy Spirit prophetically speaks to contemporary Christians through the Scriptures.

*The Holy Spirit and the Scriptures*

In the next section, *Festal* 1.9, Athanasius introduces a second pneumatological perspective that he largely omits from subsequent works. This perspective occurs as Athanasius explains why the coming of Christ brought an end to the Old Testament rites. Rather than using covenant language to explain this, Athanasius instead chooses to employ the spirit language from 2 Cor. 3:17.<sup>20</sup> When Athanasius does this, he highlights the Spirit's role in the spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures, which, although common in the works of Origen, occurs clearly only in *Festal* 1 and then, forty years later, in *Festal* 41.<sup>21</sup> Before examining *Festal* 1.9, it will be helpful to observe two instances in which Origen uses 2 Cor. 3:17. As we will see, there seem to be several parallels between how Origen and Athanasius use this text.

In both *On First Principles* and *Against Celsus*, Origen quotes 2 Cor. 3:17 while attempting to explain what it means to say that "God is spirit" (John 4:24). In *Cels.* 6.70, this quotation occurs within an argument that attempts to defend John 4:24 from Stoic materialistic interpretations of spirit. Origen argues that God is "spirit" in the sense of being incorporeal and intelligible (*Cels.* 6.70–71). To support this argument, Origen points to 2 Cor. 3:6's contrast between the "letter" and the "spirit" of the Scriptures.<sup>22</sup> According to Origen, the "letter" represents the "sensible"

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<sup>20</sup> "Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor. 3:15–17).

<sup>21</sup> On the theme in *Festal* 41, see below, p. 119.

<sup>22</sup> "[God] has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of

(τὴν αἰσθητὴν) meaning of Scripture, whereas the “spirit” represents the spiritual or “intelligible” meaning (τὴν νοητὴν) (*Cels.* 6.70).<sup>23</sup> Origen proposes that “spirit” in John 4:24 has the same meaning, indicating that God is intelligible rather than sensible. To further support this argument, Origen then quotes 2 Cor. 3:17. Part of Origen’s point is that “spirit” in 2 Cor. 3:17 has the same meaning as it does in 2 Cor. 3:5–6 and John 4:24—“spirit” is essentially a synonym for “intelligible.” It should also be noted that in this section Origen believes “the Lord” in 2 Cor. 3:16–17 refers to Christ.

This interpretation of 2 Cor. 3:17 also occurs in *Cels.* 5.60 and *princ.* 1.1.2. In these sections, as in *Cels.* 6.70, Origen implies that “the Lord” refers to Christ and “spirit” is synonymous with “intelligible.” However, in *princ.* 1.1.2, Origen provides additional details about the spiritual meaning and spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures. In *princ.* 1.1.2, while arguing for the incorporeality of God and again attempting to defend John 4:24 from materialistic interpretations, Origen uses the same tactic as in *Cels.* 6.70—he claims “spirit” in John 4:24 should be interpreted in the same manner as “spirit” in 2 Cor. 3:6. Origen writes:

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letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” (2 Cor. 3:6).

<sup>23</sup> Morwenna Ludlow, “Spirit and Letter in Origen and Augustine,” in *The Spirit and the Letter: A Tradition and a Reversal*, ed. Paul S. Fiddes and Günter Bader (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 91–93, argues that for Origen, the “letter” and the “spirit” sometimes represent two attitudes to reading the Scriptures. When one reads with an attitude that leads to spiritual or moral errors, this is a reading according to the “bare letter;” when one reads with an attitude that leads to theological truths, this is reading according to the “spirit.” Related to this, Origen frequently speaks of the “spiritual meaning” of Scripture, which refers to the “deeper” theological meaning, often intended for more spiritually advanced Christians (88–90). Cf. the seminal English work on Origen’s exegesis, R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen’s Interpretation of Scripture*. (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1959), especially 235–58.

The letter means that which is bodily, and the spirit that which is intellectual, or as we also call it, spiritual. The apostle also says, “Even until this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts; but when a man shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:15–17). For so as a man does not attend to the spiritual meaning... the Scripture itself is said or thought to be veiled; and this is the explanation of the veil which is said to have covered the face of Moses when he was speaking to the people, that is, when the law is read in public. But if we turn to the Lord, where also the Word of God is, and where the Holy Spirit reveals spiritual knowledge, the veil will be taken away, and we shall then with unveiled face behold in the holy Scriptures the glory of the Lord.  
(*princ.* 1.1.2 Latin)<sup>24</sup>

Here, Origen assumes that “spirit” in 2 Cor. 3:17 should also be interpreted as a synonym for “intelligible.” Consequently, Origen takes 2 Cor. 3:17’s phrase “the Lord is the Spirit” to mean that Christ is the veiled spiritual or “intelligible” meaning of the Scriptures.<sup>25</sup> Significantly, Origen also teaches that this veiled meaning can be revealed to human beings through the assistance of the Holy Spirit. If we will turn to Christ, who is the Lord and the Word of God, then the Holy Spirit will remove

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<sup>24</sup> This portion of *princ.* is preserved in Rufinus’s Latin translation. At times, Rufinus’s translation is unreliable, as Rufinus appears to have occasionally made modifications to the original Greek text, such as spiritualizing Origen’s emphasis on physical martyrdom, for the sake of making *princ.* better suited to Rufinus’s own early fifth-century monastic perspective. For this reason, I note whether quotations from *princ.* are based on Latin or Greek textual witnesses. The quotation above, however, appears to be reliable, as it closely resembles what we find in *Cels.* (which is preserved in Greek) and contains no clear signs of modification.

On the reliability of Rufinus’s translations, see Kevin D. Hill, “Rufinus as an Interpreter of Origen: Ascetic Affliction in the *Commentarii in epistulam ad Romanos*,” *Augustiniana* 60, no. 1–2 (2010): 145–68.

<sup>25</sup> As alluded to above, *Cels.* 5.60 also uses 2. Cor. 3:17 to make this same point. However, unlike *princ.* 1.1.2, *Cels.* 5.60 does not contain any details on the role of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual interpretation of Scripture.

the veil that prevents us from perceiving the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures (and this meaning is Christ).

With this background in place, we are now better prepared to interpret Athanasius's use of 2 Cor. 5:17 in *Festal* 1.9. Athanasius uses the verse while providing further catechesis on how the incarnation changed the interpretation of the Law. Since many of the Deuteronomic and Levitical rites and ceremonies have found their fulfillment in Christ, these rites and ceremonies are no longer to be observed according to the letter but according to "the Spirit"—that is, according to the spiritual reality that they prefigure and point to. Athanasius writes:

We have passed beyond that time of shadows, and no longer perform rites under it, but have turned, as it were, unto the Lord; "for the Lord is the spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17);—as we hear the sacred trumpet, no longer slaying a material lamb, but that true Lamb that was slain, even our Lord Jesus Christ; "Who was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and was dumb as a lamb before her shearers" (Isa. 53:7); being purified by his precious blood, which speaks better things than that of Abel. (*Festal* 1.9)

Although Athanasius does not use 2 Cor. 3:17 to make points about the incorporeality of God, Athanasius's interpretation of the verse seems to parallel Origen's interpretations in three main ways. First, Athanasius, like Origen, takes "the Lord" in 2 Cor. 3:16–17 to refer to Christ.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, both writers read the verse in this sense: "When one turns to Christ, the veil is removed. Now Christ is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of Christ is, there is freedom."

Second, Athanasius seems to agree with Origen that when Paul

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<sup>26</sup> While this point, that Athanasius interprets "the Lord" as Christ, is evident from Athanasius's argument about Christ in *Festal* 1.8–9, it is further supported by the fact that every other instance of "Lord" in *Festal* 1 refers to Christ. Additionally, in *Orations* 1.11, written just over a decade after *Festal* 1, Athanasius repeats this interpretation of "the Lord" as a reference to Christ.

wrote, “the Lord is the Spirit,” Paul’s point was that Christ is the spiritual truth hidden in the Scriptures, including the Old Testament rituals, which were types and shadows that pointed to Christ and his life, death, and resurrection. In the words of 2 Cor. 3:17, Christ, “the Lord,” is “the Spirit”—that is, the “spirit” or spiritual meaning of the Scriptures.

Third, although Athanasius is vague about the meaning of “the Spirit of the Lord,” he seems to interpret it along the same lines as Origen—meaning, he views “the Spirit of the Lord” as a reference to the Holy Spirit, who helps reveal that Christ is the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures. There are several reasons for this claim. To begin, Athanasius’s quotation of 2 Cor. 3:17 makes the most sense when we recognize that it occurs within a larger context that includes remarks about the Holy Spirit helping to bring the “shadows” of the Old Testament to an end. In *Festal* 1.8, as we saw, Athanasius says that the Old Covenant ended and the New Covenant began when Christ breathed the Holy Spirit upon his disciples. Athanasius’s use of 2 Cor. 3:17, which occurs just a few sentences after his remark about Christ breathing the Holy Spirit, seems to continue Athanasius’s thought about the Spirit helping to do away with the shadows and bring about the New Covenant. In quoting 2 Cor. 3:17, Athanasius’s point appears to be this: the Old Covenant and its shadows have been done away with through Christ and the Holy Spirit, therefore, we no longer celebrate the feasts in their former manner; instead, we celebrate them in light of their spiritual meaning, which is Christ; further, because Christ breathed his Spirit upon his disciples, the Holy Spirit is now with the church, meaning there is freedom from the Old Testament shadows. Thus, “where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom” (2 Cor. 3:17).

This reading of 2 Cor. 3:17 is further supported by the fact that Athanasius returns to the soteriological work of the Holy Spirit just a few sentences later. As we will see in the next section of this chapter,

Athanasius links the Holy Spirit with properly keeping the feast. Rather than observing the Passover in its old manner, which Athanasius associates with insincerity of heart, Christians are to observe the Passover in “sincerity and truth,” along with virtues that they attain through the help of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, if, as I suggest, Athanasius’s interpretation of 2 Cor. 3:17 parallel’s Origen’s interpretations in this regard too, taking “the Spirit of the Lord” to refer to the Holy Spirit, then Athanasius would also seem to be implying, like Origen, that the Holy Spirit is the one who helps to unveil the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures. This point also makes sense within the argument of *Festal* 1.8–9. The Holy Spirit helps to inaugurate the New Covenant (and do away with the Old Covenant shadows) by revealing that Christ is the “spirit” or the spiritual meaning of the Old Covenant and its shadows, including Passover.

After *Festal* 1, this pneumatological theme does not clearly reappear until *Festal* 41 (369).<sup>27</sup> While it is possible that Athanasius intentionally avoided this theme in his works between *Festal* 1 and *Festal* 41, it seems more likely that the theme fades from view because Athanasius was focused on other matters.<sup>28</sup> Athanasius’s subsequent remarks about the

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<sup>27</sup> Through my study of the entire Athanasian corpus, I have only noted the theme appear with clarity in *Festal* 1 and *Festal* 41. As we will see over the course of the thesis, Athanasius’s remarks about the Spirit primarily focus instead on the Spirit’s role in the inspiration of the Scriptures and the sanctification of human beings. On the theme in *Festal* 41, see below, p. 119.

<sup>28</sup> In the quotation of the *Thalia* in *Orations* 1.6, Arius claims that he learned his doctrines from earlier Spirit-inspired teachers. As Williams notes, Arius also presents himself as one who continues the tradition of charismatic teachers who are willing to challenge ecclesial authority when faced with bishops whose interpretations of Scripture are deemed unfaithful. It is possible that Athanasius, hoping to minimize such claims to the authority of the Holy Spirit, subsequently chose to downplay the role of the Spirit in the interpretation of Scripture. However, we can say with far more certainty that, as observed in Chapter 1, the subjects and themes of Athanasius’s pastoral works were strongly shaped by his

Spirit in the pastoral works may have simply been guided by his pastoral aims. These aims frequently focused on ethical exhortations, such as overcoming sin in order to properly keep the feast—which is a theme we will now examine.

### 3. The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Preparation in *Festal 1*

#### *Keeping the Feast*

In *Festal 1*, Athanasius presents a vision of salvation that emphasizes the necessity of holiness for keeping the feast and receiving eternal life in heaven. Although Christ's death as the perfect, eternal paschal lamb offers humanity salvation from sin and the debt of death owed by all, humans are also responsible for a role in their salvation. In order for individual persons to receive salvation from death, they must live in anticipation of Christ's return, having faith that Christ will raise his followers to eternal life in heaven. This is why Athanasius commands his audience to be "in all respects prepared, and careful for nothing, because, as the blessed Paul says, 'The Lord is at hand' (Phil. 4:5), and as our Saviour says, 'In an hour when we think not, the Lord comes' (Matt. 24:44)" (*Festal 1.9*). Only those persons who have prepared themselves for eternal life with Christ will receive it.

Athanasius equates preparedness for Easter with preparedness for heaven. When Christians celebrate Easter with sincere faith and holiness, embodying the hope and purity won by Christ's sacrifice, they prove

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immediate pastoral concerns. On Arius, the *Thalia*, and charismatic teachers, see Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy & Tradition*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 82–86. On Athanasius's attitude towards charismatic teachers who challenged the bishop's authority, see David Brakke, "Canon Formation and Social Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt: Athanasius of Alexandria's Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter," *Harvard Theological Review* 87, no. 4 (1994): 395–419, especially 405–10. Brakke responds to criticism of his argument in "A New Fragment of Athanasius's Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter: Heresy, Apocrypha, and the Canon," *Harvard Theological Review* 103, no. 1 (2010): 51–56.

themselves to be prepared for the life to come. Because of this association, Athanasius immediately follows his warning about Christ's return with an exhortation to keep the feast.

Athanasius's exhortation about properly keeping the Easter feast contains important details about his theology of salvation and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the exhortation is worth quoting in full. After telling his audience to be prepared for Christ's return, Athanasius writes:

“Let us keep the Feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:8). Putting off the old man and his deeds, “let us put on the new man, which is created in God” (Eph. 4:24), in humbleness of mind, and a pure conscience; in meditation of the law by night and by day. And casting away all hypocrisy and fraud, putting far from us all pride and deceit, let us take upon us love towards God and towards our neighbour, that being renewed, and having received the “new wine” (Matt. 9:17), namely the Holy Spirit, we may properly keep the feast, even the month of these new [fruits].  
(*Festal* 1.9 TM)

In this passage, Athanasius predicates the proper observation of Easter on two factors. First, Christians must strive to properly keep the feast. As noted, Athanasius assumes human beings are responsible for working to receive Christ's gift of salvation. Individuals must strive to make themselves suitable recipients of eternal life in heaven—particularly by working to live lives characterized by sincerity, humility, purity, and love for God and neighbour.

Second, in order to properly keep the feast, individuals must first become “new creatures” and receive “the new wine, namely the Holy Spirit.” By adding these comments to his instructions on how to prepare for Easter, Athanasius makes it clear that he believes the presence of the Holy Spirit in individuals is essential for observing the feast, which is integral to salvation.<sup>29</sup> This implies that the Holy Spirit is also essential for salvation. Additionally, Athanasius seems to make the gift of the Holy

Spirit contingent upon moral improvement, which is a point that we will return to shortly.

Athanasius's reference to the Holy Spirit as the "new wine" also complements his earlier bread imagery. In *Festal* 1.5, Athanasius instructed Christians to seek Christ as they fast from physical food and moral impurity, because Christ, "being heavenly bread, is the food of the saints." Together, the bread and wine images illustrate that God provides his people with the spiritual "food" necessary to endure the fast leading to the Easter feast, which culminates in the consumption of the physical Eucharistic bread and wine. Further, Athanasius's reference to the Spirit as the "new wine" also complements his use of 1 Cor. 5:8. When Christians approach the Easter feast with the unleavened bread of "sincerity and truth" and the "new wine" of the Holy Spirit, they are prepared to properly celebrate the feast with Christ.

#### *Reception of the Holy Spirit*

We can gain a better understanding of Athanasius's views on the work of the Holy Spirit in *Festal* 1.9 by comparing Athanasius's remarks with similar comments made by Origen in his chapter on the Holy Spirit in *princ.* Origen's comments include the two pneumatological points that we just saw in *Festal* 1.9: humans must strive to reform their behaviour in order to receive the Holy Spirit, and, although people can make moral improvements before receiving the Holy Spirit, the presence of the Holy Spirit is necessary for salvation. Origen, however, goes into more detail on these points, and the ideas that he expresses provide insight into assumptions behind Athanasius's remarks about the Spirit and salvation in *Festal* 1.9.

Origen's point about the reception of the Holy Spirit occurs in a

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<sup>29</sup> For Athanasius's reasons for believing the Spirit is necessary for keeping the feast and for salvation, see below, pp. 89–95.

broader discussion about how the Holy Spirit compares to the Father and Son. Origen teaches that the Holy Spirit is the third highest being, ranking below the Father and Son but above everything else. To support this claim, Origen contrasts the active presence of the Spirit with that of the Father and Son. Whereas the Father and Son are active in all rational creatures, including sinners and saints (*princ.* 1.3.6 Latin), the Holy Spirit is active and present “within the saints alone” (*princ.* 1.3.5 Greek). Origen says that the Spirit will only dwell in people whose “earth has been renewed” (*princ.* 1.3.7 Latin), and he uses the apostles’ transformation to show what he means by this. The apostles were able to receive the Holy Spirit because their faith in Christ and in the resurrection “renewed” them, making them “new” men (*princ.* 1.3.7 Latin). Origen equates this transformation with the change required by Jesus’s parable of the new wine and old wineskins, writing:

This [transformation of the apostles] is doubtless what our Saviour Lord himself was pointing out in the gospel, when he said that “new wine could not be put into old wineskins” (Matt. 9:17) and commanded that new wineskins be made, that is, that men should walk “in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4) in order to receive the new wine, the newness of the Holy Spirit’s grace. (*princ.* 1.3.7 Latin)

The apostles’ faith made them “new wineskins,” capable of receiving the “new wine” of the Holy Spirit.<sup>30</sup>

Athanasius assumes the same cause and effect as Origen. Athanasius’s audience must turn away from sin if they wish to become new creatures and receive the Holy Spirit. This perspective is apparent in the part of

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<sup>30</sup>In addition to teaching on the reception of the Holy Spirit, Origen also speaks about the loss of the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit depends on ongoing faith. Therefore, Origen teaches, God’s Spirit is taken away from the unworthy (*princ.* 1.3.7 Latin).

*Festal* 1.9 quoted earlier: “And casting away all hypocrisy and fraud, putting far from us all pride and deceit, let us take upon us love towards God and towards our neighbour, that being new [creatures], and receiving the new wine, even the Holy Spirit.” Athanasius describes repentance and moral striving as actions that lead to moral and spiritual “renovation” or “newness,” and he makes this newness a prerequisite for reception of the Holy Spirit. In this way, Athanasius and Origen agree about the necessity of repentance for reception of the Holy Spirit. To receive the “new wine” of the Holy Spirit, human beings must become “new wineskins” by turning from sin and seeking to live as new creatures, freed from sin.

We turn now to the question of why the Spirit is considered necessary for salvation.

#### 4. The Sanctifying Work of the Holy Spirit

In *princ.*, Origen depicts the Holy Spirit as an essential agent in the economy of salvation. In order to be saved, humans are called to attain holiness; however, holiness is a divine quality, and it can only be acquired through the presence of the Holy Spirit, which Origen equates with “participation” in the Spirit. Origen teaches that all human beings have a share in life and rationality because, by virtue of their creation, God has given them a “natural” participation in the Word, who is the source of life and rationality. As noted above, however, Origen believes that human beings are initially without the active presence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit must be received through faith, repentance, and moral effort. When these criteria are met, human beings are given the gift of the Holy Spirit, who provides them with participation in holiness, making them holy and advancing them along the journey of salvation.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> In Origen, salvation is progressive rather than static. Souls ascend to higher and higher levels of perfection and knowledge of God. The ultimate result of God’s perfecting work is universal union and deification to such a degree that

In *Festal 1*, as we have observed, Athanasius also maintains that the Spirit is essential for salvation, but here Athanasius does not explicitly say why this is. We will return to *Festal 1* shortly, but first it will be helpful to look at what Athanasius says about the subject in *Festal 7*.

*Clothed by the Holy Spirit*

In *Festal 7*, written for Easter 335, Athanasius introduces an overlapping soteriological and pneumatological theme that he will repeat at various stages throughout his career—the Holy Spirit provides faithful Christians with the “wedding garment” spoken of in the parable of the wedding feast (Matt. 22:1–14). In *Festal 7*, this theme occurs towards the end of the letter. While instructing his audience on how to prepare for Easter, Athanasius reminds them that they must be careful to remain faithful because grace can be lost. Athanasius writes:

Now he who has been counted worthy of the heavenly calling, and by this calling has been sanctified, if he grows negligent in it, then, although previously washed, he becomes defiled. “Counting the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a profane thing, and despising the Spirit of grace,” (Heb. 10:29) he hears the words, “Friend, how did you enter here, not having wedding garments?” (Matt. 22:12)  
(*Festal 7.9*)

In this text, Athanasius offers insight into his understanding of the “heavenly calling” placed on each Christian. To begin, Athanasius associates this calling with what we might call the “heavenly life.” That is, with the life of worship and holiness that Christians will ultimately enjoy

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God can be said to be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28; cf. *princ.* 3.6 Greek and Latin). For a study of the overlapping subjects of 1 Cor. 15:28, the journey of salvation, and the work of the Spirit in salvation, see Tom Greggs, *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation: Restoring Particularity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 54–88, 151–70.

in the resurrection, and which they are to begin partaking of during their earthly lives.<sup>32</sup>

Next, Athanasius associates this heavenly life with sanctification. As Athanasius's prior remarks about the feast reveal, Athanasius believes the pursuit of holiness is essential to living according to God's will for Christians. Those who do not seek to conform themselves to Christ and mortify the sinful desires of their bodies cut themselves off from the feast and from the hope of seeing God (*Festal* 7.3–4).

Athanasius presents sanctification as a gift that is initially received in the form of cleansing from previous sins.<sup>33</sup> This cleansing is available to Christians through "the blood of the covenant" (Heb. 10:29), and Athanasius may envision Christians receiving it through the Eucharist. We might describe this as the covenantal or purifying aspect of sanctification, since it appears to bring entrance into the new covenant, forgiveness from previous sins, and freedom from corruption.

Immediately after this quotation, Athanasius compares sinful Christians to Judas, who hung himself after betraying Christ. Like Judas, sinful Christians, having previously received the sanctifying blood of the covenant, make themselves fit for destruction if they continue "despising the Spirit of grace" (*Festal* 7.9).

The manner in which Athanasius presents this sinful behaviour, describing it as "despising the Spirit of grace," rather than, for example, despising the blood of Christ, is significant. It points to another aspect of sanctification. At the beginning and end of *Festal* 7, Athanasius references the Pauline theme of imitating Christ's suffering by mortifying sin in the body through the Spirit. At the end of *Festal* 7, Athanasius exhorts his

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<sup>32</sup> This point is apparent from Athanasius's preceding paragraphs about the heavenly feast, which Christians experience through the earthly celebration of Easter, and which they ultimately attain in the life to come.

<sup>33</sup> Athanasius describes this cleansing from sin using washing language, which may indicate that he associated the original cleansing with baptism.

audience to treat every day of their lives as a feast that requires them to be holy and conformed to Christ (*Festal* 7.10). Athanasius insists that living in this manner is possible for those who rely on the Spirit's power—who “by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body” (Rom 8:13; *Festal* 7.10 TM). At the beginning of the letter, Athanasius writes:

For he who is made like him [Christ] in his death, is also diligent in virtuous practices, having mortified his members which are upon the earth (Col. 3:5), and crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts, he lives in the Spirit, and is conformed to the Spirit (Gal. 5:25).  
(*Festal* 7.1)

Here, Christians are to conform themselves to Christ and the Holy Spirit by striving to live according to the holiness promoted by the Spirit. Importantly, Athanasius again emphasizes that the high standard of holiness that Christians are called to can be attained through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, who works in them for their moral sanctification.<sup>34</sup>

In this letter, Athanasius associates this moral aspect of sanctification, made possible by the Spirit, with the “wedding garment” described in Matt. 22:10–14. As I have suggested, Athanasius believes the Holy Spirit offers to help Christians overcome sin and live according to Christ's example. However, as Athanasius indicates in the quotation of *Festal* 7.9 above, those Christians who, “despising the Spirit,” choose to ignore the Spirit's offer to help them attain holiness, choose to also forfeit the gift of eternal life. Like the man who attended the wedding feast without a

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<sup>34</sup> As we will see here and in Chapter 3, Athanasius associates sanctification through the Spirit with attaining virtue and overcoming sin. This challenges the assessment of C. R. B. Shapland, *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit* (London: Epworth Press, 1951), 37–38, who claims that Athanasius “has little to say about the ethical fruits of the Spirit” because his “conception of sanctification... is metaphysical rather than ethical.”

wedding garment (Matt. 22:10–14), these Christians have approached the paschal feast improperly, choosing to remain in sin rather than to clothe themselves with holiness through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, upon their death, they will be asked why they approached the feast without the wedding garment, and then they will be bound and cast into the outer darkness (Matt. 22:12–13).

In *Festal* 7.10, Athanasius continues this point, using clothing imagery to further clarify the soteriological roles of the Spirit and the Son. In contrast to the sinful Christians, who will be found without wedding garments and then cut off, those Christians who remain with Christ (or, having strayed, return to him), will be given resurrection and incorruption. Athanasius explains that the Father “not only revived us from the dead, but makes us splendid through the grace of the Spirit. So that where there is the garment of corruption, he dresses us in incorruptibility” (*Festal* 7.10).<sup>35</sup> For Athanasius, the garments of incorruptibility and the wedding garments are synonymous. Both represent the purity of the body and soul that Christians must possess to attend the feast and inherit eternal life in heaven. This purity is available to humans because of “the blood of the covenant,” which brings the covenantal or cleansing aspect of sanctification, and because of the grace of the Holy Spirit, which “makes us splendid” by empowering Christians to attain the moral aspect of sanctification (*Festal* 7.9, 10).

Athanasius then uses the parable of the wedding garment to describe the activity of the Holy Spirit. The Father works through the Spirit to provide “garments” of purity and incorruptibility to those who are dressed in the “garments of corruption.” The Spirit provides these morally, physically, and spiritually decaying human beings with incorruptibility, which leads to eternal life.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> ET: based on Camplani, *Lettere Festali*, 316.

<sup>36</sup> For Athanasius, corruption represents human beings’ natural tendency to

The parallel between the clothes of incorruptibility and the wedding clothes is unmistakable and surely intentional. Christians who scorn the grace of the Spirit will lose “the wedding garment,” which represents the life-giving moral and spiritual purity that they have attained through the aid of the Spirit. But sinners who repent and turn to Christ will gain “the wedding garment,” because the Spirit will clothe them with purity and incorruptibility.

In *Festal 1*, we can see the inception of this theme. Athanasius neither refers to the parable of the wedding garment nor explicitly says that the Holy Spirit provides Christians with holiness; however, Athanasius begins to use clothing imagery to describe the moral and spiritual changes required for eternal life in heaven. In *Festal 1.9*, Athanasius paraphrases Eph. 4:22–24, instructing his audience to “[take] off the old man and his deeds” and to “put on the new man, which is created in God.” After this verse, Athanasius provides his audience with a list of specific actions that they should take in order to prepare for Easter. Athanasius ends the list by using clothing language again, writing: “Let us cloth ourselves with love towards God and towards our neighbour” (*Festal 1.9*; cf. Col. 3:14).<sup>37</sup>

Further, Athanasius implicitly connects these changes with the presence of the Holy Spirit, which is necessary for keeping the feast and for receiving eternal life. Although Athanasius does not explicitly state why the presence of the Spirit is essential, we can infer his reason from *Festal 1.9*. Here Athanasius says that those persons who have “put off” the old self, turning from sin to love for God and neighbour, have become

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return to the nothingness from which they were created. This corruption is physical, but also ontological. Their very being, which was created according to the image of God, is susceptible to this corruption. Therefore corruption leads to physical, moral, and spiritual dissolution. On humanity’s creation and salvation from corruption in *Pagans-Incarnation*, see above, pp. 40–47 and 51–55, respectively.

<sup>37</sup> ET: based on Camplani, *Lettere Festali*, 235.

“new [creatures]” and they have also received “the new wine, even the Holy Spirit” (*Festal* 1.9). From this, we can infer that Athanasius assumes the Biblical and Christian tradition of crediting the presence of the Holy Spirit with the human attainment of holiness.

There is, therefore, pneumatological continuity between *Festal* 1 and *Festal* 7. In both letters, Athanasius believes that the active presence of the Holy Spirit in believers is essential for the observation of Easter and for the reception of salvation. Athanasius also assumes that the Holy Spirit helps “clothe” human beings with holiness by empowering them as they strive to turn away from sin.

In *Festal* 7, the image of the wedding garment also connects *Festal* 7 to Athanasius’s later pastoral works. In subsequent works, Athanasius will repeat and expand on this theme, making it a long-term witness to Athanasius’s pneumatology. Therefore, the wedding garment imagery in *Festal* 7 provides a bridge between the basic clothing imagery that occurs in *Festal* 1 and the more developed wedding garment imagery that occurs later in Athanasius’s career. We will return to this subject in Chapter 3.<sup>38</sup>

#### *The Holy Spirit and Prophetic Censure*

By the fourth century, there was unanimity among Christian writers concerning one pneumatological principle—the Holy Spirit contributed to the inspiration of the prophets and the other writers of the Scriptures. This principle is rooted in the Jewish and early Christian tradition of associating God’s spirit with prophecy.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> See below, pp. 111–120.

<sup>39</sup> The theme of the Spirit of God or another spirit inspiring various prophetic messages or experiences related to prophecy and inspired knowledge occurs well over thirty times in the Jewish Bible and Septuagint. From my own survey of the material, I find examples of this in the following verses: Gen. 41:37; Exod. 28:2, 31:2; Num. 11:16–7, 11:25, 23:7, 27:18; Deut. 34:9; Judg. 6:34; 1 Kings 10:8; 2 Kings 23:2; 3 Kings 22:24 LXX; 2 Esd. 19:20 LXX, 19:30; Ps. 142:10 LXX; Job

Following this tradition, Athanasius credits the Holy Spirit with the inspiration of the Bible. For example, in *Festal 24*, written in 330, Athanasius claims that the Scriptures are reliable because they are inspired by the Holy Spirit.<sup>40</sup> However, the early pastoral works also contain a pneumatological theme related to inspiration that is more unique. As we will see, Athanasius frequently credits the Holy Spirit with speaking through the Scriptures in order to censure and correct contemporary fourth-century “sinners” and Christians.

In Athanasius’s works, the theme of the Holy Spirit censuring present-day individuals by speaking through the Scriptures first occurs in *Festal 1.5*. While admonishing Christians to avoid sin, Athanasius writes: “For thus the Holy Spirit, describing sinners and their food, referred to the devil when he said, ‘I have given him to be meat to the people of Ethiopia’ (Ps. 73:14 LXX). For this is the food of sinners.” Similarly, in

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32:8, 33:4; Mic. 3:8; Joel 2:28–29; Zech. 1:6 LXX, 7:12 LXX; Isa. 11:2–3, 48:16, 59:21, 61:1–3, 63:11; Ezek. 11:24, 37:1–14; Sus. 44–45 LXX; Dan. 4:5 (Theodotion text). The theme is also apparent Sir. 39:6, 48:12; Wis. 1:5–6, 9:17. The fluidity of spirit language, being capable of various meanings, led to a variety of pneumatological perspectives.

On the development of Jewish and Early Christian pneumatology, see John R. Levison, *The Spirit in First-Century Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); John R. Levison, *Filled with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); Marie E. Isaacs, *The Concept of Spirit: A Study of Pneuma in Hellenistic Judaism and Its Bearing on the New Testament* (London: Heythrop College, 1976). See also the review of seminal literature on the development of Pauline pneumatology in Finny Philip, *The Origins of Pauline Pneumatology: The Eschatological Bestowal of the Spirit upon Gentiles in Judaism and in the Early Development of Paul’s Theology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 3–25

<sup>40</sup> “Let the truth be your concern, because the Holy Spirit, who has produced these Scriptures, is a trustworthy witness” (*Festal 24 ET*: Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism*, 320–326). In *Serapion*, Athanasius expounds on the Trinitarian nature of the inspiration of the prophets. When prophets speak, they speak “through the Word in the Spirit” since “the Father himself through the Word in the Spirit works and gives all things” (*Serapion 2.14* [3.5 BE]).

*Pagans*, Athanasius provides two examples of the Spirit rebuking the practices of sinners by speaking through the Scriptures. Athanasius writes: “[The soul] was created in order to see God and be enlightened by him; but instead of God it pursued corruptible things and darkness, as the Spirit says somewhere in the Scriptures: ‘God made man upright, but they sought many notions’ (Eccles. 7:29)” (*Pagans* 7.5). Later, Athanasius also writes: “... Their refutation is found here also, as the Spirit says: ‘All those who made a god and vain sculptures will be ashamed’ (Isa. 44:9 LXX)” (*Pagans* 14.1).

The theme occurs next in *Festal* 7, which was most likely written in 335. Here, Athanasius speaks of the Spirit censuring wicked persons on two occasions. He writes, “The holy Spirit cries against them, ‘The wicked shall be turned into hell, even all the nations that forget God...’ (Ps. 9:18 LXX)” (*Festal* 7.2). Two verses later, while rebuking hypocritical worshippers, Athanasius writes: “Although wicked men press forward to keep the feast... the gentle Spirit rebukes them, saying, ‘Praise is unseemly in the mouth of a sinner.’ (Sir. 15:9)” (*Festal* 7.4).

In Athanasius’s early pastoral contexts, the theme last occurs in *Festal* 10, written in 338. In *Festal* 10.5, Athanasius again ascribes a censorious prophetic role to the Spirit, writing: “If they [the Pharisees] had understood the things which are written in the Psalms, they would not have been so vainly daring against the Saviour, the Spirit having said, ‘Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?’ (Ps. 2:1).”

With one exception,<sup>41</sup> Athanasius consistently attributes to the Spirit the role of censuring sinners by speaking through the Old Testament Scriptures. Athanasius’s words credit the Spirit with contributing to the

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<sup>41</sup> *Festal* 10.4 is the only exception to the pattern of the Spirit speaking against the wicked. Here, the Spirit’s words are neutral, exhorting the people of God to “enter into his Gates with psalms” (Ps. 100:4).

inspiration of the Scriptures, but they also present the Spirit as a censorious prophet who rebukes sinners to promote holiness. In short, the Holy Spirit encourages holiness by prophetically discouraging wickedness.

The uniqueness of this theme of the Spirit presently speaking through the Scriptures for the censure and correction of contemporary persons provides insight into the development of Athanasius's early pneumatology. As noted, broader themes, such as the notion that the Spirit inspired the Scriptures are widespread before and during the early fourth century. However, the theme of the Holy Spirit speaking through the Scriptures to contemporary individuals, particularly for censure or correction, is relatively unique to Athanasius.

Of the various theological texts that we can assume Athanasius had access to, perhaps the closest parallel occurs in Alexander of Alexandria's letter to his namesake in Byzantium. Here Alexander refers to the Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of prophecy," and he implies that the Spirit inspired Isaiah in such a manner that the Spirit can be said to speak to contemporary matters through Isaiah's ancient prophecies. When criticizing Arius and others for seeking to understand how the Word subsists, Alexander writes: "How does anyone meddle with the hypostasis of the Word of God unless he happens to be seized with a melancholic disposition? (21) Concerning this, the prophetic Spirit says, 'Who will describe his generation?' (Isa. 53:8)" (*ep. Alex.* 20–21). Here, the Spirit not only inspired Isaiah but also continues to teach through Isaiah's words. Accordingly, we can say that Alexander's statement assigns a prophetic role to the Spirit, even treating the Spirit as the archetypal prophet who inspires and speaks through human prophets, such as Isaiah and the other authors of Scripture. However, Alexander's statement occurs in a paragraph where he also points to several other texts that condemn Arius's actions, and his statement lacks the notion of the Spirit speaking

“presently” that we find in Athanasius. As such, we should be hesitant about saying that Athanasius learned the theme from Alexander. It could be that this theme represents a unique development in Athanasius’s thought based on Scriptural reflection.<sup>42</sup>

## 5. The Holy Spirit and Trinitarian Doxologies

### *Overview*

Trinitarian doxologies, which occur in pastoral works written in the early, middle, and late stages of Athanasius’s career, provide another long-term witness to Athanasius’s theology of the Holy Spirit. In Chapter 3, we will see that Athanasius’s preferred Trinitarian doxological formulae changed at one point, and we will assess to what extent this change reflects development in Athanasius’s thought. The present section lays the groundwork for this discussion by examining Athanasius’s early Trinitarian doxologies.

Athanasius includes Trinitarian doxologies in four works written before the first *Orations*. These are *Incarnation* (ca. 328–335), *Festal 1* (329), *Festal 24* (330) and *Festal 7* (335).<sup>43</sup> Though each of these

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<sup>42</sup> I would suggest that Athanasius was influenced, in particular, by Heb. 3:7–15, which contains the theme of the Spirit censuring or correcting contemporary individuals through the Scriptures.

<sup>43</sup> In addition to these, a Trinitarian doxology is also included in a fragmented homily *On the Moral Life* (CPG 2152). This homily is preserved in Coptic and considered authentic by Brakke. The homily may have been written during this early period in Athanasius’s career. The fragment ends with a remarkable Trinitarian doxology: “Glory to the Father, with him and the Holy Spirit, the giver of life and of one substance, for ever and ever. Amen” (ΠΕΘΟΥ ΜΠΕΙΩΤ ΝΜΜΔϪ ΜΝΠΕΠΝΕΥΜΑ ΕΤΟΥΔΔΒ ΝΡΕϪΤΑΝΞΟ ΔΥΩ ΝΞΟΜΟΟΥϪΙΟΝ ΩΔΕΝΕΞ ΝΕΝΕΞ. ΞΔΜΗΝ) ET: Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism*, 319. If we accept Brakke’s dating, then “of one substance” (the Greek manuscripts would have used ὁμοούσιος) must be a later addition, likely added by a scribe sometime after *Serapion*. Athanasius applies ὁμοούσιος in *Serapion* 1.27 (ca. 359–361), after first developing his appreciation for the term in *Decrees* (ca. 353). The application of

doxologies has minor differences in terms of phrasing, they all contain the pairing of “glory” (δόξα) with “strength” or “power” (κράτος), which by this time was a common practice.<sup>44</sup> More importantly, three of the four follow the same τῷ-διὰ-ἐν formula, ascribing glory and power “to” the Father, “through” the Son, “in” (or “by”) the Holy Spirit.

Although standardization of doxologies did not begin to occur in the church until the end of the fourth century,<sup>45</sup> by 329 the use of this τῷ-διὰ-ἐν pattern was widespread, and the formula itself was an established part of the Christian theological and liturgical tradition.<sup>46</sup> Writings from the

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ἰσοούσιος to the Spirit in *On the Moral Life* is anachronistic, and the combination of it with “giver of life” suggests to me that changes to the doxology may have occurred after the Council of Constantinople (381).

It is interesting to observe that the combination of ἰσοούσιος language with “giver of life” in a doxology also occurs in the Egyptian hagiographical account of the martyrdom of saint Mark. The account’s concluding doxology gives praise to Christ “with the Father and the Holy Ghost, the giver of life and consubstantial one, now and for ever.” See Severus of El Ashmunein, *Hist. Pat.*, 1.1.2, available in B. Evetts, *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria, II, Peter I to Benjamin I (661)*, Patrologia Orientalis, vol. 1 (Paris, 1907), 141–49. It is possible that this doxological combination became somewhat common in Egypt by end of the fourth century, but this question goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>44</sup> On the pairing of δόξα with κράτος, see the summary in Charles H. Cosgrove, *An Ancient Christian Hymn with Musical Notation: Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1786; Text and Commentary* (Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 60–61.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, its presence in *Apos. Con.* 7.45.3 (Franz Xaver Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones apostolorum*, vol. 1 (Paderborn: F. Schoeningh, 1905), 452), where it was likely added in the third or early fourth century. See also Serapion, *Euch.*, where this formula ends twenty-nine of the thirty prayers, available in R. J. S. Barrett-Lennard, *The Sacramentary of Sarapion of Thmuis: A Text for Students, with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Bramcote: Grove Books, 1993). Further, see Eusebius of Caesarea’s version of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*: “Wherefore I praise thee also for everything; I bless thee, I glorify thee, through the eternal high priest, Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, through whom, with him, in the Holy Spirit, be glory unto thee, both now and for the ages to come, Amen” (*b.e.* 4.15.35 ET: NPNF).

first century onwards identify Christ, the mediator of salvation, as the mediator “through” whom prayer and worship are to be given to the Father.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, New Testament documents treat the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of God, as both the presence of God and also the agent who enables Christian prayer and worship.<sup>48</sup> Although the identification of the Spirit as the presence of God gradually faded over time, as the church came to focus more on the question of Christ’s relationship to the Father, the Spirit’s role in empowering prayer, worship, and sanctification persisted. The persistence of the Spirit’s empowering role could be partly due to Christian experience, but it is also certainly due to numerous New Testament texts expressing the role, such as Acts 2; John 4:21–24; Rom. 5, 8; 1 Cor. 12:3–11, 14; Gal. 5; Eph. 5:18–19, 6:18; and Phil. 3:3.

One Pauline text in particular, however, appears to have been particularly influential in the development and endurance of this role and the τῷ-διὰ-ἐν pattern that reflects it: Eph. 2:18 (“for through him [Christ] both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father”).<sup>49</sup> Although the verse refers to the reconciliation with God that Christ offers Jews and Gentiles, it also expresses a broader idea that subsequent Christians transposed into a doxological context. This idea is that human beings have been given access to God through the Son’s mediating work on the cross and the Spirit’s unifying and empowering presence. When this verse was

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<sup>47</sup> Paul F. Bradshaw, “God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit in Early Christian Praying,” in *The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer: Trinity, Christology, and Liturgical Theology*, ed. Bryan D. Sprinks (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 51–52.

<sup>48</sup> On this, see especially N.T. Wright, “Worship and the Spirit in the New Testament,” in *The Spirit in Worship—Worship in the Spirit*, ed. Teresa Berger and Bryan D. Sprinks (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 3–24.

<sup>49</sup> John D. Witvliet, “Prism of Glory: Trinitarian Worship and Liturgical Piety in the Reformed Tradition,” in *The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer: Trinity, Christology, and Liturgical Theology*, ed. Bryan D. Sprinks (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 270.

considered alongside the texts above, “in the Spirit” was taken to connote how Christians glorify God ἐν (“in” or “by”) the empowering presence of the Spirit, who inspires their prayers and worship.

In the third century, Origen’s treatise *On Prayer* (*or.*) secured the popularity of the τῷ-διὰ-ἐν pattern in the Christian spiritual and liturgical traditions. Here, Origen explicitly prescribes this doxological pattern for the start and end of prayer, writing: “In the prologue of one’s prayer, one should with all one’s strength glorify God through Christ (διὰ Χριστοῦ), who is glorified with him, in the Holy Spirit (ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι), who is praised with him... The prayer should end with a glorification of God through Christ in the Holy Spirit” (*or.* 33.1)<sup>50</sup> After providing Scriptural support for his teaching on the components of prayer, Origen repeats his instruction on the ending of prayer and specifically uses the τῷ-διὰ-ἐν doxological formula to exemplify this instruction. “Lastly, it is good to end prayer as it was begun—with a doxology, hymning and glorifying the Father of all things through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit to whom be glory for ever and ever” (*or.* 33.6). Turning now to Athanasius’s four earliest Trinitarian doxologies, we will see that three follow the same τῷ-διὰ-ἐν pattern.

#### *Doxologies in Athanasius’s Early Works*

Athanasius uses the traditional τῷ-διὰ-ἐν doxological pattern at the end of *Festal* 1. After exhorting his audience to care for the poor and to love God

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<sup>50</sup> Origen’s remarks “who is glorified with him” and “who is praised with him” appear to have been ignored or at least kept tacit in subsequent early uses of the τῷ-διὰ-ἐν formula. As we will see, Athanasius revives the “with” phrase regarding the Son in *Incarnation*.

Origen also dedicates many doxologies to Christ alone. The vast majority of Origen’s homilies end with doxologies to Christ. See Henri Crouzel, “Les doxologies finales des homélies d’Origène selon le texte grec et les versions latines,” *Augustinianum* 20, no. 1–2 (1980): 95–107.

and neighbour, he reminds them that Christians who faithfully live in this manner can hope to:

...receive those things “which the eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, and which have not entered into the heart of man, which God has prepared for those that love him” (1 Cor. 2:9), through his only Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; through whom, to the Father alone, by the Holy Spirit, be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.  
(*Festal* 1.11)

In *Pagans-Incarnation*, Athanasius ends the work in a manner that closely resembles the ending of *Festal* 1. As with his first festal letter, Athanasius leads into the concluding doxology by reminding his audience of the heavenly rewards that await the faithful. If his readers imitate the good works of the saints, then they may:

...receive what has been laid up for the saints in the kingdom of heaven, “which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have they entered into the heart of man” (1 Cor. 2:9), whatsoever things have been prepared for those who live a virtuous life and love the God and Father, in Christ Jesus our Lord, through whom and with whom, to the Father with the Son himself in [the] Holy Spirit,<sup>51</sup> be honour and power and glory to the ages of ages. Amen.  
(*Incarnation* 57)

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<sup>51</sup> Brackets added. In Athanasius’s doxology, “Holy Spirit” occurs without the definite article. The same is true of the τῷ-διὰ-ἐν doxology in the *Euchologion* of Serapion, which occurs twenty-nine times and usually reads: “...through your only-begotten Jesus Christ, through whom to you [the Father] be the glory and the power in holy Spirit both now and to the ages of ages. Amen” (ET: Barrett-Lennard, *Sacramentary of Serapion*). Some interpreters have taken this as a sign of an impersonal understanding of the Spirit (for example, Bernard Botte, “L’Eucologe de Sérapion est-il authentique?,” *Oriens Christianus* 48 (1964): 50–57), but it should be noted that even in *Serapion*, Athanasius permits anarthrous references to the Spirit (*Serapion* 1.4), which means we should not make too much of this claim. Instead, the lack of the definite article reflects the oldness of the doxology, and it would seem that Athanasius and Serapion of Thmuis are both citing an established Egyptian doxological tradition.

The similarities between these conclusions provide circumstantial evidence to further support assigning an early date to *Pagans-Incarnation*. Both works end with quotations of 1 Cor. 2.8 followed by a concluding Trinitarian doxology—a pattern that never occurs in any of Athanasius’s other works. If Athanasius finished writing *Festal 1* and *Incarnation* around the same time, then it would be reasonable for the conclusion of the one to reflect the other. Since *Festal 1* can be reliably dated to 329, then this would imply that *Pagans-Incarnation* was also finished in the early years of his career as bishop.

Further, the doxology in *Incarnation* expands on what is found in *Festal 1*, and this provides a clue suggesting it was written after *Festal 1* but before the next work that uses this doxology—*Festal 7*, written in 335. In the doxology in *Incarnation*, Athanasius adds the phrase “with the Son” (σὸν) to the traditional τῷ-διὰ-ἐν formula.<sup>52</sup> Athanasius makes this addition in order to highlight the Son’s eternal existence and glory with the Father. Yet, he carefully avoids ascribing glory specifically “to” the Son. Throughout his career, Athanasius maintains a subtle prioritization of the Father over the Son and Spirit because the Father is the one from whom the Son and Spirit derive. Nevertheless, the addition of “with” in this doxology is sufficient for Athanasius’s purpose of emphasizing the Son’s unique relationship “with” the Father, which cements the double apology’s point that the cross was effective because it bore the only being who could restore rationality and immortality—the divine Word of God.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Athanasius may be reviving Origen’s comment about prayer being given to the Father through the Son “who is glorified with him” (*Or.* 33.1). See above, p. 102.

<sup>53</sup> On the work of the Word in restoring rationality and immortality, see above, pp. 50–61. See also Christopher A. Beeley, *The Unity of Christ: Continuity and Conflict in Patristic Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 127–

In *Festal 7*, Athanasius repeats this expanded version of the τῷ-διὰ-ἐν formula, writing: “Let us at all times worship the Father in Christ, through whom to him and with him be glory and dominion by the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen” (*Festal 7.11*). Here, as in *Incarnation*, the traditional formula is retained (glory to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit), while a “with” phrase about the Son is added in order to ascribe glory to the Son as well. These details suggest that Athanasius may have finished *Pagans-Incarnation* sometime between *Festal 1* (329) and *Festal 7* (335).<sup>54</sup> My larger argument about the development of Athanasius’s doxologies, however, does not depend on this dating. As will be clear by the end of Chapter 3, my argument is based on numerous sources besides the double apology, including *Festal 24*, which we will now turn to.

The concluding Trinitarian doxology in *Festal 24* (330) differs from the three examples above. In *Festal 24*, Athanasius replaces the prepositional phrase “in the Holy Spirit” with “with the Holy Spirit.” The doxology reads: “Through him [Christ] be glory and power to the Father forever, with the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen” (*Festal 24.21 ET*: Brakke).<sup>55</sup> *Festal 24* contains no internal evidence to explain the change;

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<sup>54</sup> If this is the case, then the events likely played out as follows: Athanasius concluded *Festal 1* with the traditional τῷ-διὰ-ἐν doxology that he was familiar with; sometime thereafter, as he concluded *Incarnation*, he expanded this doxology, adding the “with” phrase about Christ in order to emphasize that faith in the cross is rational because it is the work of the Word of God; then, in 335, he essentially repeated the doxology from *Incarnation*, perhaps because he had just recently finished *Incarnation* and its doxology was still fresh in his mind. Of course, I recognize that this scenario is based on circumstantial evidence, and thus it—like every theory on the dating of *Pagans-Incarnation*—must be treated as a working hypothesis.

<sup>55</sup> *Festal 24* survives in Coptic. The Coptic fragment uses the preposition ΜΝ (“with”) with the Spirit: ΜΝΠΕΠΝΝΔ ΕΤΟΥΔΔΒ ΩΔΕΝΕΖ ΝΕΝΕΖ ΖΔΜΗΝ (“with the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen”). Lefort, *Lettres festales*, 44. Numbering

and its theological meaning should not be exaggerated.<sup>56</sup> The change reflects the traditional practice of naming the Spirit together with the Father and Son in liturgical and doxological contexts, and the inclusion of this phrase in Trinitarian doxologies is also quite traditional. The preposition “with” (σὺν) is applied to the Holy Spirit in doxologies from various early Christian writers and texts. This σὺν...πνεύματι doxological formula occurs in Clement of Alexandria,<sup>57</sup> Julius Africanus,<sup>58</sup> Origen,<sup>59</sup> and various witnesses to the *Apostolic Tradition*.<sup>60</sup>

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follows Brakke.

<sup>56</sup> For example, here the phrase tells us neither that the glory given to the Father and Son should also be given to the Spirit nor that the Spirit is a worshipper of the Father and Son.

<sup>57</sup> Clement of Alexandria gives praise “to the only Father and Son, the Son and Father, the Son—Instructor and Teacher—and with the Holy Spirit” (*Paed* 3.12....σὺν καὶ τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι). The inclusion of the Spirit here appears to be a formulaic afterthought (Bogdan Gabriel Bucur, *Angelomorphic Pneumatology: Clement of Alexandria and Other Early Christian Witnesses*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, vol. 95 (Boston: Brill, 2009), 75), which may indicate “with the Spirit” was already commonplace by this time.

<sup>58</sup> The following doxology is preserved by Basil of Caesarea and treated as authentic in Martin Wallraff, *Iulius Africanus: Chronographiae; The Extant Fragments* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 294–95: “...thanks to the Father, who gave Jesus Christ, the Saviour of all and our Lord, to us, his own creatures. Glory and majesty be to him, with the Holy Spirit, unto all ages” (Basil of Caesarea, *Spir.* 73 ET: David Anderson, *St. Basil the Great: On the Holy Spirit* (Crestwood, NY: Saint Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980), 109).

<sup>59</sup> Basil reports that Origen used this doxology in many of his commentaries on the Psalms (*Spir.* 73). I look forward to examining the doxologies in the newly discovered collection of Origen’s homilies on the Psalms, forthcoming in Lorenzo Perrone, *The New Homilies on the Psalms: A Critical Edition of Codex Monacensis Graecus 314* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, forthcoming).

<sup>60</sup> The Latin translation contains the following doxology: “...through your Child, Jesus Christ, through whom [be] glory and power and honour to you, Father and Son with the Holy Spirit, both now and to the ages of ages. Amen” (*Apos. Trad.*, 68.26–69.24 ET: Paul F. Bradshaw, Maxwell E. Johnson, and L. Edward Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), 30). The Greek *Epitome of the Apostolic Constitutions* contains a

As we will see in Chapter 3, Athanasius repeats the τῷ-διὰ-ἐν and σὺν...πνεύματι forms on several occasions after writing the *Orations*. Both forms reflect the established and accepted tradition of giving glory to the Father through the mediation of the Son. The τῷ-διὰ-ἐν pattern emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. The Spirit empowers the prayers and worship given to the Father. The σὺν...πνεύματι form highlights a different aspect of the Spirit's identity. The Holy Spirit is always named "with" and present "with" the Father and Son.<sup>61</sup> After the conflict with the "Tropikoi," however, Athanasius makes a subtle change to his doxological usage to prevent possible misinterpretations regarding the Spirit's place in the Trinity.<sup>62</sup>

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very similar doxology: "...through your Child Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom [be] glory, power, honour to you, with the Holy Spirit, now and always and to the ages of ages. Amen" (*Epitome of Apos. Con.* 4.1–4 ET: Bradshaw, Johnson, and Phillips, *Apostolic Tradition*, 31). The related church order, the *Testamentum Domini*, originally Greek but preserved in Arabic, Ethiopic, and Syriac, also includes a similar doxology containing "with the Holy Spirit" (ibid.) Likewise, the Ethiopic translation of the *Apostolic Tradition* contains a doxology that includes "with the Holy Spirit" (ibid., 62). See also the doxology in the *Strasbourg Papyrus*, which is the first layer in the *Anaphora of St. Mark*, in Walter D. Ray, "The Strasbourg Papyrus," in *Essays on Early Eastern Eucharistic Prayers*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 39–56.

<sup>61</sup> Readers familiar with Basil will recognize the similarities here with *Spir.* 58–68, which is the *locus classicus* on the meaning of "in" and "with" when applied to the Spirit in doxological contexts. Basil neatly sums up his understanding in *Spir.* 68: "The preposition *in* expresses the relationship between ourselves and the Spirit, while *with* proclaims the communion of the Spirit with God" (ET: Anderson, *Holy Spirit*, 102; Anderson's italics). One key difference, however, is that in the first stage of his career Athanasius uses "with" in a neutral manner—"with" reflects the tradition that the Spirit is to be named with the Father and Son. Basil, on the other hand, goes beyond this, arguing that "with" indicates the Spirit's status: it "expresses the Spirit's dignity" (*Spir.* 68).

<sup>62</sup> On the change to Athanasius's doxologies, see below, pp. 133–141.

### Conclusion

What can be known about Athanasius's early theology of the Holy Spirit? The only witnesses to this part of Athanasius's thought are his early pastoral works, which at first glance appear to offer little in terms of pneumatology. In these works, Athanasius does not discuss the nature of either the Spirit or the Trinity. When referencing the Holy Spirit, Athanasius focuses on the Spirit's role in the lives of faithful Christians—which is not the kind of Spirit-material that most studies of Athanasius's pneumatology have been interested in.

A secondary argument of this thesis, however, is that pneumatology is often defined too narrowly. There is a tendency to restrict pneumatology to matters related to the nature of the Holy Spirit and treat other material related to the Spirit as tangential. Yet, this material is not unimportant. It shows that within the first decade of Athanasius's career as bishop, Athanasius had begun to integrate the Holy Spirit into his vision of salvation and Christian spirituality. As we have seen, three pneumatological perspectives became common themes in Athanasius's early pastoral works. In these works, the Holy Spirit corrects and censures fourth-century persons, helps clothe Christians with the "wedding garment" of holiness (which is necessary for salvation), and may be included in doxologies because Christians pray "in" the Spirit and because it is traditional to name the Holy Spirit "with" the Father and Son.

In Chapter 4, we will see that in *Serapion* Athanasius draws on his earlier tenets about the Holy Spirit. One such tenet is the view, noted in this chapter, that Athanasius considers the Holy Spirit to be essential for Christians to attain salvation. This is because the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit provides Christians with holiness. Without this wedding garment of holiness, Christians cannot enter into heaven.

The pneumatology of Athanasius's early pastoral works is also important because it provides background for Athanasius's discussions

about the Spirit and salvation in the *Orationes*. As Chapters 5 through 7 will show, Athanasius's vision of salvation in the *Orationes* reveals important details in his thought about the identity of the Spirit. For example, when this and later material is read without a knowledge of Athanasius's pastoral works, Athanasius's vision of salvation can appear to be disconnected from spiritual and ethical transformation.<sup>63</sup> Athanasius's pastoral works tell us that this is not the case.

Finally, the material on the Holy Spirit in Athanasius's early pastoral works is also significant because the pastoral works offer us a longterm witness to Athanasius's theology. Athanasius wrote pastoral works throughout the various stages of his career. Consequently this material allows us to trace how Athanasius discussed the Spirit for pastoral purposes before and after major theological works, such as the *Orationes* and *Serapion*. For this purpose, we will look now at the subject of the Holy Spirit in the pastoral works that Athanasius wrote after the first *Orationes*.

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<sup>63</sup> See above, p. 92n34.

## Pneumatology in the Later Pastoral Works

### Introduction

This chapter argues that, with two exceptions, the pneumatology in Athanasius's later pastoral works, which I regard as those written after 340, is in continuity with that in his earlier pastoral works.<sup>1</sup> In the later pastoral works, Athanasius repeats and refines the themes of the Holy Spirit "clothing" Christians with holiness and prophetically correcting fourth-century Christians through the prophetic Scriptures. Athanasius provides these themes with greater detail, but he does not radically change them.

As noted, Athanasius's later pastoral works also include two features that distinguish them from the earlier pastoral works. First, in Athanasius's *Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms*, Athanasius provides new insight into the Holy Spirit's role in the inspiration and unity of the Scriptures. Second, after 357, Athanasius makes a change to his concluding Trinitarian doxologies. As we will see, this change to his doxologies reflects an important development in

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<sup>1</sup> There is one major pastoral work that I exclude from this thesis: the *Life of Antony*. Much debate surrounds the *Life of Antony*, but it seems likely that it was written by Athanasius, perhaps between Antony's death in 356 and the end of Athanasius's third exile (362). I have chosen to exclude the *Life of Antony* because of its limited pneumatological content, controversial authorship, and late date. It is also less of a pastoral work than the writings treated in this chapter. On its political purpose of helping unify the Egyptian church, see Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism*, 245–265. For a bibliography on the debates over authorship, dating, and transmission, see Leemans, "Thirteen Years," 153–61.

Athanasius's understanding of the Spirit's nature and relationship to the Father and Son.

This chapter begins by returning to the motif of the Holy Spirit providing Christians with holiness, which Athanasius presents as the “wedding garment” necessary for eternal life in heaven. We will see that this theme helps support my claim of pneumatological continuity between the early and later pastoral works.

### 1. Sanctification and the Wedding Garment

#### *The Theme in Festal 20*

In *Festal 20*, written in 348, Athanasius repeats the theme of the Holy Spirit supplying Christians with the “wedding garment.” As in *Festal 7* (335), the garment represents the moral holiness that Christians must possess in order to properly celebrate Easter and later be accepted into heaven. In *Festal 20*, however, Athanasius combines the wedding garment imagery with the Johannine image of the Holy Spirit as “living” spiritual water (John 7). As we will see, by combining the imagery in this manner, Athanasius places extra emphasis on humanity's need for the Holy Spirit.

Athanasius brings the wedding garment and living water imagery together while teaching his audience about the benefits of “thirsting” for God. As we noted in Chapter 2, Athanasius believes that keeping the Easter feast requires spiritual and physical fasting. In the current letter, Athanasius explains that Christians can endure the Easter fast and other challenges through faith and prayer. If people continually pray and desire God, then God will quench their thirst by giving them the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, like living waters, comforts, refreshes, and strengthens those who thirst. Athanasius writes:

When we thirst, he satisfies us on the feast-day itself; standing and crying, “If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink” (John 7:37). For such is the love of the saints at all times, that they never once leave off, but offer the

uninterrupted, constant sacrifice to the Lord, and continually thirst, and ask of him to drink... [And] he gives them abundantly according to the multitude of his lovingkindness, granting to them at all times the grace of the Spirit... [And] “as cold waters are pleasant to those who are thirsty” (Prov. 25:25), according to the proverb, so to those who believe in the Lord, the coming of the Spirit is better than all refreshment and delight.  
(*Festal* 20.1)

While preparing for Easter, Athanasius’s audience is to continually thirst for God, trusting that God will bless them with the renewing presence of the Holy Spirit.

Athanasius’s belief that the Holy Spirit is crucial for the observation of Easter and the hope of heaven becomes particularly clear in what follows. After the quote above, Athanasius teaches that if Christians “thirst” for wicked things instead of God, then they will lack the “wedding garment” required for Easter and heaven. This is because the Spirit empowers Christians to attain the “the wedding garment”—that is, the moral aspect of sanctification necessary for salvation. Athanasius explains:

It becomes us then in these days of the Passover, to rise early with the saints, and approach the Lord with all our soul, with purity of body, with confession and godly faith in him; so that when we have here first drunk, and are filled with these divine waters which [flow] from him, we may be able to sit at the table with the saints in heaven, and may share in the one voice of gladness which is there. From this sinners, because it wearied them, are rightly cast out, and hear the words, “Friend, how did you come in here, not having a wedding garment?” (Matt. 22:12). Sinners indeed thirst, but not for the grace of the Spirit; but being inflamed with wickedness, they are wholly set on fire by pleasures, as says the proverb, “All day long he desires evil desires” (Prov. 21:26).  
(*Festal* 20.2)

Expanding on his use of the Johannine image of the Holy Spirit as spiritual water, Athanasius teaches that the presence of the Holy Spirit is

essential for Easter and salvation since the Spirit helps bring the “wedding garment” of holiness. Significantly, Athanasius makes participation in Easter and salvation depend on Christians possessing this “wedding garment.” It is essential to recognize that, for Athanasius, this wedding garment is not the Holy Spirit but the holiness that the Spirit helps inspire. To put it another way, Christians need the “water” of the Holy Spirit because this water empowers them to put on the “wedding clothes” (holiness) required for admission to Easter and heaven.<sup>2</sup> In this way, this pneumatology is in continuity with that of earlier works such as *Festal 7*, although in *Festal 20* humanity’s need for the Spirit is more strongly underlined.

Another point of continuity between *Festal 20* and earlier pastoral works concerns reception of the Holy Spirit. As in *Festal 1* and *7*, in this letter Athanasius assumes that the Holy Spirit comes to actively work in human beings after individuals choose to repent from sin and follow God. In *Festal 20*, repentance as a pre-requisite for reception of the Holy Spirit is illustrated by Athanasius’s emphasis on thirsting for God. If Christians continually seek and pray to God,<sup>3</sup> they will be rewarded by him. God will give them the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, *Festal 20* is in

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<sup>2</sup> Humanity’s need for the Spirit is further emphasized by Athanasius’s warning about what will happen to those persons who lack the holiness made possible by the aid of the Spirit. Drawing on the last part of the parable of the wedding feast (Matt. 20:11–14), Athanasius warns his audience that sinners will be cast out from the feast because they approach it “without a wedding garment”—that is, without the moral holiness necessary for salvation. Although sinners are also spiritually thirsty, they do not seek “the grace of the Spirit.” They are “instead inflamed by evil” and therefore “completely set ablaze by pleasures” (*Festal 20.4 ET*: based on Camplani, *Lettere Festali*, 436). As in *Pagans-Incarnation*, these pleasures leads to various evil thoughts and actions.

<sup>3</sup> “For such is the love of the saints at all times, that they never once leave off, but offer the uninterrupted, constant sacrifice to the Lord, and continually thirst, and ask of him to drink” (*Festal 20.1*).

<sup>4</sup> “Those who are thus continually engaged, are waiting entirely on the

continuity with the letters examined in Chapter 2 that made reception of the Holy Spirit depend on repentance.

Turning now to the subject of participation in the heavenly feast, it is interesting that Athanasius does not restrict this participation to the afterlife. As in his early letters, Athanasius presents the celebration of the Easter feast as an event that occurs on earth and in heaven. In *Festal* 20, however, Athanasius adds new details about the relationship between the Easter feast on earth and in heaven. Athanasius maintains that the experience of being “able to sit at the table with the saints in heaven and to participate in the harmony of voices and joy of heaven” can be attained in this lifetime (*Festal* 20.3). This is because proper participation in the earthly feast is also a participation in the heavenly feast. When Christians take part in the Easter liturgy on earth, they temporarily share in the heavenly wedding feast described in Matt. 22 and the eternal celebration of Christ’s sacrifice that is eternally enjoyed by the saints in heaven.

For our subject, it is important to note that faithful Christians’ participation in this heavenly feast is made possible by their reception of “the divine water” (the Holy Spirit) and “the grace of the Spirit,” which bring holiness. The sinners’ expulsion from the feast, on the other hand, is due to their wickedness and lack of “a wedding garment.” The wedding garment represents what “the sinners” are not adorned with, namely moral purity and holiness.<sup>5</sup> Those who participate in the feast must be adorned with this wedding garment, which, as we observed, Christians attain through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, who empowers them to overcome sin and clothe themselves with holiness.

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Lord... For not only does he satisfy them in the morning; neither does he give them only as much to drink as they ask; but he gives them abundantly according to the multitude of his lovingkindness, granting to them at all times the grace of the Spirit” (*Festal* 20.1).

<sup>5</sup> On this see *Festal* 41.6, written in 369, where Athanasius interprets the garment as a metaphor for being “clothed with wisdom and justice.”

*The Theme in Virginité*

The theme of the Holy Spirit clothing individuals with holiness so these persons might be joined with Christ in heaven also occurs at the end of Athanasius's treatise on *Virginité*.<sup>6</sup> Athanasius wrote the treatise for the ascetic group whom he labels "virgins" (πάρθενοι).<sup>7</sup> This group was comprised of Alexandrian ascetic women living either with their parents or with other "virgins." In the treatise, Athanasius exhorts this group to continue their ascetic lifestyle, which involves seeking physical and spiritual virtues.

Athanasius begins the treatise by reminding his audience about the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1–12), which highlights the need for vigilant dedication to Christ. Next, he also offers them encouragement by recalling the rewards stored in heaven for the faithful. It is in this context that he employs his metaphor of being clothed with holy virtues. He writes:

See how the person who conducts himself by God's law is full of praises. For when you walk blamelessly, then "like dawn your light will shine forth, and your health will quickly spring forth. You will call, and the Lord will answer you, and as much as you speak, he will say, 'Behold, I am near' (Isa. 58:8–9). When you are clothed in the virtues like garments and like a cloak you have acquired the power of the Holy Spirit, then the king will see you and desire your beauty, because you are so clothed and multicoloured with the virtues. Then you will be brought to him, for he has seen your beauty and love (Ps. 45:11–15). Then he will bring you into the bridal chamber not made with hands, the unending marriage feast, the kingdom of heaven, eternal life.  
(*Virginité* 16)

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<sup>6</sup> Athanasius's treatise on *Virginité* is preserved in Syriac and Armenian versions. On the letter's authenticity and background, see Brakke, "Authenticity": 27–30.

<sup>7</sup> On the "virgins" in Alexandria, see Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism*, 9–11, 19–35, 70–79.

Weaving together the parable of the wedding garment, the parable of the ten virgins, and Ps. 45:11–15’s imagery of clothing and desire, Athanasius describes how and why the virgins’ devotion to Christ will be rewarded. If the virgins live virtuously, conducting themselves according to God’s law, they will not be like the foolish virgins, who were not prepared for their bridegroom. Instead, being like the five wise virgins, they will be brought to Christ, who will take them as his bride. Using marital imagery to describe the virgins’ reward, Athanasius says that they will not only enter into heaven—into “the kingdom of heaven, eternal life, the place of the angels”—but that they will receive the special reward of seeing their bridegroom “face to face” in “the bridal chamber not made by hands” (*Virginité* 16).

In the next section, Athanasius expands on the virgins’ heavenly reward, writing:

Then you will dwell with Christ. Then you will see your bridegroom...  
 Then he will appear to you, he who established heaven and spread forth the earth among the waters. To the virgin alone belongs this right, this heritage, this rank, this station, such glory, because she has hated the day of humanity (Jer. 17:16), because she has rejected all uncleanness.  
 (*Virginité* 17)

The virgins’ reward is relational. In heaven they will receive a special intimacy with Christ, who is their Lord and bridegroom. The reason for the reward, however, is ethical and spiritual. Athanasius tells the virgins that this heavenly reward depends on their character and inner beauty, which he describes with clothing imagery: “When you are clothed in the virtues like garments and like a cloak you have acquired the power of the Holy Spirit, then the king will see you and desire your beauty, because you are so clothed and multicoloured with the virtues” (*Virginité* 16). In late antiquity women frequently dressed in a three-piece outfit comprised

of an undertunic, an overtunic (called a stola), and an outer cloak,<sup>8</sup> and it is quite possible that Athanasius is basing his imagery on this common outfit. If this is the case, then Athanasius likely intended for the “garments” and the “cloak” to be understood together as a single unit or image. Together the cloak and the tunics (or “garments”) comprise the virgins’ spiritual clothing, and this outfit as a whole represents the virgin’s character and spiritual state. If it is correct that Athanasius intended for the “garments” and the “cloak” to be interpreted as a pair, then in this case that which they represent, namely the virtues and the power of the Holy Spirit, should also be interpreted as an inseparable pair.

Athanasius’s purpose here, therefore, is quite different than in his dogmatic works and many of his pastoral writings. Athanasius is concerned with neither arguing for the divinity of the Son or Spirit nor teaching about how the virtuous life is acquired, and thus he has no need to highlight the Spirit’s role in the development of virtue. Instead, Athanasius’s focus here is on the end rather than the means—on the moral and spiritual maturity necessary for intimacy with Christ in heaven rather than on the Spirit’s contribution to this state, and Athanasius’s clothing metaphors serve to make two points.

First, the virgins will not receive this heavenly reward unless they are fully clothed, possessing both a life of virtue and the power of the Holy Spirit. The overtones of the parable of the wedding garment are unmistakable. Like those invited to the wedding, the virgins must be clothed in the proper garments in order for them to experience the joy offered to them.<sup>9</sup> Second, just as the cloak and the garments belong

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<sup>8</sup> On popular clothing in the Roman empire in late antiquity, see Annemarie Stauffer, “Clothing,” in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 381–82.

<sup>9</sup> Given the prevalence of the notion of virgins as the brides of Christ in early Christian ascetic literature, Athanasius’s own emphasis on the virgins as brides of

together, making a complete outfit only when both are present, so the virtues and the Holy Spirit also belong together. The virgins are not spiritually whole until they possess not only virtue but also the presence of the Holy Spirit, who inspires, perfects, and completes their virtuous efforts.

*The Theme in Festal 41*

Athanasius reemploys the imagery of Christians being clothed with virtues in *Festal 41*, composed in 369. Writing towards the end of his life, with *Serapion* several years behind him, Athanasius once again exhorts his audience to prepare for Easter by seeking moral and spiritual purity.

Athanasius writes:

Let us “cleanse ourselves,” as the Apostle [Paul] exhorted, “from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1); that so, being spotless within and without—without, clothing ourselves with temperance and justice; within, by the Spirit, rightly dividing the word of truth—we may hear, “Enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matt. 25:21). But those who have fallen from this joy, such as both the ancient Jews and the

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Christ, and on his preceding discussion of the parable of the ten virgins, I think Athanasius likely intended for the virgins to take the parable of the wedding garment one step further: the virgin is not a wedding guest but the bride, the wedding garments are bridal clothes, and the wedding feast is part of the virgin’s nuptial union with Christ, her bridegroom. This interpretation places additional emphasis on the special relationship with Christ awaiting the virgins in heaven, which fits with Athanasius’s aim to promote the virgins’ withdrawal from public life for the sake of their union with Christ. On Athanasius’s ascetic program for the virgins, see Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism*, 21–35. For the theme of virgins as brides of Christ in other writers, see also Elizabeth Castelli, “Virginité and Its Meaning for Women’s Sexuality in Early Christianity,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 2, no. 1 (1986): 71–74.

new ones,<sup>10</sup> hear with shame, “Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?” (Matt. 22:12) And they will remain strangers to the feast. (*Festal* 40 NPNF / 41.6 Camplani)<sup>11</sup>

On this occasion, the presence of the Holy Spirit is again necessary for individuals to truly experience the Easter feast, but Athanasius’s emphasis is different than in previous letters. As in *Festal* 20, individuals must clothe themselves with virtues, here specified as “temperance and justice.” However, Athanasius identifies these virtues as only the individuals’ outer clothing, and he insists that these people must be “spotless” on the outside and the inside. In this text, the wedding garment, which represents the holy characteristics necessary to participate in the feast, includes the outer “clothing” of discernible virtuous behaviours but also specific inner qualities, namely purity of heart and orthodox faith in Christ.

Here, as in his polemical works, Athanasius connects inner faith and purity with the proper interpretation of the Scriptures. In the quotation above, however, Athanasius seems to repeat a point that he made in *Festal* 1 (329) and then abandoned until now. This point is that Christians (rather than Jews) are capable of properly interpreting the Scriptures because they have the gift of the Holy Spirit, who helps them “handle the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). As noted in Chapter 2, between *Festal* 1 and *Festal* 41, Athanasius avoids emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in the interpretation of the Scriptures, likely because he wished to prevent the rise of independent “spirit-lead” teachers.<sup>12</sup> Athanasius acknowledges that

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<sup>10</sup> Athanasius frequently adopts the unfortunate early Christian practice of using “the Jews” as a pejorative label to refer to all monotheists who do not regard Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Similarly, Athanasius uses “the Greeks” as a label to refer to all polytheists.

<sup>11</sup> Camplani, *Lettere Festali*, 526–27, correctly identifies this text as part of *Festal* 41. The first sentence of the English translation is from NPNF. The remainder is translated from Camplani’s Italian edition.

some Jews may have the outer qualities of temperance and justice, but he argues that Jews are not able to truly celebrate the Passover feast because they possess two shortcomings. First, although they may have outer virtues, they lack the inner purity that comes from reading the Scriptures in light of Christ. Without this inner purity, no one is capable of truly participating in the feast. Second, Jews do not understand that Christ is the fulfillment of the content of the Scriptures—including the Passover. No person can truly participate in the paschal feast, which involves worshipping and communing with Christ, unless they recognize the truth about him.

In sum, Athanasius once again uses the image of the wedding garment as a symbol for what Christians must possess in order to truly share in the earthly and heavenly feast; however, he has expanded the criteria necessary for this participation in the feast. Christians must still be “clothed” with external virtues, but now they must also be characterized by proper internal beliefs—beliefs which are fostered by the Holy Spirit, who helps them to correctly interpret the Scriptures. Thus, as in previous works, the Holy Spirit helps “clothe” Christians with the holiness and other things necessary for salvation.

## 2. Minor Themes

### *Union with Christ through the Holy Spirit*

In *Festal 3* (ca. 342), Athanasius briefly associates the Holy Spirit with an individual’s union with Christ. As we will see, union with Christ is central to Athanasius’s vision of salvation in the *Orations*. Although Athanasius does not go into detail on this activity, it is worth noting.

In *Festal 3*, Athanasius urges Alexandrian Christians to celebrate the paschal feast by dedicating themselves to the discipline of prayer, the practice of thanksgiving, and the cultivation of grace. Athanasius

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<sup>12</sup> See above, p. 85.

interprets the parable of the talents as a lesson on how Christians should treat the grace they have been given. Having received grace, believers should not remain idle, lest “the grace given to us should begin to depart, and the enemy finding us empty and naked, should enter [into us]” (*Festal* 3.3). In the next section, Athanasius makes it clear that the grace that he is referring to—the grace that must be fostered—is “the grace of the Holy Spirit.” Drawing on 1 Thess. 5:19, Athanasius writes:

Therefore the blessed Paul, when desirous that the grace of the Spirit given to us should not grow cold, exhorts, saying, “Quench not the Spirit” (1 Thess. 5:19). For so shall we remain partakers of Christ, if we hold fast to the end the Spirit given at the beginning.  
(*Festal* 3.4)

In order to rightly celebrate the paschal feast, Christians are to avoid idleness and evil deeds, lest they “quench the Spirit.” Instead, they are to foster the “grace of the Spirit,” which in this context can refer to both the sanctifying grace given to them by the Spirit and also to the presence of the Holy Spirit. Significantly, here, as in the *Orations*, Athanasius attributes these Christians’ participation in Christ to the presence of the Holy Spirit within them—which is a major pneumatological theme in the *Orations*.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Sinning Away the Holy Spirit*

In *Festal* 3, Athanasius expands on a perspective that he introduced seven years earlier, in *Festal* 7 (335): individuals can sin away the presence of the Holy Spirit. In *Festal* 7, this notion provided the impetus behind Athanasius’s remarks about the wedding garment, which Christians can only attain through the Holy Spirit working in them.<sup>14</sup> As we saw,

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<sup>13</sup> See below, especially pp. 290–299.

<sup>14</sup> See above, pp. 90–95.

Athanasius warned Christians that if they became negligent in following Christ, whose sacrifice offers them eternal life, then they will lose their salvation. These persons, “counting the blood of the covenant... a profane thing, and despising the grace of the Spirit” will hear the words, “Friend, how did you enter here, not having wedding garments,” and they will be expelled from the feast into “outer darkness” (Matt. 22:12; *Festal* 7.9).

In *Festal* 3, Athanasius provides a similar warning about negligence. Christians are to “keep pace with the grace of God, and not fall short; lest while our will remains idle, the grace given us should begin to depart, and the enemy finding us empty and naked, should enter” (*Festal* 3.3). In *Festal* 3, however, Athanasius explicitly states a pneumatological assumption that was implicit in *Festal* 7: The Holy Spirit refuses to remain in Christians who have become sinful and ungrateful for the grace that they have been given. Athanasius states this while explaining 1 Thess. 5:19, writing:

For [Paul] he said, “Quench not;” not because the Spirit is placed in the power of men, and is able to suffer anything from them; but because bad and unthankful men are such as manifestly wish to quench it, since they, like the impure, persecute the Spirit with unholy deeds. “For the holy Spirit of discipline will flee deceit, nor dwell in a body that is subject unto sin; but will remove from thoughts that are without understanding” (Wis. 1:5).  
(*Festal* 3.4)

The Holy Spirit’s unwillingness to remain in sinful persons proves to be a life-long pneumatological assumption for Athanasius, which informs his understanding of the relationship between faith, works, and salvation in pastoral and polemical contexts.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to these minor themes of union with Christ through the Holy Spirit and of sinning away the presence of the Spirit, there is one additional pneumatological theme that Athanasius introduces in a late

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, *Orations* 1.37 and *On the Moral Life* 6, which both speak of the Holy Spirit leaving sinful Christians.

pastoral work that should be noted. Unlike the two minor themes that we just looked at, however, this next theme is developed at length. Therefore, we will now turn to this theme, which pertains to the inspiration of the Scriptures.

### 3. The Holy Spirit and the Scriptures in *Marcellinus*

In Athanasius's *Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms*,<sup>16</sup> Athanasius discusses in new detail the Holy Spirit's role in the inspiration of the Scriptures. In the letter's introduction, Athanasius reveals that he is writing to a Christian man named Marcellinus, who, having become ill, wished to dedicate himself to the study of the Psalms.<sup>17</sup> Athanasius provides us with no direct indication of when he wrote the work, but it seems likely that it was written in the last ten or fifteen years of Athanasius's life.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> On the preservation and authenticity of *Marcellinus*, see M. J. Rondeau, "L'Épître à Marcellinus sur les Psaumes," *VC* 22 (1968): 176–80, for a summary of the content of *Marcellinus*, see G. Christopher Stead, "St. Athanasius on the Psalms," *VC* 39, no. 1 (1985): 66–69. See also Thomas Böhm, "Exegetische Schriften," in *Athanasius Handbuch*, ed. Peter Gemeinhardt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 271–76, who summarizes previous literature on *Marcellinus* and on the problems of attributing the spurious *Expositions on the Psalms* to Athanasius.

<sup>17</sup> Robert C. Gregg, *Athanasius: The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 21n31, notes that it is possible that this is the same Marcellinus as the deacon mentioned in Athanasius's *Apology* 73, but Gregg also acknowledges that Marcellinus was a common name.

<sup>18</sup> Everett Ferguson, "Athanasius' 'Epistola ad Marcellinum in interpretationem Psalmorum,'" *SP* 16 (1985): 295–96, suggests that some of the interpretations of the Psalms in *Marcellinus* likely reflect aspects of Athanasius's own life. Based on these possible autobiographical elements in *Marcellinus*, Ferguson proposes a date between 360 and 363.

I would propose another reason for assigning a relatively late date to the work. Beginning in the middle of the fourth century, the monastic use of the Psalms began to be integrated into urban services. As a result, the Psalms became an even more pervasive part of "cathedral" worship and the lives of urban Christian

After a brief epistolary greeting, in which Athanasius promises to share what he learned from “a certain old man who had bestowed much labour on the Psalter,”<sup>19</sup> Athanasius begins by reminding Marcellinus of the goodness of studying the Scriptures in general and the Psalms in particular. “All Scripture of ours, my son—both ancient and new—is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, as it is written (2 Tim. 3:16). But the Book of Psalms possesses a certain winning exactitude for those who are prayerful” (*Marcellinus* 2). For Athanasius, the goodness of the Scriptures and of their study is entirely predicated on their inspiration, which, following 2 Tim. 3:16, he attributes to God.

*The Holy Spirit and the Inspiration of the Scriptures*

In the course of his teaching on the use of the Psalms, Athanasius appeals to the inspired nature of the Scriptures several more times in order to justify his guidance. The Psalms exemplify proper worship and speak words that are appropriate “for us and our emotions and equanimity” because they are “divine hymns” (*Marcellinus* 10, 29, 30). The Psalter is a garden for the soul, providing the soul with “fruits... when the need arises,” because “the things in it are truly divinely inspired” (*Marcellinus*

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leaders and laity. On the spread of monastic psalmody into these services, see especially the summary in James McKinnon, “Desert Monasticism and the Later Fourth-Century Psalmody Movement,” *Music & Letters* 75, no. 4 (1994): 784–87. For additional details, see Robert Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: The Origins of the Divine Office and Its Meaning for Today* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1986), 31–73; McKinnon, “Desert Monasticism”.

<sup>19</sup>The “studious old man” is an intriguing rhetorical convention. Although it is possible that the “old man” is a veiled reference to Athanasius, Rondeau’s suggestion is more likely: the views expressed in Marcellinus represent a collection of wisdom that Athanasius learned from various monks during his travels, and that Athanasius used the “old man” to represent these sources and their authority. See Rondeau, “L’Épître à Marcellinus sur les Psaumes,” 194–97.

30). Indeed, the Psalms are the “ordinances” of God, on which we are to meditate “day and night” (*Marcellinus* 33; Ps. 1).

In *Marcellinus*, the Holy Spirit’s role in Christian pedagogy, including the inspiration of the Scriptures, is pervasive. As in earlier works, Athanasius identifies the Son and Holy Spirit as prophetic speakers of the Scriptures. Through the inspired texts, the Son often speaks of his suffering and his efforts to procure salvation.<sup>20</sup> The Son’s works are also prophetically spoken of by the Spirit, who “says in the seventy-first” psalm, for example, that the Son “will save the children of the needy, and shall bring low the false accuser... for he has delivered the poor from the oppressor; and the laborer, who had no helper” (*Marcellinus* 7; Ps. 72:4). Indeed, Athanasius identifies the Holy Spirit as the one who is “over” (ἐπι) the inspiration and composition of all of the Scriptures, ensuring the consistency of their message. At the heart of the Scriptures is the metanarrative of creation, fall, and redemption. About these events, Athanasius writes:

These things are sung in the Psalms, and they are foretold in each of the other books of Scripture... In each book of Scripture the same things [concerning the Saviour] are specifically declared.<sup>21</sup> This report exists in all of them, and the same agreement of the Holy Spirit.... For the same Spirit is over all [the Scriptures] (τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ Πνεῦμα ἐπὶ πάντας ἐστὶ), and in each case in accordance with the distinction that belongs to it, each serves and fulfills the grace given to it, whether it is prophecy, or law, or the record of history, or the grace of the Psalms. Since it is one and the same Spirit (ἐπειδὴ δὲ τὸ ἓν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ Πνεῦμά ἐστιν), from whom are all distinctions, and it is indivisible by nature (ἀδιαίρετόν ἐστι κατὰ φύσιν)—because of this surely the whole is in each, and as determined by service the revelations and the distinctions of the Spirit pertain to all and to each severally.

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<sup>20</sup> For example, Athanasius identifies the Son as the one speaking in Ps. 88:7, “Your wrath has pressed heavily upon me,” and in Ps. 69:4, “Then I restored that which I did not take away” (*Marcellinus* 7).

<sup>21</sup> I have restored “concerning the Saviour” (περὶ τοῦ Σωτῆρος), which Gregg omits. See PG 27.17.46.

(*Marcellinus* 9–10)

Here Athanasius makes an argument for the unity of the Scriptures, and he bases his argument on the indivisibility of the Spirit. Athanasius's argument can be summarized as follows: If each book of Scripture has been inspired by the Holy Spirit,<sup>22</sup> and if the Holy Spirit is “indivisible by nature” (ἀδιαίρετόν ἐστι κατὰ φύσιν), then the message of each book of Scripture must be indivisible from the message of every other book of Scripture.<sup>23</sup> To put it another way, since the Spirit who inspires the Scriptures cannot be divided, the message of the Scriptures also cannot be divided. Accordingly, the “whole” of the message of the gospel must be in each book of the Bible. Thus, as Athanasius says, there is “a common grace of the Spirit in all [Scripture],” and this grace (that is, the common message “concerning the Saviour”) should “be found existing in each [book of Scripture]” (*Marcellinus* 9, 10).

*The Holy Spirit and the Pedagogical Role of the Psalms*

In *Marcellinus*, the Spirit's role in the inspiration of the Scriptures is so vital, not only because the Spirit's work ensures the authority and unity of the Scriptures, but also because, in Athanasius's opinion, the Spirit's prophetic, pedagogical work extends and continues into the present through our use and interpretation of the Scriptures, in general, and the Psalms in particular. Athanasius says the Psalter “contains even the emotions of each soul,” (*Marcellinus* 10), and the Psalter's “words become like a mirror to the person singing them, so that he might perceive himself and the emotions of his soul” (*Marcellinus* 12). The Psalms have been uniquely composed in order to teach humans about themselves, so

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<sup>22</sup> “Each psalm is both spoken and composed by the Spirit” (*Marcellinus* 12).

<sup>23</sup> Athanasius's argument relies on the implicit assumption that if one's nature is consistent and indivisible then one's work must also be consistent and indivisible.

they might overcome sinful passions and seek God. As Athanasius explains, “through hearing [the words of the Psalter], it teaches not only not to disregard passion, but also how one must heal passion through speaking and acting” (*Marcellinus* 10). The Psalms teach how to live out the commands and exhortations contained in the rest of the Scriptures, they provide words and prayers necessary for every stage of the spiritual life, and they also reveal the deepest thoughts of each individual soul. Accordingly, when individuals sing the Psalms, they find that the words of the Psalter become their own and give voice to their own unique situation.

The Psalms are so revealing—so alive—because the Holy Spirit inspired each psalm to tell individual persons about themselves.

Athanasius writes:

Each psalm is both spoken and composed by the Spirit so that in these same words, as was said earlier, the stirrings of our souls might be grasped, and all of them be said as concerning us, and the same issue from us as our own words, for a remembrance of the emotions in us, and a chastening of our life. For what those who chant have said, these things also can be examples and standards for us.

(*Marcellinus* 12)

With the words of the Psalms, the Holy Spirit prophetically speaks into people’s lives, teaching each person about themselves and about the spiritual life necessary for salvation.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the teaching function of the

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<sup>24</sup> Thus, Athanasius also says that, with the exception of the Psalms that are strictly prophecies about Christ, the Psalms become the reader’s “own” words, meaning the words of the Psalms seem to speak into and about the reader’s current spiritual state. Athanasius writes: “He who recites the Psalms is uttering the rest as his own words, and each sings them as if they were written concerning him, and he accepts them and recites them not as if another were speaking, nor as if speaking about someone else. But he handles them as if he is speaking about himself” (*Marcellinus* 11). Athanasius attributes the Psalter’s relevancy to the

Psalms is so important to Athanasius that he says it contains the same model of the virtuous life that Christ taught during the incarnation—which was the perfect expression of virtue. Athanasius continues:

A more perfect instruction in virtue one could not find than that which the Lord typified in himself... The Lord, being true Lord of all and one concerned for all, performed righteous acts, and not only made laws but offered himself as a model for those who wish to know the power of acting. It was indeed for this reason that he made this resound in the Psalms before his sojourn in our midst, so that just as he provided the model of the earthly and heavenly man in his own person, so also from the Psalms he who wants to do so can learn the emotions and dispositions of the souls, finding in them also the therapy and correction suited for each emotion. If the point needs to be put more forcefully, let us say that the entire Holy Scripture is a teacher of virtues and of the truths of faith, while the Book of Psalms possesses somehow the perfect image for the souls' course of life.

(*Marcellinus* 13–14)

To Athanasius, the Psalter provides the finest written instructions on the holy life. Indeed, its teaching is second only to that of the incarnation.

#### *The United Work of the Word and the Holy Spirit*

Athanasius's discussion about the teaching roles of the Psalter and the incarnation is also significant because it shows that Athanasius conceives of this pedagogy as an activity that takes place through the joint work of the Word and the Holy Spirit. In Chapters 6 and 7, we will see that Athanasius credits the Holy Spirit with empowering the incarnate Word to cast out demons, and Athanasius presents baptism and Christian union with Christ as works performed by the united activity of the entire

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breadth of its content. It contains, he says, every human experience: "For I believe that the whole of human existence, both the dispositions of the soul and the movements of the thoughts, have been measured out and encompassed in those very words of the Psalter. And nothing beyond these is found among men" (*Marcellinus* 30).

Trinity. In Athanasius's comments above about the moral teaching provided by the Psalter and the incarnation, Athanasius presents the Word and the Spirit as performing specific pedagogical activities that, together, provide Christians with the instruction necessary to live righteously.

As we noted in the quotation above, Athanasius says the greatest instruction on the "heavenly" life occurred in the incarnation. In the incarnation, Christ's words and actions taught humans how to live according to righteousness rather than sin. Significantly, in *Marcellinus*, Athanasius maintains that the same information is also taught in the Psalms through the joint work of the Word and the Holy Spirit. This point occurs in *Marcellinus* 9, where, as we observed above, Athanasius speaks of the Spirit's work of overseeing the unity of the Scriptures. The part of this text that is particularly relevant for our present subject occurs as Athanasius describes the Spirit's method of inspiring each author and book of Scripture. Athanasius writes:

The whole [of the gospel message] is in each [book of Scripture], and, as determined by service (διακονίαν), the revelations and distinctions of the Spirit pertain to all [Scripture] and to each [book] individually. Furthermore, according to the reserved need, each [author of Scripture] frequently, under the influence of the Spirit (ὑποσχοῦντος τοῦ Πνεύματος),<sup>25</sup> serves the Word (διακονεῖ τὸν λόγον). Therefore, as I said previously, when Moses is legislating, sometimes he prophesies and sometimes sings, and the Prophets when they are prophesying sometimes issue commands, like "Wash yourselves, be clean. Cleanse your heart from wickedness, O Jerusalem" (Is. 1:16, Jer. 4:14), and sometimes recount history, as Daniel does the events surrounding Susanna and Isaiah does referring to Rabshakeh and Sennacherib (cf. Dan. 12; Is. 36–37).

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<sup>25</sup> This phrase is difficult to translate due to ὑποσχοῦντος, but it seems to express the notion that the authors of Scripture submitted to the Spirit, perhaps even becoming unconscious prophetic instruments of the Spirit. The latter notion is suggested by Gregg's translation: "When the Spirit takes over" (Gregg, *Life of Antony and Marcellinus*, 107).

(*Marcellinus* 9 TM)

In this rather complicated passage, Athanasius repeats his earlier point that the core message “concerning the Saviour” is contained in each book of Scripture.<sup>26</sup> In the rest of the section, he goes on to explain that this remains true even though each book has its own distinctive literary style (or styles). He notes that these styles are determined according to the “service” (διακονίαν) that each book is intended for (*Marcellinus* 10). Yet, despite this variety, each book of Scripture can teach us the same core message because each author, “under the influence of the Spirit, serves the Word” (*Marcellinus* 9).

The phrase “serves the Word” (διακονεῖ τὸν λόγον) is rather ambiguous, and it is possible that it expresses the idea that each inspired author “serves,” in the sense of delivers or communicates, the Word to their audience. However, while this may be the phrase’s secondary meaning, its context suggests a different primary meaning. As we have seen, the phrase occurs in a discussion that notes the various literary styles found in the Scriptures. Athanasius’s point seems to be that the authors of Scripture wrote in various styles according to need (or according to the intended “service” for each book). Therefore, the primary meaning of the phrase “under the influence of the Spirit, serves the Word” is to reaffirm this point. Each author of Scripture, when inspired by the Holy Spirit, worked for (or “serves”) the Word. These authors wrote in whatever style was appropriate, through the power of the Spirit, according to the Word’s purpose for their writings.

In terms of the bigger picture, Athanasius’s discussion illustrates how he conceives of the pedagogical roles of the Word and the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>26</sup> “In each book of Scripture the same things are specially declared. This report exists in all of them, and the same agreement of the Holy Spirit” (*Marcellinus* 9).

The Word seems to serve two related roles. On the one hand, he is the embodiment of the righteous lifestyle intended for all human beings. As we have seen, Athanasius says the incarnate Word “provided the model of the earthly and heavenly man in his own person” (*Marcellinus* 13), making the Word the perfect instructor concerning virtue and righteousness.

On the other hand, the Word is also responsible for overseeing the content of the Scriptures, which is a work done in conjunction with the Holy Spirit. As we have seen, Athanasius presents the authors of Scripture as writing in various ways according to the Word’s specific intention for their writings. An implicit point here is that the Word helped determine the message of the Scriptures. In *Marcellinus* 13, Athanasius connects this point to the Word’s role as the embodiment of the righteous life.

Although the Word provided the “perfect instruction in virtue” through his incarnation, he also chose to embed this message about himself and the righteous life in the Psalms (and each book of Scripture), so humans might learn how they are to live through the Scriptures as well. As Athanasius puts it, the Word embedded this message about himself in every book of Scripture, including the Psalms in particular, so that this message about Christ and the righteous life might “resound in the Psalms before his sojourn in our midst,” where “he provided the model of the earthly and heavenly man in his own person” (*Marcellinus* 13). As a result of this, readers of the Psalms “can learn the emotions and dispositions of the souls, finding in them also the therapy and correction suited for each emotion” (*Marcellinus* 13).

Towards the end of *Marcellinus*, Athanasius adds more information about the Word’s purpose for shaping the Psalms to promote spiritual health. According to Athanasius, the Psalms were given a musical structure in order to serve as a symbol of the harmony that is intended to be in each human soul. When a soul sings the Psalms properly, the soul “imagines positive things, even possessing a full desire for the future

goods” (such as the resurrection), and it “becomes forgetful of the passions and, while rejoicing, sees in accordance with the mind of Christ, conceiving the most excellent thoughts” (*Marcellinus* 29).

These pedagogical roles associated with the Word make the Spirit’s contribution to Christian pedagogy more complex. As we saw near the beginning of our discussion of *Marcellinus*, Athanasius credits the Spirit with prophetically speaking of Christ in the Psalms (*Marcellinus* 7), of being “over” (ἐπι) the inspiration and composition of all of the Scriptures, and, as a result of the Spirit’s own indivisibility, of ensuring the consistent message of the Scriptures.<sup>27</sup> Yet, based on the roles that Athanasius attributes to the Word, we need to be more accurate about the Spirit’s own pedagogical roles.

I would suggest that Athanasius views both the Holy Spirit and the Word as managers over the inspiration of the Scriptures and the Christian pedagogy that occurs through the Scriptures—yet, these managerial roles are not identical. Athanasius describes the Spirit as being responsible for directly inspiring the authors of Scripture. In this way, the Spirit ensures that these writers “serve” (that is, work for) the Word. The picture that emerges from this is a hierarchy in which the Word is above the Spirit in their joint mission to manage the content of the Scriptures.<sup>28</sup> Through

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<sup>27</sup> See above, pp. 124–126.

<sup>28</sup> These roles seem to be roughly analogous to the roles of an editor in chief and a managing editor in the newspaper and magazine industry. The editor in chief is responsible for determining, among other things, the vision of the publication. The managing editor oversees the various writers in order to ensure that the publication follows the direction expressed by the editor in chief. Similarly, the Word determines the big picture content of the Scriptures (indeed, he is part of that content, in the sense that all the Scriptures point to him). The Holy Spirit directly oversees the individual authors of Scripture, inspiring their exact words and literary style, in order to ensure that each serves the mission of the Word and contains the message about the Word, who is the model of righteousness.

their managerial roles, the Word and the Spirit together ensure that “all Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16; *Marcellinus* 2).

#### 4. The Holy Spirit in Trinitarian Doxologies

##### *Continuity and Change*

As I noted in the introduction to this thesis, Athanasius’s pastoral works provide a unique witness into the history of his thought because he wrote pastoral works throughout every stage of his career as Bishop of Alexandria. From these pastoral works, we have observed Athanasius add new details about the Holy Spirit over the course of his lifetime, such as details about the Spirit’s role in the sanctification of Christians and in the inspiration of the Scriptures. However, these changes have been evolutionary rather than revolutionary—meaning, they are primarily minor and in continuity with Athanasius’s earlier views. But, as the end of Chapter 2 alluded, there is one area of Athanasius’s pneumatology in the pastoral works that undergoes significant change: his Trinitarian doxologies.

As we noted in Chapter 2, which discussed Athanasius’s pastoral works written before the *Orationes*, Athanasius’s early pastoral works feature two concluding Trinitarian doxological formulas, both of which are highly traditional. The τῷ-διὰ-ἐν formula is most common. This formula ascribes glory and power “to” the Father, “through” the Son, “in” (or “by”) the Holy Spirit. Athanasius also uses another formula, in which he replaces the prepositional phrase “in the Holy Spirit” with “with the Holy Spirit.” This “σὺν...πνεύματι” formula continues a tradition of naming the Spirit with the Father and Son in liturgical and doxological contexts.

After the 330s, Athanasius continues to use both Trinitarian formulas. The τῷ-διὰ-ἐν formula occurs in *Festal* 2 (352), *Egypt and Libya*

(356 or 357), *Flight* (357), and *History* (357).<sup>29</sup> The *σὺν...πνεύματι* formula occurs in *Ammoun* (ca. 345–356),<sup>30</sup> *Festal* 19 (347), and *Festal* 39 (367).

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<sup>29</sup> On the dates of *Egypt and Libya* and *History*, see David M. Gwynn, *The Eusebians: The Polemic of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the “Arian Controversy”* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 35–36 and 40–41, respectively. For the occasion and argument of *Flight*, see Karen Piepenbrink, “Apologia de fuga sua,” in *Athanasius Handbuch*, ed. Peter Gemeinhardt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 193–97.

<sup>30</sup> The date of *Ammoun* remains controversial. Dmitriy Bumazhnov, “Monastische Schriften,” in *Athanasius Handbuch*, ed. Peter Gemeinhardt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 262–63, following Hugh G. Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wâdi ‘n Natrûn. Part II: The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and Scetis* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1932), 45–47, notes that if we assume this letter was written for Ammoun, the founder of the monastic community in Nitria, then, when Palladius’s account (*Historia Lausiaca* 8) is combined with details from the *Menologium Sirletianum*, we learn that Ammoun died no later than 337. This suggests that Athanasius’s letter was written before 337. However, Palladius’s *Historia Lausiaca* was written around 419–420, and his account is at least second hand. Further, the *Menologium Sirletianum* is, as Evelyn White acknowledges, not always reliable. These details make a date before 337 less than certain.

Instead, the letter seems to fit better within the period between 346 and 356, when Athanasius was in Egypt and actively writing to monks (Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius*, 277, 280). Indeed, David Brakke, “The Problematization of Nocturnal Emissions in Early Christian Syria, Egypt, and Gaul,” *J ECS* 3, no. 4 (1995): 433–46, has shown that Athanasius’s argument about nocturnal emissions can be read as a response to ascetic views promoted by works such as the letters of Antony the Great. Antony, writing in the 340s or 350s at the latest, taught that monks were to strive for the cessation of “the natural emission of seed” (Antony, *Letter* 1, ET: Derwas J. Chitty, *The Letters of St. Antony the Great* (Oxford: SLG Press, 1975), 2). Brakke notes the social implication of this teaching. “The monk who judged his emission to be defiling would abstain from the Eucharist, the ritual that expressed and created the solidarity of diverse Christians with each other and their bishop” (Brakke, “Nocturnal Emissions,” 440). Thus, “from this perspective, it is no surprise to find a bishop, Athanasius of Alexandria, condemning in fierce language monks who considered nocturnal emissions to be defiling” (Brakke, “Nocturnal Emissions,” 442). Brakke does not deduce a date for Amun in light of this context, but, in my view, this context strongly suggests a date shortly after Antony’s letters—thus, reinforcing a date between 345 and 356.

Despite this continuity, Athanasius's concluding Trinitarian doxologies undergo two major changes in the late 350s through 360s. First, in *On the Decrees of Nicaea*, *Serapion*, and the *Letter to Jovian*, Athanasius modifies the *σὺν...πνεύματι* formula in order to explicitly ascribe glory to the Holy Spirit (along with the Father and Son). This modification begins in *Decrees*, which was written before *Serapion*.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, Athanasius's emphasis on the Spirit's glory was not due to his debate with the "Tropikoi" over the nature of the Spirit. Instead, I would suggest, this development is best understood in light of the growing debate in the middle of the fourth century over the problem of the unity and distinctions within the Trinity. In the next subsection, I will briefly outline the most relevant portions of this debate because, as we will see, it appears to have provided the inspiration behind Athanasius's change to the *σὺν...πνεύματι* formula.

#### *Creeks and Trinitarian Developments from 341–357*

The 340s began a period that has been described as "the Age of Synodal Creeds."<sup>32</sup> The Synod of Antioch (341) presented three Eastern creeds, all of which contain anti-Marcellan elements.<sup>33</sup> Of significance regarding

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Other authorities that date *Ammoun* to this period include Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 3, *The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature* (Holland: Spectrum, 1950), 64, NPNF, and Leslie Barnard, "The Letters of Athanasius to Amoun and Dracontius," *SP* 26 (1993): 354. These writers say the work was written "before 356," "before 354," and "in the early 350's," respectively.

<sup>31</sup> On the date of *Decrees*, see 137–140.

<sup>32</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (New York: David McKay, 1974), 263.

<sup>33</sup> A fourth untitled creed is also associated with the Synod of Antioch. Athanasius includes all four in *Synods* 22, 23, 24, 25, respectively. On the creeds and their anti-Marcellan content, see Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra*, 162–78. Parvis adds new clarifications about the theological views represented at the Synod, including that "the synod was still heavily dominated by the Eusebian alliance and people who owed their positions to them" (163).

the Spirit, the Second Creed placed new emphasis on the distinct subsistences, ranks, and glories of the three Persons. The relevant section of the creed runs:

And [we believe] in the Holy Ghost, who is given to those who believe for comfort, and sanctification, and initiation, as also our Lord Jesus Christ enjoined his disciples, saying, “Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 28:19); namely of a Father who is truly Father, and a Son who is truly Son, and of the Holy Ghost who is truly Holy Ghost, the names not being given without meaning or effect, but denoting accurately the peculiar subsistence, rank, and glory of each that is named, so that they are three in subsistence, and in agreement one.  
(*Synods* 23)

In this article on the Holy Spirit, the creed repeats traditional Scriptural roles associated with the Holy Spirit, but then it proceeds to emphasize the distinct subsistences within the Trinity. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct entities, with different ranks and glories. The implication of this is that there is a hierarchy of being and glory within the Trinity, according to which the Father is above the Son (and, we can infer, the Son is above the Spirit). Further, the members of the Trinity are united according to will rather than according to nature, essence, or common glory.<sup>34</sup>

In 345, the so-called “Long-lined Creed” was taken to the Council of Milan. This creed was comprised of an expanded (and somewhat moderated) version of the Fourth Creed of Antioch, which the Eastern bishops hoped would appease their Western counterparts.<sup>35</sup> In continuity with the previous creeds of Antioch, the Long-lined Creed insists that the

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<sup>34</sup> I interpret the phrase “and in agreement one” as a reference to a unity of will. This reaffirms the First Creed’s point that the Son has unity with the Father because the Son “fulfilled all His Father’s will” (*Synods* 22).

<sup>35</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 279–80.

three Persons of the Trinity are not the same; however, this creed tones down the language of distinction and provides more explanatory information. It explains that in confessing a perfect Trinity, Christians do not believe in three Gods. Instead, it says, the Father and Son have the same Godhead, although the Son is subordinate to the Father.<sup>36</sup>

In 347, 351, and 357, three synods were held in Sirmium. The second and third synods each issued creeds, known as the First Creed of Sirmium and the Second Creed of Sirmium, respectively. Both creeds continued the debate over the question of unity and distinction within the Trinity. The First Creed of Sirmium,<sup>37</sup> written by Eastern bishops, was also based on the Fourth Creed of Antioch. This creed added new anathemas about the Holy Spirit. The creed proclaimed that the Spirit is neither the unbegotten God nor the Son. It also anathematized anyone who believed that the Spirit is a physical “part” of the Father or Son—a view that Eastern bishops suspected Marcellus’s theology implied.<sup>38</sup>

The Second Creed of Sirmium, written mostly by Western bishops during the period when “the fortunes of the Athanasian party were at the lowest ebb,”<sup>39</sup> rejected the Nicene use of οὐσία / *substantia*, ὁμοούσιος, and ὁμοιούσιος to speak about the Son’s generation from the Father.<sup>40</sup> The

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<sup>36</sup> The relevant portion of the creed runs: “Believing then in the all-perfect triad, the most holy, that is, in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and calling the Father God, and the Son God, yet we confess in them, not two Gods, but one dignity of Godhead, and one exact harmony of dominion, the Father alone being head over the whole universe wholly, and over the Son himself, and the Son subordinated to the Father; but, excepting him, ruling over all things after him which through himself have come to be, and granting the grace of the Holy Ghost unsparingly to the saints at the Father’s will. For that such is the account of the Divine Monarchy towards Christ, the sacred oracles have delivered to us” (*Synods* 26).

<sup>37</sup> Athanasius includes this creed in *Synods* 27.

<sup>38</sup> For these points, see anathemas 20, 21, 22.

<sup>39</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 285.

<sup>40</sup> This creed is included in *Synods* 28.

authors of the creed argued that this language was non-Biblical and that the manner of the Son's generation was beyond human comprehension.

Moreover, the creed also insisted on the superiority of the Father over the Son, stating that "the Father is greater in honour and dignity and Godhead." As a result of the manner in which the creed emphasizes this superiority, the creed implies that there is a hierarchy of glory and rank in the Trinity. The Father is superior to the Son because the Son is generated from the Father. The Son, in turn, appears to be superior to the Spirit, because the Spirit is sent by the Son.<sup>41</sup>

#### *The Doxology of Decrees*

With this background in place, we return to *Decrees*. Uta Heil has argued, quite persuasively, I think, that the Second Creed of Sirmium makes sense as the context for *Decrees*. According to this new chronology, *Decrees* was written in "the early days of the third exile" (356–362) as a response to the

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<sup>41</sup> The pertinent section of the creed reads: "And no one is ignorant, that it is Catholic doctrine, that there are two Persons of Father and Son, and that the Father is greater, and the Son subordinated to the Father together with all things which the Father has subordinated to him, and that the Father has no beginning, and is invisible, and immortal, and impassible; but that the Son has been generated from the Father, God from God, Light from Light, and that His origin, as aforesaid, no one knows, but the Father only.... And the whole faith is summed up, and secured in this, that a Trinity should ever be preserved, as we read in the Gospel, 'Go and baptize all the nations in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost' (Matt. 28:19). And entire and perfect is the number of the Trinity; but the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, sent forth through the Son, came according to the promise, that He might teach and sanctify the Apostles and all believers" (*Synods* 28).

Western authors of the Second Creed of Sirmium,<sup>42</sup> who had come to reject Nicaea's language of οὐσία, ὁμοούσιος, and ὁμοιούσιος.

While no part of my larger argument depends on this date for *Decrees*, this context, with the growing debate over the unity and distinctions within the Trinity, does help explain why Athanasius modifies the σὺν...πνεύματι formula for his concluding doxology in *Decrees*. The last sections of *Decrees* (29–32) focus on the ontological unity within the Trinity, particularly between the Father and Son. Athanasius argues that, despite being non-Biblical, ὁμοούσιος describes the Biblical reality of the essential unity between the Father and Son. Further, in opposition to the Second Creed of Sirmium's hierarchical Trinity and earlier creeds that suggested that the unity within the Trinity is merely a unity of will, Athanasius maintains that the unity within the Trinity is a unity of nature and glory and rank. Athanasius expresses this point in his concluding doxology, writing:

To God and the Father is due the glory, honour, and worship with (σὺν) his co-existent Son and Word, together with the all-holy and life-giving Spirit (ἅμα τῷ παναγίῳ καὶ ζωοποιῷ πνεύματι), now and unto endless ages of ages. Amen.  
(*Decrees* 32)

By adding “together with” (ἅμα) in this doxology, Athanasius retains the broad form of the traditional “σὺν...πνεύματι” doxological formula while also making his polemical point affirming the unity within the Godhead: there is one nature and glory in the Trinity. Therefore, when

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<sup>42</sup> Uta Heil, “De decretis Nicaenae synodi,” in *Athanasius Handbuch*, ed. Peter Gemeinhardt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 211. The date of *Decrees* is integral to the date of *On the Opinion of Dionysius (Dion.)*, and thus Heil develops her argument for both dates in Uta Heil, *Athanasius von Alexandrien, De sententia Dionysii: Einleitung, Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 22–35.

Christians worship, they should give praise and glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together.<sup>43</sup> This suggests that the Holy Spirit is uncreated, united to Father and Son, and worthy of worship.

### *The Doxology of Serapion*

A second major change occurred in Athanasius's usage of Trinitarian doxologies as a result of Athanasius's encounter with the "Tropikoi." In 358 or 359, Athanasius was informed by his friend, bishop Serapion of Thmuis, that a group of Egyptian Christians, referred to as "Tropikoi," had begun to teach that the Holy Spirit must be an angel.<sup>44</sup> Athanasius responded to this situation by writing three letters to Serapion on the subject of the Holy Spirit, arguing that the Spirit is not a created angel

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<sup>43</sup> A form of this modified "σὺν...πνεύματι" doxology occurs in at least one other Athanasian work, Athanasius's letter to emperor Jovian, written in 363. In this letter, after repeating the Nicene creed and reaffirming that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, Athanasius adds a brief comment about the Spirit—no doubt inspired by his recent conflict with the "Tropikoi." The Council of Nicaea, Athanasius claims, did not "make the Holy Spirit alien from the Father and the Son (Ἄλλ' οὐδὲ ἀπηλλοτριώσαν τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἀπὸ τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ), but rather glorified him together with the Father and the Son, in the one faith of the Holy Triad (ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον συνεδόξασαν αὐτὸ τῷ Πατρὶ καὶ τῷ Υἱῷ ἐν τῇ μιᾷ τῆς ἁγίας Τριάδος πίστει), because there is in the Holy Triad also one Godhead (διὰ τὸ καὶ μίαν εἶναι ἐν τῇ ἁγίᾳ Τριάδι θεότητα)" (*Jovian* 4).

Athanasius's short treatise on Matt. 12:32, which was formerly regarded as *Serapion* 4, ends with a modified "σὺν...πνεύματι" doxology. This doxology, like that in *Decrees*, uses the preposition ἅμα with the Holy Spirit. However, the manuscript tradition for the doxology in this treatise is unreliable, with multiple variants. For this doxology, see Kyriakos Savvidis, ed. *AW*. I/1. *Die dogmatischen Schriften*. Lfg. 4 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 600. For the Greek text of the treatise, *AW*. I/1. Lfg. 4, 579–600. For a French translation, see Joseph Lebon, *Athanasie d'Alexandrie: Lettres à Serapion sur la divinité du Saint-Esprit*, SC, vol. 15 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1947), 186–211. On this treatise's relationship to *Serapion*, see below, p. 180n63.

<sup>44</sup> On the date of *Serapion*, see below, p. 180n62.

but a member of the uncreated Godhead—meaning, the Holy Spirit is of the divine nature.<sup>45</sup>

Chapter 4 discusses Athanasius’s encounter with the “Tropikoi” in more detail, but here it is important to note that after 357 Athanasius retires the τῷ-διὰ-ἐν formula. Even from this brief overview of the situation that led to the composition of *Serapion*, it is not difficult to imagine why Athanasius may have felt that it was wise to abandon the τῷ-διὰ-ἐν formula. Beginning around the 340s, controversy over “Arian” doxologies began to emerge,<sup>46</sup> and by the late 350s, Athanasius certainly would have been aware that doxologies were vulnerable to being given heterodox interpretations. As a result of these developments, Athanasius recognized that the τῷ-διὰ-ἐν formula could be used by the “Tropikoi” to argue that the Spirit is merely the agent through whom Christians worship the Father and the Son, meaning the Spirit could be an angel or other creature. In light of this, Athanasius chose to discretely stop using the τῷ-διὰ-ἐν formula, and thus it never reappears in his works after 357.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Athanasius reuses this formula in his short treatise on Matt. 12:32, which, as noted in *AW* 1/1. Lfg. 4, 579–80, is usually dated between 358 and 360. On this treatise, see above, 140n43.

<sup>46</sup> Bishop Leontius is said to have whispered the doxologies when leading worship because of this controversy. According to this account, he recognized that “Arian” and anti-“Arian” sympathizers were beginning to suspect one another of using particular doxologies in order to promote their position during public worship. See Josef Jungmann, *The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer* (New York: Alba House, 1962), 175–76.

<sup>47</sup> Despite Athanasius quietly retiring the τῷ-διὰ-ἐν formula, this did not prevent subsequent controversy over doxological prepositions. Basil wrote *Spir.* in 374–375 partly as a response to certain worshippers becoming offended by his use of two different doxologies during worship. Basil takes up the question of prepositions, attempting to argue against subordinating pneumatologies while remaining true to the traditions of the church. One of the perspectives that Basil counters is the view, held by Eustathius, that the Spirit is an intermediary being, ranked between God and creatures. Michael Haykin, following W. -D.

### Conclusion

Athanasius's pastoral works written after 340 demonstrate a high degree of pneumatological continuity with his earlier pastoral works. By the early 340s, Athanasius had at least begun writing the *Orations*, which, as we will see, contain important developments regarding the Spirit and the Trinity. Despite these developments, Athanasius's pastoral focus and theological method do not change in the later pastoral works. Instead, Athanasius remains focused on pragmatic spiritual matters, and he continues to speak in the same manner about the Spirit as he did in pastoral works written before the *Orations*. For example, Athanasius retains both his tenet that the Holy Spirit is essential for salvation and his ethical understanding of sanctification. Significantly, the same trend continues even in the pastoral works written after *Serapion*. In *Serapion*, Athanasius vigorously argues for the divinity of the Spirit against a group of Egyptian Christians who proposed that the Spirit is a created angel. As a result of this, Athanasius becomes more careful with the wording of his Trinitarian doxologies, but apart from that, he does not change how he treats the Spirit in his pastoral works.

This behaviour is interesting because it shows that even after firmly regarding the Holy Spirit as divine, Athanasius does not feel the need to discuss the Spirit's nature in pastoral works. If Athanasius's pastoral works were our only witness to his thought, we would not know that he held such a high pneumatology. This shows that Athanasius's silence on matters does not prove that he lacks an understanding of these matters. Therefore, we should be hesitant before making assumptions based on

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Hauschild, "Die Pneumatomachen. Eine Untersuchung zur Dogmengeschichte des vierten Jahrhunderts" (diss., 1967), explains that Eustathius conceived of the Spirit as "simply the power in which the Christian worships" Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 160.

silence. For example, as I argued in Chapter 1, we should not assume that Athanasius omits the subject of the Spirit in *Pagans-Incarnation* because he lacks views on the Spirit. Similarly, as we will see in the next chapter, we should not assume that when Athanasius speaks about the Trinity in the *Orations* that he does so without giving thought to the Holy Spirit.

As we will see in the chapters that follow, our study of the Holy Spirit in Athanasius's pastoral works also provides us with background information that will be helpful as we examine and interpret Athanasius's remarks about the Spirit in the *Orations*. Just as the pastoral works assume the theology that Athanasius expresses in his other works, so the *Orations* at times assume and build on the views about the work of the Spirit expressed in the pastoral works. With this study of the Holy Spirit in Athanasius's pastoral works complete, we turn now to the *Orations*.

PART II

***The Orations against the Arians***

## **A Foundational Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Athanasius's Trinitarian Arguments**

### **Introduction**

In the winter of 338/339 Athanasius was deposed by the Council of Antioch. It was most likely during this second exile, which was spent in Rome, Athanasius composed the *Orations against the Arians*. With the composition of this major polemical work, Athanasius began in earnest to implement a new strategy to restore his reputation and position as bishop. Part of this strategy required him to seriously reflect on and engage with the contemporary theological questions facing the church. These issues included not only the question of the Son's relation to the Father, but also the related question of how Christianity's claims to monotheism can be justified in light of its faith in the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Consequently, the *Orations* contain Athanasius's first major discussions directly about the Trinity and about the Spirit as a member of the Trinity.

In this chapter, I will argue that Athanasius's charges against the Trinitarian "blasphemies" of "Arianism" and Athanasius's Trinitarian polemical arguments appear to have significant implications for his theology of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, sections 2 and 3, which constitute the core of this chapter, highlight these pneumatological implications. These sections focus on *Orations* 1, since it appears to have been written first (and several years before *Orations* 3). We will see that even in the first of the *Orations*, Athanasius's arguments imply that the Spirit, like the Son,

is eternal, uncreated, united to the Son, worthy of worship, and of the same divine nature as the Father and Son. Of course, it is one thing for a writer's theology to imply certain points, and another for that writer to consciously recognize and affirm these implied points. In Chapters 4 through 7, I will attempt to show that Athanasius appears to have indeed held the first four of these points. Yet, I suggest, Athanasius does not seem to have concluded that the Holy Spirit is truly of the same divine nature and rank as the Father and Son until at least the end of the 350s. Thus, there is a certain ambiguity in Athanasius's pneumatology. On the one hand, it is remarkably close to the pneumatology expressed in *Serapion*; on the other hand, it lacks the central affirmation that makes the pneumatology of *Serapion* "mature." Despite this ambiguity, in Chapters 4 through 7, I will argue that the *Orations* laid the pneumatological "foundation" for *Serapion*, since, by the completion of these *Orations*, Athanasius regarded the Spirit as eternal, uncreated, united to the Son, and worthy of worship.

To help support this claim and provide context for our study of the *Orations*, this chapter begins by examining Athanasius's reasons for writing the *Orations*. Athanasius appears to have intended for the *Orations* to help restore his reputation and position as bishop of Alexandria by alleging that he was the victim of a conspiracy orchestrated by heretics. After briefly discussing the *Orations*' chronology, section 1 discusses this purpose of the *Orations*. It explains Athanasius's strategy of creating a narrative about this "Arian" heresy and its contemporary advocates. This background provides evidence in favour of my claim about Athanasius's views on the Spirit. It appears that Athanasius's polemical purposes caused him to directly reflect on the Trinity and to engage with questions raised by writers in the 330s and 340s about the unity and plurality of the Godhead. As we will see, Athanasius consequently includes the Spirit in his discussions, suggesting that as he made statements about the Trinity,

he recognized that these statements apply to the Spirit as well.

Sections 4 and 5, the final sections of this chapter, briefly look at *Serapion* in order to illustrate what I mean when I say that the pneumatology in the *Orations* provides the “foundation” for the views expressed in *Serapion*. These sections will demonstrate that in *Serapion* Athanasius draws upon and reuses polemical strategies and Trinitarian arguments introduced in the *Orations*. I will argue that, apart from two major steps forward, the pneumatology expressed in *Serapion* draws on the *Orations*’ four tenets about the Spirit. Consequently, much of the pneumatology in *Serapion* is derivative, in the sense that it repeats, clarifies, and builds upon the pneumatological foundation established in the *Orations*.

### 1. The *Orations* and the Narrative of “Arianism”

In 340, Athanasius and Marcellus of Ancyra found themselves in Rome, united by common polemical and theological views. The two shared an antipathy towards “those around Eusebius” of Nicomedia, including Eusebius of Caesarea. They also shared an affinity for what can be called “inclusive monotheism”—that is, the conviction that Christianity’s claims to monotheism require the Word to be eternally included in the identity of God.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I borrow this expression and its partner, “exclusive monotheism,” from Jon M. Robertson, *Christ as Mediator: A Study of the Theologies of Eusebius of Caesarea, Marcellus of Ancyra and Athanasius of Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 97–98, 137–39, 165–70, 214–16. Robertson uses “inclusive monotheism” to describe the tendency in Athanasius’s and Marcellus’s theologies to focus on the unity of God, which they believe can only be maintained if the Word is eternally included in the identity of the one God. He uses “exclusive monotheism,” on the other hand, in reference to the doctrine of monotheism held by Arius, Asterius, and Eusebius of Caesarea, which “depended on a sharp ontological distinction between God and his Word and the explicit exclusion of the Word from the identity of the ‘one, true God’” (ibid., 95).

The degree of communication and cooperation between the two deposed bishops remains a topic of debate. Some scholars attribute the invention of “Arianism” to an alliance that developed between Athanasius and Marcellus;<sup>2</sup> others argue that the degree of theological agreement between the two was insufficient to foster genuine cooperation;<sup>3</sup> still others maintain a middle position.<sup>4</sup>

Regardless of which position one takes on the issue, it is clear that Athanasius engaged a variety of theological sources while writing the *Orations*—including works by Marcellus. Athanasius’s interactions with these various sources provides clues about when he may have written the *Orations*. In all three *Orations*, Athanasius names Asterius (d. 341) as a target of his arguments. Lewis Ayres notes that this tactic “seems to have most force during Asterius’s lifetime or shortly thereafter.”<sup>5</sup> The same reasoning could be applied to *Orations* 1 and 2 regarding Eusebius of Nicomedia (d. 342), whom Athanasius also names and rebuts. Additionally, Sara Parvis has argued that *Orations* 1 is building on and interacting with Marcellus’s *On the Holy Church*, which she argues was written in 340.<sup>6</sup> If her hypothesis is correct, then Athanasius’s engagements with various theological sources provide us with three clues

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra*, 180–192. Cf. Martin Tetz, “Athanasius von Alexandrien,” in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 4, ed. Gerhard Krause, Siegfried Schwertner, and Gerhard Müller (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), 337–38; Joseph T. Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum: Marcellus of Ancyra and Fourth-Century Theology* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 1–9.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Robertson, *Christ as Mediator*, 166–67.

<sup>4</sup> This seems to be the position taken in Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 108–9, although Anatolios emphasizes that Athanasius does not try to mask his differences with Marcellus.

<sup>5</sup> Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 110n257.

<sup>6</sup> For Parvis’s argument about the date of *On the Holy Church* and its possible influence on *Orations* 1, see Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra*, 185–91.

that suggest dating the *Orations* to the early through mid-340s. Before we discuss the date of the *Orations* in more detail, however, we need to consider the literary relationship between the three *Orations*.

#### *Literary Relationship*

When comparing the *Orations*, *Orations* 1 and 2 prove to have much in common, whereas *Orations* 3 differs noticeably in terms of its polemical targets, theological emphases, and literary structure. In *Orations* 1 and 2, the explicit targets of Athanasius's polemical arguments are Arius, Asterius, and Eusebius of Nicomedia (*Orations* 2.24).

In *Orations* 3, however, Athanasius adds an additional target: Sabellius. Sabellius, an early third-century theologian, remembered as a modalist and heretic, was by this point long dead. However, his name had become synonymous with the heretical doctrine that the Father and Son are a single entity. By the time Athanasius was in Rome, Eastern bishops began to suspect that the heresy of Sabellianism was inherent in Marcellus's theology. Over the course of the early 340s, these suspicions increased, and Athanasius's association with Marcellus became a liability—particularly because Athanasius, like Marcellus, maintained that the Word is intrinsic to God's eternal identity. By adding Sabellianism as a polemical target, Athanasius could distance his brand of inclusive monotheism from the Sabellian tendencies associated with Marcellus's monotheism. Further, by not directly criticizing Marcellus, Athanasius could reduce the chances of alienating himself from Marcellus in the process.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> A similar point is alluded to in Kelley McCarthy Spoerl, "Athanasius and the Anti-Marcellan Controversy," *ZAC* 10, no. 1 (2006): 39–41. Spoerl notes that Athanasius never directly attacks Marcellus in writing. On Athanasius's complicated later relationship with Marcellus, see Joseph T. Lienhard, "Did Athanasius Reject Marcellus?," in *Arianism After Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts*, ed. Michel R. Barnes and Daniel H.

In addition to criticizing Sabellianism, in *Orations* 3, Athanasius attempts to further protect himself against accusations of Sabellianism by placing special emphasis on an anti-Sabellian teaching, namely: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three individual subsistences. Although this doctrine is implicit in *Orations* 1 and 2, its overt presence in *Orations* 3 further differentiates *Orations* 3 from 1 and 2.<sup>8</sup>

Another difference between *Orations* 1 and 2 compared to 3 is literary structure. The literary structure of the *Orations* suggests that the first two *Orations* form a unit, whereas their connection to *Orations* 3 is not as obvious. The introduction of *Orations* 2, for example, picks up where *Orations* 1 leaves off. *Orations* 1 and 2 both discuss Apostolic and Old Testament Biblical texts related to the alleged mutability and creation of the Son.<sup>9</sup> *Orations* 3, on the other hand, focuses on the Gospels. This focus makes it a logical companion to *Orations* 1 and 2, yet its introduction and main argument do not reveal the same kind of natural connection that is apparent between *Orations* 1 and 2. These differences suggest that *Orations* 3 was written after the unit of *Orations* 1 and 2.<sup>10</sup>

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Williams (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 65–80.

<sup>8</sup> See *Orations* 3.4, 3.15, 3.36.

<sup>9</sup> Specifically, *Orations* 1 and 2 each discuss texts that Athanasius and the Christian tradition assumed were written by Apostles. In *Orations* 1, these texts are Phil. 2:9–10 and Heb. 1:4; In *Orations* 2, the Apostolic text is Acts 2:36. *Orations* 1 and 2 also each address a poetic text from the Old Testament. *Orations* 1 looks at Psalm 45:7–8; *Orations* 2 at Prov. 8:22. All of these discussions pertain to the alleged mutability and creation of the Son.

<sup>10</sup> As a result of perceived differences between *Orations* 1–2 and 3, Charles Kannengiesser challenged the traditional assumption that Athanasius wrote all three *Orations*, which sparked a debate that has continued for almost two decades. Ultimately, most scholars have concluded that *Orations* 3 was written by Athanasius; but, Kannengiesser's work prompted the critical discussions that led to these conclusions. On the authorship of *Orations* 3, see Charles Kannengiesser, *Athanase d'Alexandrie évêque et écrivain: Une lecture des Traités contre les Ariens*. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1983), particularly 405–16. Cf. G. Christopher Stead, review of "Athanase d'Alexandrie évêque et écrivain: Une lecture des Traités contre les

This point naturally leads to questions about the purpose and composition date of the *Orations*. We will now turn to these subjects.

*Athanasius's Conspiracy Narrative*

Based on the specific sources that Athanasius engages in the *Orations* and the manner in which he engages these sources, there is a growing consensus that the composition of the *Orations* began during the early years of Athanasius's exile in Rome, which lasted from 339–346. Athanasius responds to the views of many writers, subsuming them under the label of “Arianism.” These figures include Arius of Alexandria, Eusebius of Nicomedia, Asterius of Cappadocia, and Eusebius of Caesarea.

In sections 2 and 3 of this chapter, we will see that Athanasius's polemical Trinitarian arguments interact with views from these writers. From this, it will become clearer that Athanasius had a specific polemical goal in mind when he wrote the *Orations*. In this thesis, I will assume that Athanasius wrote *Orations* 1–2 between 340 and 343, finishing *Orations* 3

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Ariens,” by Charles Kannengiesser, *JThS* 36 (1985): 220–29; E. P. Meijering, *Die dritte Rede gegen die Arianer, Teil I: Kapitel 1–25* (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1996), 12–18.

Kannengiesser also argued that Athanasius's composition of *Orations* 1 and 2 involved multiple stages of redaction (Kannengiesser, *Évêque et écrivain*, 367–74). Based on the literary content and structure of the *Orations*, I agree with Kannengiesser on this point. However, I am not convinced by Kannengiesser's chronology in “The Blasphemies of Arius: Athanasius of Alexandria *De Synodis* 15,” in *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments*, ed. Robert C. Gregg (Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1985), 59–78. He proposes that the composition period spanned six or seven years, meaning Athanasius finished the original form of *Orations* 1–2 by 339 or 340 and the redacted version around 346. I would argue that it is also possible that the whole process occurred over a relatively short period of time (about two or three years for *Orations* 1–2). However, this matter goes beyond the scope of my thesis, which does not depend on proving the exact date of the composition of the *Orations*.

by 345. My larger argument about the development of Athanasius's pneumatology depends on the works being written in the 340s, but it does not require further precision than this. Whether Athanasius wrote the majority of the *Orations* while Marcellus was also living in Rome (340) and shortly thereafter, perhaps bookending the Council of Serdica (343), or only finished them by about 345,<sup>11</sup> Athanasius designed the *Orations* to promote a conspiracy narrative that he had begun to develop several years earlier. Now in exile, Athanasius believed that this narrative could be used to vindicate himself by shaping how others in the church and empire interpreted his suspension following the Council of Tyre (335) and his deposition following the Council of Antioch (winter 338/339).

Athanasius first introduced his conspiracy narrative at the Council of Tyre, where he faced numerous charges, including murder, perjury, sacrilege, violence, and the attempted solicitation and subsequent rape of a prostitute (Sozomen, *h.e.* 2.23, 2.25). Athanasius and his fellow Egyptian bishops attempted to convince the assembly that the accusations against him were due to the underhanded tactics of a group of bishops comprised of "Eusebius [of Nicomedia] and his fellows" (*Apology* 77). Athanasius claimed this group had invented these accusations and was plotting against him because they supported "the madness of Arius, and his impious doctrine" (*Apology* 77). As Gwynn has shown,<sup>12</sup> this excerpt is interesting not only because of its emphasis on Eusebius, but also because it introduces the notion that the conspiracy by Eusebius and his associates was partly motivated by theological matters—an idea that Athanasius expands on significantly when writing the *Orations*.

Athanasius's conspiracy narrative appears to have been unsuccessful at

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<sup>11</sup> For a summary of arguments over the date of the *Orations*, see especially Leemans, "Thirteen Years": 138–44.

<sup>12</sup> See Gwynn, *The Eusebians*, 82–86. I follow his narrative of events surrounding Tyre.

Tyre, but it was Athanasius's belligerent personality that ultimately caused his exile. Athanasius and six opposing bishops (including Eusebius of Nicomedia) took their dispute to Emperor Constantine in Constantinople. Although Athanasius managed to convince the emperor that the assembly at Tyre had not been impartial, the six anti-Athanasian bishops brought a new accusation against Athanasius. They claimed that he was plotting to stop grain exports from Egypt to Constantinople. Athanasius sealed his own fate, however, by threatening the emperor with God's judgment!<sup>13</sup> Constantine sent Athanasius to Trier, where Athanasius remained until Constantine's death in May, 337.

Shortly after the death of the emperor, Athanasius was freed from his suspension in Trier. However, over the course of 337–339, it became clear that he was not free from the numerous charges that had been brought against him at Tyre and Constantinople. During his gradual return to Alexandria, Athanasius travelled through the eastern half of the empire, spending five months gathering support in provinces where the bishops were not aligned with the Eusebians—that is, with supporters of Eusebius of Nicomedia and Eusebius of Caesarea.<sup>14</sup> Sara Parvis suggests that Athanasius stopped in Ancyra to strategize with Marcellus, at which time the two may have exchanged lists of potential allies.<sup>15</sup> On November

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<sup>13</sup> My account here follows Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 23–24. As Barnes observes, Athanasius was technically suspended rather than deposed.

<sup>14</sup> Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra*, 139.

I use “Eusebian” to refer to an informal alliance that existed between supporters of the two Eusebii. The term is sometimes used primarily in a theological sense. My usage, however, focuses more on the historical alliance, ambiguous as it may have been. On this alliance, see Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 54; Mark DelCogliano, “Eusebian Theologies of the Son as Image of God before 341,” *J ECS* 14, no. 4 (2006): 459–84, “The Eusebian Alliance: The Case of Theodotus of Laodicea,” *ZAC* 12, no. 2 (2008): 250–66.

<sup>15</sup> See Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra*, 141, which also contains a delightful description of how the two men may have strategized from the pub. Her speculation on each man's preferred beverage should not be missed.

23, 337, Athanasius returned to Alexandria, but the controversies surrounding him remained. He also faced the new problem of a rival bishop, Pistus, who had been appointed by the Eusebians. In 338, a party of Egyptian bishops held a council in Alexandria, hoping to end the accusations and secure Athanasius's position as the rightful bishop,<sup>16</sup> but these efforts proved to be futile. In Antioch during the winter of 338/339, a council comprised mainly of anti-Athanasian bishops succeeded in convincing Constantius of Athanasius's guilt, resulting in Athanasius being officially deposed.

*After the Council of Antioch*

By the time Athanasius fled to Rome, he had spent two years attempting to disprove one charge after another, and it was clear that his approach was not working. Consequently, while in Rome, Athanasius changed strategies. Rather than trying to clear his name by refuting the charges related to his conduct, Athanasius worked to vindicate himself by developing his conspiracy narrative so as to reframe the conflict in terms of a controversy over theological matters. Previously, during the condemnation of Arius at the Council of Nicaea, Athanasius had witnessed the powerful consequences of finding oneself on the wrong side of a debate over theological beliefs. Drawing on this experience while living in Rome, Athanasius came to recognize, perhaps in collaboration with Marcellus, that he could leverage the theological differences between himself and his Eusebian antagonists to shift the nature of the conflict from questions about his conduct to questions about orthodoxy.

Athanasius's specific strategy concerned the theological perspectives held by certain members of the group responsible for the decisions leading to his deposition at Tyre. He worked to assimilate their perspectives into the views held by Arius, thereby making their theologies

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<sup>16</sup>The synod composed an encyclical letter, which is quoted in *Apology* 3–19.

guilty by association. In this manner, Athanasius could push the epicentre of the conflict back in time, making his problems with the Eusebians the continuation of a historical debate that had already been settled in opposition to the views attributed to Arius.<sup>17</sup> Athanasius hoped that, just as in 325, the decision of Nicaea against Arius could be used to condemn those associated with Arius and to vindicate Alexandria's bishop.

Athanasius's narrative was soon adopted by Julius, bishop of Rome, who defended and advocated for Athanasius against the Eusebians. Gwynn's summary is accurate: "Throughout his letter, Julius repeatedly implies that those bishops who have written to him condemning Athanasius do not represent the eastern Church, or even a Christian council, but comprise a distinct 'faction.'"<sup>18</sup>

Athanasius's account was also adopted by the western bishops at the Council of Serdica, who appear to have been won over by Athanasius and Marcellus before the eastern bishops managed to arrive at Serdica.<sup>19</sup> The western bishops' letter to Alexandria adopts Athanasius's narrative and even identifies his opponents as "Arians." Furthermore, both this letter and the western bishops' encyclical letter uphold "the rigid distinction between the 'Eusebians' and the eastern Church that Athanasius and his supporters first attempted in vain to impose upon the Council of Tyre."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra*, 190. On the "invention" of "Arianism," see the recent accounts in *ibid.*, 180–92, and Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 105–130. See also Michel René Barnes, "The Fourth Century as Trinitarian Canon," in *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community*, ed. Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (New York: Routledge, 1998), 48–56. For an overview of scholarship on "Arianism," see Joseph T. Lienhard, "From Gwatkin Onwards: A Guide through a Century and a Quarter of Studies on Arianism," *Augustinian Studies* 44, no. 2 (2013): 265–85.

<sup>18</sup> Gwynn, *The Eusebians*, 92.

<sup>19</sup> Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 241–43.

<sup>20</sup> Gwynn, *The Eusebians*, 95–97.

By 380, when Gregory of Nazianzus delivered his panegyric on Athanasius,<sup>21</sup> Athanasius's narrative had become the definitive interpretation of these conflicts, and, in many ecclesiastical contexts, it remains so to this day. However, these historiographical successes did not come easily. By the end of his life, Athanasius had devoted portions of at least eleven major works to establishing and sustaining this narrative.<sup>22</sup> Works such as *Apology*, *History*, and *Flight* provided essential "historical" details to support his narrative—a narrative that largely began with the *Orations*. With this in mind, we turn to the opening of *Orations* 1, where Athanasius begins his project of reframing his conflict with the Eusebians as an extension of Arius's conflict with Alexander.

#### *Athanasius's Heresiological Narrative*

Athanasius starts *Orations* 1 abruptly, omitting a formal greeting, in order to immediately warn his readers about the dangers of "Arianism" (and thus begin framing his narrative of heresy). To this end, Athanasius launches a series of standard Christian heresiological accusations against the "Arians."<sup>23</sup> "Arianism," Athanasius says, makes its followers "companions in death," acts as the "harbinger of the Antichrist,"<sup>24</sup> originates from its "father the devil," takes its name and teachings from a man rather than Christ, is the last in a genealogy of heresies, has "shaken off the Apostolical faith," and distorts the meaning of the Scriptures to justify itself (*Orations* 1.1, 1.2–1.3, 1.4).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See especially Gregory Nazianzen, *or.* 21.12–26.

<sup>22</sup> These works include: *Festal Letters*, *ep. virg.* 1, *Encyclical*, *Orations* 1–3, *Decrees*, *Synods*, *Apology*, *History*, and *Flight*. Depending on one's views on authorship, *Life of Antony* may also be added to this list.

<sup>23</sup> Blaising, "Contents and Structure," 28, proposes that *Orations* 1.2–1.3 serves as a digression on the difference between "Arian" and "Christian" that leads to the formal judicial narration (which starts at *Orations* 1.4).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Alexander of Alexandria, *Henos Somatos* 1 NPNF / 3–4 AW.

<sup>25</sup> Later in *Orations* 1, Athanasius will also employ the classical Christian

After these generic accusations, Athanasius narrows his focus. His subsequent discussions form the treatise's *narratio*, bringing two specific accusations against "Arianism:" The opinions of "Arianism" are blasphemous (*Orations* 1.4–7), and its appeals to Scripture are invalid (*Orations* 1.8–10).<sup>26</sup>

Athanasius sets up his narrative by establishing a polarizing taxonomy of "heresy" and "Christianity." He defines heresy as the intentional departure from the faith of the church, and he associates Christianity with the church. He also claims that in the history of Christianity, every group that has withdrawn from the church has proceeded to take up the name of the teacher who initiated the heresy. Those who remain in the church, however, retain the name of Christians (*Orations* 1.1–3).<sup>27</sup> Athanasius uses, among other groups, the Marcionites to support this claim. With this framework in place, Athanasius uses it to develop his narrative about the heretical "Arians" and their actions that led to his unjustified deposition.

In the first part of his narrative, Athanasius interprets Alexander's conflicts with Arius (and also Meletius) according to his polarizing heresiological framework. Athanasius writes:

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polemical tactic of comparing his opponent's perspective with that of Jews who deny Christ (*Orations* 1.8). My summary of *Orations* 1.1–1.4 largely follows that of Gwynn, *The Eusebians*, 171–73.

As Krastu Banev, *Theophilus of Alexandria and the First Origenist Controversy: Rhetoric and Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 149, notes: Athanasius regarded heresy as false reasoning (παραλογισμός), "in which there is nothing in accordance with reason (εὐλογον); and he saw that people are seduced by it because it arrays itself in scriptural language."

<sup>26</sup> Blaising, "Contents and Structure," 27–28. On the two charges against "Arianism," see Blaising, "Contents and Structure," 32–35, 46–50, 53–65.

<sup>27</sup> Athanasius uses, among other groups, the Marcionites to support this view. Marcionites, he says, left the church in order to follow Marcion, and their heretical nature should be obvious simply from the fact that they are called Marcionites rather than Christians.

Meletius, when ejected by Peter the Bishop and Martyr, called his party no longer Christians, but Meletians, and so in consequence when Alexander of blessed memory had cast out Arius, those who remained with Alexander, remained Christians; but those who went out with Arius, left the saviour's name to us who were with Alexander, and as to them they were henceforward denominated Arians.

(*Orations* 1.3)

Athanasius's account reflects the state of his ecclesiastical concerns. Since the threat of the Meletians still lingers, Athanasius takes the opportunity to slander them, using them as an additional example of a group fitting this paradigm of heresy.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, Athanasius is primarily concerned with the Eusebians, and this portion of the narrative fulfils three aims related to the Eusebians. First, it unequivocally identifies Arius as a heretic and Alexander as an exemplary Christian. Second, and more importantly, it expands the scope of the "Arian" heresy to include those who "went out with Arius." This step is vital for Athanasius's *Orations* because it allows him to subsequently argue that the Eusebians are contemporary examples of those who "went out with Arius." Third, and perhaps most importantly of all, this part of his narrative establishes that "those who remained with Alexander" are also genuine Christians—a claim that is particularly useful for Athanasius because of his connection to Alexander. By extension, Athanasius can use this narrative to argue that he and his supporters, having remained with Alexander, are representatives of the authentic Christian faith.

Athanasius also intends for his narrative to support his claim that he is

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<sup>28</sup> On the Meletians in the late 330s and 340s, see Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 94–96. Athanasius renewed his polemic against the Meletians in the Festal Letters written between 367–370. The best discussion on this renewal is in Alberto Camplani, *Le lettere festali di Atanasio di Alessandria: Studio storico-critico* (Rome: C. I. M., 1989), 262–79.

the legitimate bishop of Alexandria. Assuming the chronology outlined above,<sup>29</sup> Athanasius was writing from Rome, knowing that Philagrius, the Prefect of Egypt, had appointed Gregory of Cappadocia as the new bishop of Alexandria (*Encyclical*, 2–3). Based on Julius’s letter to the Eusebians at Antioch, written in 341,<sup>30</sup> it appears that Athanasius believed that the Christians of Alexandria would not look kindly on an Alexandrian being replaced by a foreigner. Julius shows support for Athanasius,<sup>31</sup> while Athanasius himself composes his narrative in a manner that reinforces his claim to the bishopric of Alexandria. As quoted above, Athanasius emphasizes that he and his supporters are “those who remained with Alexander” and the legitimate Christian faith. In the second part of his narrative, Athanasius repeats this theme, writing: “Behold then, after Alexander’s death too, those who communicate with his successor Athanasius, and those with whom the said Athanasius communicates, are instances of the same rule” (*Orations* 1.3). Unlike Gregory, Athanasius was a native Alexandrian. He was born and raised in Alexandria;<sup>32</sup> he was baptized, taught the Christian faith, appointed as

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<sup>29</sup> See above, pp. 151–155.

<sup>30</sup> Athanasius includes Julius’s letter in *Apology*, 21–36. For the date and circumstances of the letter, see Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 50.

<sup>31</sup> Julius, writing in support of Athanasius, argues that the appointment of Gregory, a foreigner, only created further division at Alexandria. Athanasius is almost certainly the source of this argument. “For what canon of the Church, or what Apostolical tradition warrants this, that when a Church was at peace, and so many Bishops were in unanimity with Athanasius the Bishop of Alexandria, Gregory should be sent thither, a stranger to the city, not having been baptized there, nor known to the general body, and desired neither by Presbyters, nor Bishops, nor Laity—that he should be appointed at Antioch, and sent to Alexandria?” *Apology*, 30.

<sup>32</sup> Athanasius’s childhood and young adulthood are only available to us in hagiographical form. Nevertheless, it seems most likely that Athanasius was born, baptized, and raised in or near Alexandria. For the hagiography of Athanasius’s early years, see Severus of El Ashmunein, *Hist. Pat.*, 1.2.8, available in Evetts, *History of the Patriarchs*, 403–23.

deacon, and finally elected as bishop in the church of Alexandria. Athanasius's polarizing narrative implies that he, being a true Alexandrian, should therefore be restored to his position as bishop of Alexandria and Gregory of Cappadocia ousted.

*“Arianism” Mocked and Condemned*

In *Orations* 1.4–6, Athanasius outlines the various blasphemies of “Arianism” in order to turn his audience against the “Arians.” Before examining these blasphemies, it is important to appreciate Athanasius's larger polemical strategy. Here, the thesis of Athanasius's narrative is that the “Arians” have abandoned Christ's teachings, which are contained in the Scriptures, and replaced them with Arius's teachings, which are contained in the *Thalia*. Athanasius says that persons who follow Arius are no longer Christians but “Ariomaniacs” (Ἀρειομανίται). They alone are mad enough to replace “the oracles of the divine Scripture [and] call Arius's *Thalia* a new wisdom” (*Orations* 1.4). The contrast between the *Thalia* (the so-called new wisdom) and the Scriptures (the “divine oracles” and real wisdom of God) is apparent. But Athanasius makes it more obvious by quoting from the Wisdom of Sirach: the wisdom of a man “is known from the utterance of his word” (Sir. 4:24).<sup>33</sup>

Athanasius also attempts to convince his audience of the errors of “Arianism” by mocking the literary form, title, and theology of the *Thalia*. First, the literary form of the *Thalia* was, at least in part, metered. Athanasius uses this fact to accuse Arius of madness by comparing Arius's work to that of the poet Sotades, “the Obscene.”<sup>34</sup> Second, the *Thalia*'s

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<sup>33</sup> In *Festal* 39, Athanasius lists Sirach as a work to be read by Catechumens. For an assessment of the value Athanasius places on books in this category, see Johan Leemans, “Athanasius and the Book of Wisdom,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 73, no. 4 (1997): 349–68.

<sup>34</sup> Sotades was infamous for his poems' subject matter and for getting himself thrown in jail because of his foolish words to Ptolemy Philadelphus. See Plutarch,

title, θάλεια is almost a homonym with θήλεια (“female”). Athanasius exploits this similarity to further discredit Arius, accusing him of writing a work of an effeminate character.<sup>35</sup> Last, the Christology of the *Thalia* bears, in Athanasius’s opinion, parallels with views attributed to the Pharisees in the Gospels. Consequently, Athanasius compares the “Arians” to the Pharisees, claiming that both groups use Scriptural language to appear pious while “denying the Son, and reckoning him among the creatures” (*Orations* 1.4).

Athanasius’s larger polemical aim here is to begin laying the groundwork necessary to link the views of his Eusebian opponents to those of Arius.<sup>36</sup> By providing a summary of Arius’s “errors,” particularly those Athanasius claims are contained in the *Thalia*, Athanasius can establish particular viewpoints as being “heretical” and “Arian.” Later in the *Orations*, Athanasius will then use these views to slander his Eusebian opponents through guilt by association, arguing that their views are forms of “Arianism.” This tactic will allow Athanasius to assimilate or paint his opponents as contemporary “Arians,” which, in turn, supports his narrative about his exile being the result of the Eusebians plotting against him for theological reasons—namely, so they might promote the heretical doctrines first taught by Arius.

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*De Lib.* 14.

<sup>35</sup> On this tactic and its relationship to the feminization of heresy, see Virginia Burrus, “The Heretical Woman as Symbol in Alexander, Athanasius, Epiphanius, and Jerome,” *Harvard Theological Review* 84, no. 3 (1991): 236–38.

<sup>36</sup> Athanasius’s strategy here is neatly summarized by J. Warren Smith, “The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 112: “The rhetorical effect of this work was to tar his opponents with the label ‘Arian’ even though few of the Eusebians affirmed Arius’ theology. From Athanasius’ perspective, however, the Eusebians’ subordinationism was tantamount to Arius’ declaring the Son a creature. Unless the Son is *equal* in divinity with the Father, the Son is not fully and truly God and so cannot mediate the divine nature to humanity necessary for salvation.”

## 2. “Arianism” and Trinitarian Theology in *Orations* 1.5–6

### *The Trinitarian Blasphemies of “Arianism”*

With this background about Athanasius’s polemical narrative in place, we will now turn to theological matters. In this section, we will observe how Athanasius develops his depiction of “Arianism” in order to assimilate the views of the Eusebians into his definition of “Arianism.”<sup>37</sup> I will subsequently argue that Athanasius’s depiction of the Trinitarian “blasphemies” associated with “Arianism” provide insights into Athanasius’s own views on the Trinity.

Athanasius begins his project of assimilation, which will depict the Eusebians as “Arians,” by aligning distinctive views of his Eusebian opponents with the heresy of “Arianism” in *Orations* 1.5–6. To do this, Athanasius includes these views in a list of “blasphemies” that he claims are taught in Arius’s *Thalia*. The reason we can know that Athanasius is doing this is because of the details provided by two other texts, which appear to be more accurate witnesses to Arius’s theology and the original content of the *Thalia*. Significantly, unlike *Orations* 1.5–6’s depiction of the *Thalia*, these witnesses do not attribute Eusebian characteristics to Arius and the *Thalia*.

To begin, we will compare the content of the *Thalia* as it is depicted in *Orations* 1.5–6 with these two other texts. We will see that the “blasphemies” that Athanasius attributes to the *Thalia* in *Orations* 1.5–6 likely did not occur in the authentic *Thalia*. Instead, these views are best understood as Eusebian emphases that Athanasius regards as logical extensions of the views of Arius. As such, these views are, in Athanasius’s opinion, continuations of “Arianism” and the doctrines originally taught in the *Thalia*, which is why Athanasius can attribute them to the *Thalia*. By associating these Eusebian views with the *Thalia*, Athanasius can

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<sup>37</sup> On the Eusebians, see above, 153.

proceed with his strategy of arguing that the Eusebians are heretical “Arians,” meaning his opponents are the ones who should be in exile. To begin, we will turn to the first part of Athanasius’s report of “Arian” blasphemies in *Orations* 1.5–6.

In *Orations* 1.5, after quoting the metered prologue of the *Thalia* and highlighting its blasphemous Sotadean style, Athanasius provides a list of blasphemous propositions that he attributes to the *Thalia*. Athanasius’s list begins by accusing Arius of teaching the following:

“God was not always a Father,” but “once God was alone, and not yet a Father, but afterwards he became a Father.” “The Son was not always;” for, whereas all things were made out of nothing, and all existing creatures and works were made, so the Word of God himself was “made out of nothing,” and “once he was not,” and “he was not before his origination,” but he as others “had an origin of creation.” “For God,” he [Arius] says, “was alone, and the Word as yet was not, nor the Wisdom. Then, wishing to form us, thereupon he made a certain one, and named him Word and Wisdom and Son, that he [the Father] might form us by means of him [the Son].”  
(*Orations* 1.5)

According to Athanasius, Arius denies God’s eternal fatherhood and the Son’s eternal existence. Arius considers God to be the first principle of all that has come into existence, which, in his view, means that the Word must have been made by God “out of nothing.” Consequently, God became “Father” by creating the Son, and thus, in Athanasius’s theological framework, the Father and Son are ontologically divided; the Father is the eternal God and the Son is a creature made by God who is subsequently named “Word” and “Wisdom” and “Son.”

The text above is part of what we might call an “Arian” blasphemies list. In *Orations* 1.5–6, this list is comprised of a mixture of quotations attributed to the *Thalia*, paraphrases of Arius’s theology, and commentary criticizing these blasphemies. Before discussing the remainder of Athanasius’s list of “Arian” blasphemies, it is important to understand the

relationship of *Orations* 1.5–6 to two other witnesses to the theology of Arius and the *Thalia*.

*Witnesses to the Thalia*

The first text that appears to bear witness to the theology of Arius's *Thalia* is Alexander of Alexandria's *Encyclical Letter to All Bishops*, referred to in this thesis as *Henos Somatos* on the basis of its first two words.<sup>38</sup> While *Henos Somatos* does not mention the *Thalia* by name, the letter contains an account of the blasphemies of Arius's theology that has numerous parallels with the material in *Orations* 1.5–6 that Athanasius attributes to the *Thalia*.<sup>39</sup> For the sake of concision, here is an abridged quotation from *Henos Somatos* on Arius's blasphemies:

God was not always the Father; but there was a time when God was not the Father. . . . For the Son is a thing created (κτίσμα), and a thing made (ποίημα): nor is he like to the Father in substance (ὁμοιος κατ' οὐσίαν). . . . And he [the Son] is called, by a misapplication of the terms, the Word and Wisdom, since he [the Son] is himself made by the proper Word of God, and by that wisdom which is in God. . . . He [the Son] is by his very nature changeable and mutable, equally with other rational beings. The Word, too, is alien and separate from the substance of God. The Father also is ineffable to the Son. . . . He [the Son] for our sakes was made, that by him as by an instrument God might create us; nor would he [the Son] have existed had not God wished to make us.

(*Henos Somatos* 2 NPNF / 7–10 AW)

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<sup>38</sup>To prevent this encyclical letter from being confused with Athanasius's *Encyclical Letter*, we will use the title *Henos Somatos* for Alexander's letter.

<sup>39</sup>These parallels have been demonstrated through schematization by both Lorenz and Parvis. See Rudolph Lorenz, "Die Christusseele im arianischen Streit: Nebst einigen Bemerkungen zur Quellenkritik des Arius und zur Glaubwürdigkeit des Athanasius," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 94 (1983): 1–10, 1–10; Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra*, 182–85. Parvis also says that the author of *Henos Somatos* appears to know the *Thalia* (Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra*, 69).

This summary has much in common with Athanasius's account in *Orations* 1.5–6 of the blasphemies of the *Thalia*. Athanasius makes all but one of the points above,<sup>40</sup> and his account, like the one in *Henos Somatos*, is intended to demonstrate the blasphemous nature of Arius's theology.<sup>41</sup>

The second text that we will discuss here is Athanasius's treatise *On the Synods of Ariminum and Seleuceia*, which quotes the *Thalia* in section 15. Following the conventions used by Rowan Williams, we will refer to the material attributed to the *Thalia* in *Synods* 15 as *Thalia S* and in *Orations* 1.5–6 as *Thalia A*.

There are several reasons for regarding *Thalia S* as more reliable than most of *Thalia A*. First, only the prologue of *Thalia A* is metered, whereas much of *Thalia S* appears to be metered. This may be a sign that *Thalia S* contains either direct quotations from the historical *Thalia* or close approximations to it, since the *Thalia* was likely partially or completely metered.<sup>42</sup> Second, the theology of *Thalia A* contains participation

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<sup>40</sup> Athanasius's list in *Orations* 1.5–6 does not speak of the Son being created by “the proper Word” and Wisdom of God.

<sup>41</sup> In addition to these similarities, the works may share a common author. The seminal argument for Athanasian authorship is made in G. Christopher Stead, “Athanasius's Earliest Written Work,” *JThS* 39, no. 1 (1988): 76–91. Stead's article comparing the vocabulary and literary styles of *Henos Somatos* with the undisputed works of Athanasius has convinced many readers that Athanasius in fact authored *Henos Somatos* on Alexander's behalf. Yet, as Gwynn, *The Eusebians*, 68–69, argues, it is puzzling that Athanasius would write against the “Eusebians” in the early 320s and then wait for over a decade before continuing his attack in the *Encyclical* written in his own name. Since my argument does not depend on how this question is answered, however, I will leave the question open. To investigate the matter in appropriate depth would go beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>42</sup> Several scholars have attempted to find a scansion that fits the *Thalia*. Most scansions are limited to the prologue, such as M. L. West, “The Metre of Arius' Thalia,” *JThS* 33, no. 1 (1982): 98–105. Stead, however, attempts to also include the blasphemies (G. Christopher Stead, “The *Thalia* of Arius and the Testimony of Athanasius,” *JThS* 29 (1978): 40–51). On the other hand, it is possible that

language, but no other fragments of Arius's works use this language. This language appears to have been introduced by Athanasius in response to its prior usage by Eusebius of Nicomedia or Asterius. Third, the theology of *Thalia S* is more nuanced and sympathetic to Arius than what is found in *Thalia A*. Together, these observations point to *Thalia S* being the more accurate of Athanasius's two versions of the *Thalia*. Nevertheless, *Thalia A* remains an important text for our study because, since it is the product of Athanasius paraphrasing and reworking parts of the historical *Thalia*, it reflects the concerns not only of Arius but also of Athanasius himself.

#### *Comparison of Trinitarian Material*

We will now examine the Trinitarian differences between Athanasius's depiction of "Arianism" in *Orations* 1.5–6 (*Thalia A*) and these other witnesses. This will show that, in *Orations* 1.5–6, Athanasius expands the scope of "Arianism" and his account of the *Thalia* to include matters particularly related to the questions of unity and distinction in the Trinity. Athanasius's depiction may not be a reliable witness to the historical *Thalia*, but it can tell us about his own views on these matters.

Despite the similarities between the content in *Orations* 1.5–6 compared with *Henos Somatos* and *Synods* 15, there are also important differences. For our study, the key difference is that the blasphemies list in *Orations* 1.5–6 contains content that does not occur in either *Henos Somatos* or *Synods* 15. Significantly, this unique material is Trinitarian. In

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only portions of the *Thalia* were metered, which would explain the difficulty of finding a suitable scansion (Blasing, "Contents and Structure," 44–46). In between these views is that of Williams, who recognizes that the prologue in *Orations* 1.5 and the material in *Synods* 15 are metrical, but also observes that the latter material is disjointed at times, likely due to omissions. The non-metrical form of the blasphemies material in *Orations* 1.5–6 suggests it is less reliable, "though we should not exaggerate the degree of possible distortion" (Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy & Tradition*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 98–99).

*Orations* 1.5–6, we find views on the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that are more developed than material in the other witnesses to Arius and the *Thalia*. For this reason, it is worth quoting this material in full. Athanasius writes:

[Arius says] “the essences (αἱ οὐσίαι) of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are separate in nature (μεμερισμένοι τῇ φύσει), and estranged (ἀπεξενωμένοι), and disconnected (ἀπασχοινομένοι), and alien (ἀλλότριον), and without participation of each other (ἀμέτοχοι εἰσιν ἀλλήλων αἱ οὐσίαι);” and, in his [Arius’s] own words, “utterly unlike (ἀνόμοιοι) from each other in essence and glory (ταῖς τε οὐσίαις καὶ δόξαις), unto infinity,” Thus as to “likeness of glory and essence,” he [Arius] says that the Word is entirely different (ἀλλότριον) from both the Father and the Holy Spirit. With such words has the irreligious spoken; maintaining that the Son is distinct (διηρημένον) by himself, and in no respect partaker (ἀμέτοχον) of the Father. These are portions of Arius’s fables as they occur in that jocose composition. (*Orations* 1.6)<sup>43</sup>

When this portion of Athanasius’s blasphemies list is compared to the blasphemies material in *Henos Somatos*, it becomes apparent that Athanasius depicts Arius’s blasphemies differently here than how they are presented in *Henos Somatos*.<sup>44</sup> In *Henos Somatos*, the blasphemies material is clearly intended to outline the key theological matters involved in the

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<sup>43</sup> The reliability of this summary has been questioned because Athanasius includes a list of propositions in *Synods* 15 that is very similar to the material in *Orations* 1.6 but metrical and more sympathetic to Arius. The summary in *Synods* 15, therefore, is considered to be closer to the views of Arius and the historical *Thalia*. On this, see Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy & Tradition*, 98–99.

<sup>44</sup> One might ask why Athanasius’s *Encyclical* is omitted from this comparison. Although it and *Henos Somatos* are both circular letters, I omit *Encyclical* from this discussion because it is not a theological work. Athanasius’s focus in *Encyclical* is to report the alleged crimes that accompanied Gregory’s entrance into Alexandria and installation as bishop. If Athanasius is the author of *Henos Somatos*, then the radical differences between these circular letters demonstrate how strongly Athanasius’s immediate concerns shape the content of his works.

conflict with Eusebius of Nicomedia, who is labelled as an “Arian.” *Henos Somatos* emphasizes that, *contra* Arius and Eusebius, the orthodox Christian faith recognizes that the Son must be the eternal Son and Word of God. By contrast, the “blasphemies list” in *Orations* 1.5–6 not only highlights what it sees as the problem with the denial of the eternity of the Father-Son (God-Word) relationship but also attributes rather developed views on the relationships within the Trinity to the *Thalia*.

When the above portion of Athanasius’s “errors list” is compared with *Thalia S*, we see that the material in *Orations* 1.5–6 contains more developed views about the relationships between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit than the material in *Thalia S*. *Thalia S* contains a short and relatively plain statement about the Trinity. After underlining the ontological superiority of the Father over the Son, *Thalia S* adds the following remark about the Trinity and then returns to the subject of the Son:

Thus there is a Triad, not in equal glories. Not intermingling with each other are their subsistences. One more glorious than the other in their glories unto immensity. Foreign from the Son in essence is the Father, for he is without beginning.

(*Thalia S* / *Synods* 15)

*Orations* 1.5–6, on the other hand, contains a more developed statement about the Trinity. As noted earlier, the Trinitarian discussion in *Thalia A* includes participation language, which is language that appears to be foreign to the historical *Thalia* since it does not occur in *Thalia S* and since no other fragments of Arius’s works use this language. Additionally, *Thalia A* emphasizes that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each distinct in terms of nature and being. Its language implies that the Trinity is a hierarchy in which the Father is superior to the Son, who is, in turn, superior to the Spirit. Whereas in *Thalia S*, the focus is on

affirming the superiority of the Father over the other two members of the Trinity. Unlike *Thalia A*, *Thalia S* does not explicitly teach that the Son and Spirit are of different natures. Emphasis on the Trinity as three beings of different natures and levels of glory is a particularly “Eusebian” characteristic that occurs in *Orations* 1.5–6 but not *Henos Somatos* or *Thalia S*.

In terms of the bigger picture, it can be said that *Thalia S* and *Henos Somatos* reflect the theological context of the 320s to early 330s, while *Thalia A* contains changes made by Athanasius that reflect the theological context of the late 330s to early 340s. In *Henos Somatos*, Alexander focuses on Arius’s “blasphemies” regarding the interconnected questions of the Son’s generation, eternity, and existence with respect to the Father. These were the divisive subjects when the letter was written in the early 320s. The same focus is apparent in *Thalia S*, which appears to be a relatively reliable witness to the historical *Thalia*.

*Thalia A*, however, contains certain views that reflect Trinitarian questions that were raised in the next decade. By the late 330s, the theological debate had expanded to include the question of the threefold nature of God. Eusebius of Caesarea and Marcellus, in particular, had drawn attention to the subject. It was in this theological context that Athanasius wrote the *Orations*. Indeed, when Athanasius took up his pen, the ink may barely have been dry on Marcellus’s *On the Holy Church*, in which Marcellus engages a Trinitarian creed and accuses the “Arians” of treating the Spirit as a servant and underling (δοῦλος and ὑπηρέτης).<sup>45</sup> Therefore, as Athanasius developed the *Orations* to reframe his conflict with the Eusebians, he simultaneously expanded the scope of the “Arian”

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<sup>45</sup> Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra*, 185–90. Parvis argues for dating *On the Holy Church* to 340. Cf. Alastair Logan, “Marcellus of Ancyra (Pseudo-Anthimus), ‘On the Holy Church’: Text, Translation and Commentary,” *JThS* 51, no. 1 (2000): 81–112, who argues for a date in the mid 340s.

controversy to match the breadth of the contemporary debates. By this time, these debates included questions about how the members of the Trinity are related to one another in terms of their glory and nature, and thus it is significant that this subject occurs in *Thalia A* but not *Henos Somatos* or *Thalia S*.

In addition to expanding the scope of the “Arian” debates, Athanasius’s depiction of “Arianism” as a Trinitarian heresy also implicitly reveals his own perspectives on matters related to the relations within the Trinity. By condemning “Arianism” for allegedly claiming that there are three distinct or separate essences within the Trinity, Athanasius implicitly affirms the opposite perspective—“the essences” (αἱ οὐσίαι) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are *not* separate in nature (μεμερισμένα τῇ φύσει), nor are the members of the Trinity “estranged” (ἀπεξενωμένα), “disconnected” (ἀπεσχοιτισμένα), “alien” (ἀλλότριαι), and “without participation in each other” (ἀμέτοχοι εἰσιν ἀλλήλων αἱ οὐσίαι).

We can gain additional insight into this perspective by considering the kind of participation relationship that Athanasius seems to be interacting with. As we briefly noted in Chapter 1 and will see in more detail in Chapter 6, Athanasius primarily uses participation language to express how creatures receive a share in attributes that belong to God. In this sense, Athanasius’s concept of participation is indebted to the Platonic notion that participation usually implies an ontological hierarchy in which the “participated” entity is superior to the “participating” entity.<sup>46</sup> However, Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Asterius seem to have criticized a different sense of participation. They rejected the notion of what we might call a “substantial” or “strong” participatory relationship, in which the “participated” entity communicates its nature to the “participating” entity.<sup>47</sup> This is the notion of participation that occurs

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<sup>46</sup> On participation, see pp. 41–43 and Chapter 6.

<sup>47</sup> On the notions of substantial participation, which may be indebted to

in *Orations* 1.6.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the “Arian” point in *Orations* 1.6 is that the Son (and the Holy Spirit) do not have a substantial participation in the Father—meaning, they do not have the same nature as the Father. By rejecting this view, Athanasius implicitly asserts the opposite perspective—namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share the same uncreated nature.<sup>49</sup>

The same point is implied in Athanasius’s rejection of the “Arian” assertion that the members of the Trinity are “unlike” (ἀνόμοιοι) and “different” (ἀλλότριον) according to essence and glory (οὐσίαις καὶ δόξαις). *Contra* the “Arians,” who take issue with Nicaea’s use of ὁμοούσιος,<sup>50</sup> Athanasius’s criticism implies that the members of the Trinity have unity with one another according to their essence and glory, meaning they are uncreated and worthy of worship.

This comparison shows that Athanasius’s depiction and criticism of the “Arian” Trinitarian blasphemies clearly has pneumatological implications; however, these implications must be assessed in a balanced manner. On the one hand, the Holy Spirit, being a member of the

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Aristotle and Porphyry, and “conservative Platonic” participation, see Rowan Williams, “The Logic of Arianism,” *JThS* 34, no. 1 (1983): 67–75. On these subjects in Asterius, see Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 54–56; in Athanasius, see Peter Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 189–193, who argues that Athanasius also uses the “strong” sense of participation at times, such as when discussing the Son’s participation in the Father (*Orations* 1.16); see also the use of participation language in Eusebius of Nicomedia, *ep. Paulin.* 3.

<sup>48</sup> See also Anatolios, *Coherence*, 238–39n80.

<sup>49</sup> It is important to note that although Athanasius occasionally uses this “strong” sense of participation in the *Orations*, Athanasius does not think of the members of the Trinity as being of the same *genus* as the Father. See Widdicombe, *Fatherhood of God*, 193.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Arius *ep. Alex.* 5; see also Eusebius of Caesarea’s complicated relationship with ὁμοούσιος, summarized in Lewis Ayres, “Athanasius’ Initial Defense of the Term ‘Ὁμοούσιος’: Rereading the De Decretis,” *J ECS* 12, no. 3 (2004): 350–55.

Trinity, is inherently bound up in Athanasius's remarks about the unity within the Trinity. If, as I suggest, Athanasius implicitly teaches that there is substantial participation and likeness of essence and glory in the Trinity, then logically this would also apply to the Spirit. On the other hand, immediately after these Trinitarian charges against "Arianism," Athanasius adds a parallel charge that focuses on the Father-Son relationship. This suggests that Athanasius is primarily focused on the subject of the Son, meaning we should also be careful to not exaggerate the pneumatological significance of *Orations* 1.6. Therefore, at this point in our discussion of *Orations* 1.6, perhaps the best conclusion that we can make about Athanasius's pneumatology is to recognize that Athanasius is beginning to champion a position that emphasizes unity of nature and glory within the Trinity, but he is doing so with a focus on the Son. Athanasius's rhetoric may logically imply that the Spirit has the same nature and glory as the Father and the Son, but, given Athanasius's sharp focus on the Father-Son relationship, we cannot know if he consciously recognized these implications.

We have now seen that Athanasius's depiction of the "Arian" Trinitarian "blasphemies" can be used as a window into the state of Athanasius's own Trinitarian theology. In the next section, we will take a similar approach while examining Athanasius's polemical Trinitarian arguments.

### **3. Polemical Arguments and Trinitarian Theology in *Orations* 1.17–18**

In *Orations* 1.17–18, Athanasius develops three polemical arguments that co-opt the emphasis the Eusebians placed on the three-fold reality of God and the ontological distinction between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Athanasius's strategy here employs the assimilation tactic that he introduced in the beginning of the *Orations*. When Athanasius uses this

tactic in *Orations* 1.17–18, Athanasius focuses on the principle that the Son comes to exist after God, who is eternal and unbegotten. Athanasius argues that this proposition leads to several blasphemies against the Trinity, and he accuses its “Eusebian” sympathizers of being heretical “Arians.”

During this process, Athanasius presents his own views on the Trinity. In many ways, Athanasius’s perspective is truly his own. It is distinct from both “Marcellan” and Eusebian theologies in key areas, and it maintains several of Athanasius’s core theological assumptions. Yet, Athanasius’s doctrine of the Trinity also has much in common with these other theologies. The paragraphs below trace Athanasius’s arguments as he explains how denying the eternity of the Son leads to blasphemies against the Trinity. This analysis gives particular attention to how Athanasius engages alternative theologies and to what kind of theology of the Trinity he develops in the process.

#### *The “Eternally Perfect Trinity Argument”*

Athanasius bases his first argument here for the Word’s eternity on a premise that neither the Eusebians nor Marcellus would be comfortable with: the eternal perfection of the Trinity. The triadic union of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is “eternal” (ἄιδιος);<sup>51</sup> the Trinity has always been complete, existing as these three, without development or change. Athanasius’s premise shares the Eusebians’ emphasis on the threefold nature of the Godhead. Although Athanasius does not use technical language, such as ὑπόστασις or πρόσωπον, to distinguish the three from

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<sup>51</sup> Athanasius usually uses ἄιδιος to express the notion of the Father and Son’s eternity. On the difference between ἄιδιος and αἰώνιος in Athanasius’s works, see the analysis in Ilaria Ramelli and David Konstan, *Terms for Eternity: Aionios and Aidios in Classical and Christian Texts* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007), 157–172, who suggest αἰώνιος is more often used in relation to duration and to eschatological life and punishment.

one another,<sup>52</sup> he agrees with the Eusebians that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three subsisting entities or subjects.<sup>53</sup> However, Athanasius uses this threeness to argue for the co-existence of the Word with the Father in a manner that opposes the views of the Eusebians (and Marcellus).

Athanasius's argument begins quite simply: "Let them tell us this—or rather learn from it how irreligious they are in saying, 'once he was not,' and, 'he was not before his generation;'— for if the Word is not with the Father from eternity, the Triad is not eternal."<sup>54</sup> The logic here is straightforward. If Athanasius's premise about the eternal perfection of the Trinity is true, then it follows that each member of the Trinity must also be eternal, otherwise the Godhead has not always existed as a Trinity. Athanasius expresses this conclusion using the language of a divine Monad expanding into a Triad, which is undoubtedly a criticism of Marcellus's theology.<sup>55</sup> Athanasius writes that if the Triad is not eternal then it must be the case that:

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<sup>52</sup> On the subject of distinction within the Trinity according to Athanasius, see R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 181–90, 429, 444–46; Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 115–17.

<sup>53</sup> By avoiding hypostasis, Athanasius has no word to describe what exactly Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three of. Nevertheless, as his criticism of Marcellus's views below show, he affirms their eternal threeness.

<sup>54</sup> "Εἰ γὰρ οὐκ αἰδίως σύνεστιν ὁ Λόγος τῷ Πατρὶ, οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ Τριάς αἰδιος" (*Orations* 1.17). Based on the TLG database, this text appears to be one of the first instances in which a Greek writer specifically uses τριάς and αἰδιος together to express the eternity of the Trinity. In Origen, *Jo.* 10.39.270, which is extant in Greek, Origen speaks of the Trinity as eternal using αἰώνιος (αἰώνιῳ τῇ τριάδι). In *princ.* 4.4.1 (Latin), Origen describes the Trinity as transcending time, but of course in his cosmology differed greatly from that of Athanasius and Athanasius's contemporaries.

<sup>55</sup> For a more detailed account, see Khaled Anatolios, "Christ the Power and Wisdom of God: Biblical Exegesis and Polemical Intertextuality in Athanasius's Orations against the Arians," *J ECS* 21, no. 4 (2013): 523–525.

A Monad (μονάς) was first, and afterwards by addition (ἐκ προσθήκης) it became a Triad (τριάς); and so as time went on, it seems what we know concerning God grew and took shape. And further, if the Son is not proper offspring of the Father's essence, but of nothing has come to be, then of nothing the Triad consists, and "once there was not" a Triad, but a Monad; and a Triad once with deficiency, and then complete; deficient, before the Son was originated, complete when he had come to be.  
(*Orations* 1.17)<sup>56</sup>

Here, Athanasius includes the views of Marcellus under the umbrella of "Arianism" because of his binary polemic, and he seizes on the notion of development within the Trinity to criticize the Eusebians and Marcellus. The theologies of Marcellus and of the Eusebians, Athanasius argues, both imply change within the Godhead. When the "Arians" deny the Son's eternity, they deny the Trinity's eternity. Consequently, before the Son existed, the Godhead existed as something less than a Trinity—a Monad. This also means that the Godhead must have developed over a period of time, beginning as a Monad and expanding into the Triad of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Such views are, of course, blasphemous. Hereafter I will refer to this view as the blasphemy of the expanding Monad and Athanasius's argument against it as the eternally perfect Trinity argument.

#### *The "Incomposite Trinity Argument"*

Athanasius proceeds by highlighting a second problem that he sees with the denial of the Son's coexistence: If God is eternal and the Son is not, then the Trinity must be composite, meaning "a thing originated is

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<sup>56</sup> Ἀλλὰ μονὰς μὲν ἦν πρότερον, ἐκ προσθήκης δὲ γέγονεν ὕστερον τριάς, καὶ προϊόντος τοῦ χρόνου κατ' αὐτοὺς ἠὔξησε καὶ συνέστη τῆς θεολογίας ἡ γνώσις. πάλιν τε, εἰ οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ υἱὸς ἴδιον τῆς τοῦ Πατρὸς οὐσίας γέννημα, ἀλλ' ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων γέγονεν, ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων συνίσταται τριάς καὶ »ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν« τριάς, ἀλλὰ μονάς· καὶ ποτὲ μὲν ἐλλειπῆς Τριάς, ποτὲ δὲ πλήρης· ἐλλειπῆς μὲν πρό τοῦ γένηται ὁ υἱός, πλήρης δὲ ὅτε γέγονε·

reckoned with the Creator” (*Orations* 1.17). But if the Trinity is composite, comprised of two different natures (*Orations* 1.18), then this “Triad is discovered to be unlike itself, consisting of strange and alien natures and essences. And this, in other words, is saying that the Triad has an originated consistence” (*Orations* 1.17), which is also blasphemous. I refer to this as the blasphemy of a composite Trinity and Athanasius’s counter argument as the incomposite Trinity argument. In Athanasius’s assessment, the composite Trinity is even worse than the blasphemy of the expanding Monad because it means that the Trinity is a product of the creative activity, which is a view that is not necessarily implied in the expanding Monad scheme. In Marcellus’s theology, after the Monad expands, the Godhead is “orthodox” numerically and substantively.<sup>57</sup> The Godhead is “three” in number, and the Son and Spirit are both from the substance of the Father rather than existing because of a creative act.

*The “Glorious Trinity Argument”*

Athanasius’s third problem with the denial of the Son’s eternity continues his polemical strategy. However, it also provides us with a glimpse of the diverse views that Athanasius would have encountered while worshipping away from Alexandria, if not also in Alexandria itself. After introducing the blasphemy of the composite Trinity, Athanasius notes that in this model of the Trinity, worshippers glorify not only the eternal, unbegotten God, but also created beings. If “a thing originated is reckoned with the Creator” then “what once did not exist receives divine worship and glory with him who is everlasting” (*Orations* 1.17 TM). Throughout his career, Athanasius is emphatic that Christians are to

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<sup>57</sup> See fr. 48 and 73 in Markus Vinzent, *Markell von Ankyra: Die Fragmente, Der Brief an Julius von Rom* (Leiden: Brill, 1997). For a balanced assessment of the place of this doctrine in Marcellus’s thought, see Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum*, 56–58.

worship God alone—never a creature. Based on this and his strict binary cosmology, Athanasius judges worship of a composite Trinity to be a form of idolatry, which makes this one more example of the blasphemies that arise from rejecting the Son’s eternity. We can refer to this as the blasphemy of the idolatrous Trinity and Athanasius’s attack upon it as the glorious Trinity argument.

It is interesting to observe that Athanasius gives less emphasis to this argument than his previous two arguments. He presents this argument as proof of the errors that spring from making the Son’s existence posterior to the Father’s existence, and as we will see, he argues for an opposing view, but neither of these treatments is lengthy or emphatic. There are several possible reasons for this.<sup>58</sup> I would suggest, however, that Athanasius gave the blasphemy of the idolatrous Trinity less attention because he believed it would be less convincing and more controversial than the other two—likely because he recognized that views on worship were unsettled and that a number of Christians worshipped according to the sort of “composite” schema that he condemns.<sup>59</sup> If this is the case,

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<sup>58</sup> That Athanasius does not emphasize the “idolatrous worship” implication could be merely incidental. Alternatively, Athanasius might have chosen to give more emphasis to the other two blasphemies because he felt they were more directly related to the rejection of Christ’s eternity.

<sup>59</sup> It is not my intention here to go into detail on liturgical beliefs and practices, but with even just two brief examples taken from fourth-century Egypt, we can see that there was a variety of opinions on how to direct worship to the Trinity. As we will see below, Athanasius emphasized the equal glory of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. From the *Thalia*, we can see that Arius took a different approach to the worship of the Trinity. *Thalia* S insists on the primacy of the unbegotten God. The Trinity is included in worship, but the three are not “equal” in terms of “glories,” and their subsistences are not mixed. The Father is “more glorious than the other in their glories unto immensity.” It would seem then that Arius ascribed glory to all three members of the Trinity, but he regarded the unbegotten God alone as the true God, worthy of the highest degree of worship.

In the *Sacramentary of Serapion*, attributed to Athanasius’s friend Serapion,

then it makes his emphasis on the equal glory within the Trinity all the more distinctive.

*Pneumatology*

As with Athanasius's Trinitarian charges against Arianism in *Orations* 1.5–6, Athanasius's polemical Trinitarian arguments make claims about the Trinity that should logically apply to the Holy Spirit as well. The first point that applies to the Spirit comes from Athanasius's argument about the eternal perfections of the Trinity. In this argument against the notion of an expanding monad (*Orations* 1.17), Athanasius insists that the Trinity is not the result of development or change; instead, the Trinity has always existed, being complete as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For this to be true, each member of the Trinity must be eternal and the relationship of union between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which seems to characterize the Trinity, must also be eternal. The pneumatological implication of this is clear—the Holy Spirit must have an eternal existence and an eternal relationship with the Father and Son.

The other major pneumatological implication is contained in Athanasius's arguments that the Trinity is glorious and incomposite (*Orations* 1.17–18). As we have seen, Athanasius argues that if the Trinity is composite, being comprised of created and uncreated beings, then this would lead to idolatrous worship and to the Trinity owing part of its

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bishop of Thmuis, the Christ and the Spirit appear to be the “two most honoured six winged seraphim” from Isa. 6:2. As we pray, Christ and the Spirit pray to and give worship to the Father “in us” (*Prayer of Offering*, Barrett-Lennard, *Sacramentary of Sarapion*, 25). This interpretation also occurs in Origen, *princ.* 1.3.4.

Given this theological diversity within Egypt alone, Athanasius would have certainly been aware of the lack of agreement on the subject of worship. Therefore, he may have chosen to give less attention to his “idolatrous worship” example because he wished to reduce the chance of creating unnecessary conflicts with potential anti-“Eusebian” allies.

threeness to the creative act. Therefore, Athanasius insists that the Trinity must be incomposite. Each member of the Trinity must have the same uncreated nature. However, by making this argument, Athanasius implies that the nature of the Holy Spirit must also be uncreated and of the divine nature.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, Athanasius's argument also appears to imply that the Spirit, like the Father and Son, is an appropriate object for humans to glorify with the Father and Son.

In total, then, Athanasius's polemical Trinitarian arguments seem to imply five points about the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is eternal, eternally united to the Father and Son, uncreated, worthy of worship, and of the divine nature. However, it should be noted that theologians are not always consistent nor aware of the implications of their arguments. While the materials above seem to imply five points about the Holy Spirit, we require additional evidence in order to determine if these were tenets of Athanasius's thought. Chapters 5 through 7 will attempt to provide this evidence, but first we will briefly look at continuity and development in *Serapion*.

#### 4. Athanasius's Polemical Strategies in *Serapion*

This section briefly looks at the pneumatology of *Serapion*. The purpose of this section is not to provide a comprehensive discussion of the pneumatology of *Serapion*.<sup>61</sup> Instead, this section has a narrower aim. Here, I will argue that the pneumatological points implied by Athanasius's Trinitarian arguments in the *Orationes* provided the foundation for the views developed in *Serapion*.

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<sup>60</sup> The last point, about the Spirit being of the same divine nature as the Father and Son, is also noted in Laminski, *Der Heilige Geist*, 42.

<sup>61</sup> For a more comprehensive treatment of the pneumatology in *Serapion*, see Laminski, *Der Heilige Geist*; Campbell, "Doctrine of the Holy Spirit": 408–440; Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 59–103. See also the summary and comments in Shapland, *Holy Spirit*.

In 356, Constantius II, then the sole ruler of the Roman empire, exiled Athanasius. Athanasius retreated to the desert, where he found sanctuary with the monks in the lower Thebaid. Around 359 or 360, during his third exile, Athanasius received a letter from his friend Serapion, bishop of Thmuis. Serapion's letter reported that a group of former "Arians" were teaching that the Holy Spirit is a created being—an angel. Athanasius responded by writing his first *Letter to Serapion on the Holy Spirit*, which was dedicated to refuting this new group's central arguments and asserting the uncreated nature of the Holy Spirit. Between 360 and 361,<sup>62</sup> apparently at the request of Serapion, Athanasius followed this up with two other letters on the Spirit.<sup>63</sup> In what follows, we will observe how, in *Serapion*, Athanasius borrows polemical strategies and pneumatological perspectives from the *Orationes*. Before this, however, we will briefly consider Athanasius's depiction of his opponents, the "Tropikoi."

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<sup>62</sup> Although most studies assign a date of 358–359 for *Serapion*, Mark DelCogliano, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, and Lewis Ayres, *Works on the Spirit: Athanasius's Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit, and, Didymus's On the Holy Spirit*, PPS (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 25–29, have recently argued that a date of 359–361 makes better sense of the evidence, including Athanasius's reference to Eunomius. I follow this chronology.

<sup>63</sup> The manuscripts for *Serapion* divide the work into four letters, but scholars now agree that the original correspondence consisted of three letters. In the manuscripts, a fourth work, the short treatise on Matt. 12:32, was included with the letters. The editors of *AW*. I/1. Lfg. 4 have removed this exposition and organized the letters according to what was most likely their original structure. This change required the editors to renumber the letters. In this thesis, the numbering for *Serapion* lists the new numbering first, followed by the old numbering (based on the Benedictine edition) in square brackets where numbering differs. DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, and Ayres, *Works on the Spirit*, 49–50, note two misprints in that edition. Their corrections are used here.

*Athanasius's Depiction of the "Tropikoi"*

"Tropikoi" (Τροπικοί), the name that Athanasius uses throughout *Serapion* to refer to these persons, was apparently coined by Athanasius or Serapion in response to observing that these "dishonourable men" customarily interpreted Scripture according to a specific pattern (τρόπος).<sup>64</sup> In *Serapion* 1.9, Athanasius criticizes them for interpreting Amos 4:13 according to an inaccurate τρόπος. Craig Blaising calls this "the false pattern that the three Persons are always named together in Scripture."<sup>65</sup> Blaising's description highlights the real matter at hand—Athanasius's debate with the "Tropikoi" is largely over Biblical interpretation, and the significance of the "Tropikoi" name must be understood in this context.

A pair of texts appear to have been at the heart of the controversy, and Athanasius's arguments over the interpretation of this pair reveal that the hermeneutic of the "Tropikoi" is specific. These texts are Amos 4:13 and 1 Tim. 5:21, which read:

Therefore I am the one who gives strength to thunder and who creates spirit and who proclaims his Christ to humanity, who makes the dawn and foggy mist, and who mounts upon the high places of the earth: Lord God almighty is his name!

(Amos 4:12–13; *Serapion* 1.3)

In the presence of God and Jesus Christ and the elect angels, I charge you to observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing out of partiality.

(1 Tim. 5:21; *Serapion* 1.10)

According to Athanasius's account, the "Tropikoi" interpreted these texts in a manner that makes the Holy Spirit a creature similar to angels, but their τρόπος was likely more complex than Athanasius lets on.

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<sup>64</sup> In addition to "Tropikoi" and "dishonourable men," Athanasius also calls these persons "fools," "godless," allies of the "Arians."

<sup>65</sup> Blaising, "Contents and Structure," 77–78.

Although we do not have any primary sources written by the “Tropikoi,” Athanasius’s depiction of them combined with his criticisms of their interpretations of Amos 4:13 and 1 Tim 5:21 provide us with clues about their interpretive method. Athanasius depicts the “Tropikoi” as using a specific pattern to interpret a particular kind of Biblical texts. From Athanasius’s account of the “Tropikoi’s” interpretations of Amos 4:13 and 1 Tim. 5:21, Athanasius implies that the “Tropikoi” use this pattern to interpret verses that refer to God by name (“God,” “Lord,” or “Father”) and then name at least one other person shortly thereafter. When verses meet this condition, the “Tropikoi” interpret the verse according to the pattern noted above, namely that the members of the Trinity are always named together. Therefore, when the “Tropikoi” read Amos 4:13 and see “God,” “Christ,” and “spirit,” they use their pattern, which tells them that “spirit” must refer to the Holy Spirit. Likewise, when they read 1 Tim. 5:21, which contains “God,” “Jesus Christ,” and a third agent (“elect angels”), they employ their pattern and determine that “elect angels” must include the Holy Spirit.

In *Serapion* 1.13–14, Athanasius is pleased to point out that this interpretive method can lead to numerous problems. For example, verses such as Isa. 48:16 and Hag. 2:4–5 name God and then the Spirit, omitting the Son altogether. The method that Athanasius attributes to the “Tropikoi” cannot adequately deal with verses that only name two of the three persons.

However, I suspect Athanasius has given us a straw man. The interpretive method held by the historical persons whom Athanasius and Serapion label “Tropikoi” was likely a more nuanced, coherent, and convincing *τρόπος* than what Athanasius attributes to them. Indeed, there is an interpretive approach that produces the same interpretations of Amos 4:13 and 1 Tim. 5:21 without resulting in the problems that Athanasius describes in *Serapion* 1.13–14. This approach operates

according to the following rules. First, when a verse of Scripture names together exactly three unique living subjects, and when two of these subjects are the Father and the Son and the third subject is neither a human nor an animal, then the third subject must be (or include) the Holy Spirit. Thus, because Amos 4:13 and 1 Tim. 5:21 both contain a series of three subjects, two of which are “God” and “Christ,” the third subject must refer to the Holy Spirit. Therefore κτίζων πνεῦμα in Amos 4:13 speaks of the creation of the Holy Spirit (*Serapion* 1.30), and the race of angels in 1 Tim. 5:21 includes the Holy Spirit (*Serapion* 1.10). This method sounds complicated, but it is more natural than the approach Athanasius attributes to the “Tropikoi.”<sup>66</sup> It would seem, therefore, that Athanasius’s depiction of the “Tropikoi,” as with the “Arians” and “Eusebians,” is rather disingenuous. This characteristic should not surprise us, since, as we will now see, Athanasius borrows polemical strategies from the *Orations*.

#### *Assimilation and Polarization*

In *Serapion* 1–3, Athanasius repeats two polemical tactics that served him well in the *Orations*—assimilation and polarization. Athanasius employs his assimilation strategy through three overlapping actions. First, he introduces the heresy of “Arianism” and presents it in a form that is broadly relatable to views put forward by the “Tropikoi.” Second, Athanasius shapes his depiction of the views of the “Tropikoi” in a manner that, on at least some points, can be assimilated to his account of “Arianism.” Third, he then accuses the “Tropikoi” of committing the

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<sup>66</sup> If the “Tropikoi” truly believed that the members of the Trinity are usually named together, then when they encountered verses that name three persons—and two of these persons are, for example, the Father and the Son—it would be natural for them to consider the possibility that the third agent could be a reference to the Spirit.

heresies of “Arianism” and of being “Arians” themselves, which Athanasius’s conspiracy narrative has long maintained is grounds for condemnation. Related to this, Athanasius uses polarization once again to establish three things. First, through polarization he establishes a binary taxonomy of heresy and orthodoxy. As we will see, Athanasius pushes the views of the “Tropikoi” into the category of heresy, while he places the views of himself and his supporters into the prized category of orthodoxy. Second, polarization enables Athanasius to depict the views of the “Tropikoi” in the most extreme, unsympathetic form possible. Athanasius establishes the issues as black and white, and he insists that the views of the “Tropikoi” must conform to his strict creature-or-creator cosmology. Third, polarization leaves no room for compromise, dialogue, or development within Serapion’s community. The “Tropikoi” must either accept Athanasius’s corrections or leave the church.

Athanasius uses his tactic of assimilation in the opening of *Serapion* 1. The letter begins with a short narrative outlining the circumstances that inspired its composition: “The letter of Your Sacred Kindness has reached me in the desert...” (*Serapion* 1.1). This leads into a *propositio* of sorts, where Athanasius puts forth his central charge against the “Tropikoi”: the “Tropikoi” are veiled allies of the “Arians.”<sup>67</sup>

You [Serapion] wrote that certain ones [the Tropikoi] who have withdrawn from the Arians on account of their blasphemy against the Son of God have nonetheless set their minds against the Holy Spirit, claiming not only that he is a creature but also that he is one of the ministering spirits and is different from the angels only in degree. But this amounts to a feigned battle against

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<sup>67</sup> As we will see, the “Tropikoi’s” position (according to Athanasius’s account) is rather ironic. On account of their Christology, the “Tropikoi” denounce—and are denounced by—the Arian’s, yet, unbeknownst to them, they are actually in agreement with one another concerning the essential divisibility of the Godhead, and, therefore, they are allies in the fight against the unity of the Godhead.

the Arians, while their real dispute is with the pious faith. For just as Arians by denying the Son also deny the Father, so too these people by disparaging the Holy Spirit also disparage the Son.

(*Serapion* 1.1)

Athanasius's linking of the "Tropikoi" with the "Arians" is an *ad hominem* attack intended to discredit the "Tropikoi" through guilt by association. This becomes a common theme in *Serapion*, with forms of "Arian" and "Arius" occurring sixteen times in the first letter alone.<sup>68</sup> It is clear that Athanasius is repeating his assimilation strategy.

Having begun to reuse his assimilation strategy, Athanasius immediately reintroduces his rhetoric of polarization to influence how his readers will view the "Tropikoi." As in *Orations* 1.1, he depicts his opponents and their theology in polarizing terms designed to cast them in a negative light, and he implicitly introduces his binary taxonomy of orthodoxy and heresy—or, in Athanasian language, piety (εὐσέβεια) and impiety (ἀσέβεια). Athanasius describes the "Tropikoi" as having "set their minds against the Holy Spirit," which effectively assigns them to the category of heresy / impiety. Further, Athanasius interprets the "Tropikoi's" alleged claim that the Spirit is not only "a creature but also that he is one of the ministering spirits and is different from the angels only in degree" according to his fundamental doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* and its ontological polarization between God and creation. In Athanasius's ontology, there is no room to consider the notion of degrees of divinity, and thus he polarizes the "Tropikoi's" perspective, branding them as heretics whose angelic pneumatology logically implies that the Spirit is merely a creature.

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<sup>68</sup> Combined, "Arius," "Arian(s)," and "Arianism" occur twenty-four times in *Serapion* 1–3.

*“Arians,” “Tropikoi,” and the Unity of the Trinity*

Athanasius’s association of the “Tropikoi” with the “Arians” is certainly an *ad hominem* attack through “guilt by association,” but it is also more than this. In the process of preparing his response to Serapion, Athanasius appears to have recognized that he could apply many of his anti-“Arian” arguments against the “Tropikoi” because, at their heart, the blasphemies of both heresies were due to the same error, namely the fundamental failure to grasp the unity of God. According to Athanasius’s depiction of “Arianism” in the *Orations*, the “Arians” denied the Son’s divine nature and co-eternality with the Father because they believed this undermines Christianity’s claims to monotheism and divine immutability.<sup>69</sup> In *Serapion*, Athanasius presents the “Tropikoi” as denying the Spirit the same qualities that the “Arians” deny the Son, but the “Tropikoi” are depicted as doing so for different monotheistic reasons. On the one hand, the “Arians” focus on protecting the Father’s exclusive eternity and natural divinity because they believe that if the Son (or Spirit) is said to possess these qualities, then Christianity’s claims to monotheism are undermined. The “Arian” concern, therefore, is to guard Christianity from falling into ditheism.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, the “Tropikoi” agree with Athanasius that attributing eternity and true divinity to the Son is not a breach of monotheism; however, they refuse to ascribe these same qualities to the Spirit because they are convinced that the Holy Spirit is an angel and that if these qualities are bestowed on the Spirit then they must

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<sup>69</sup> It must be stressed that I am speaking of Athanasius’s portrayal of the Arian’s theology. Maurice Wiles reached the same conclusion, namely that in Athanasius’s view the Arians see Athanasius’s perspectives as a break from monotheism. See Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism through the Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 8.

<sup>70</sup> Against Athanasius’s depictions, the “historical” Eusebians accused Athanasius and others who, like Athanasius, had an “inclusive monotheism” (such as Marcellus) with Sabellianism.

be bestowed on all of the angels. In summary, Athanasius's depictions leave us with the following impression: The "Arians" were concerned that Christian monotheism might become ditheism; the "Tropikoi" were concerned that monotheism might become polytheism. Both groups have erred by denying the essential unity of the Trinity.

Athanasius's claim that "Arianism" and "Tropicism" are driven by the same fundamental error, namely the failure to accept the essential unity of the Trinity, develops during the course of *Serapion*, but it first begins to appear in the quotation above, repeated here: "For just as Arians by denying the Son also deny the Father, so too these people by disparaging the Holy Spirit also disparage the Son" (*Serapion* 1.1). Athanasius presents both factions as committing the very blasphemies that they wish to prevent. Although the "Arians" identify the Son as a creature because they believe this will protect the divinity of the Father, their view of the Son actually means that the Father must also be a creature because, despite what they might think, the Trinity is not a composition of multiple natures—it is incomposite. There is only one nature in the Trinity, and thus, as a result of this unity of nature, if one member of the Trinity is a creature, then it follows that all must be creatures. Likewise, the "Tropikoi" claim that the Spirit is a creature because they wish to preserve the orthodox doctrine of the Son. However, because of the essential unity of the Trinity, by denying the divinity of the Spirit, the "Tropikoi" also by extension deny the divinity of the Son. This is the logic behind Athanasius's statement that "just as Arians by denying the Son also deny the Father, so too these people [the "Tropikoi"] by disparaging the Holy Spirit also disparage the Son" (*Serapion* 1.1.)

In *Serapion* 1.2, Athanasius continues this tactic of aligning the "Tropikoi" with the "Arians." First, he observes that the "Tropikoi" are repeating a blasphemy that began with the "Arians." In Athanasius's view, by "Arianism" attributing eternity exclusively to the Father, this makes

both the Son and Spirit creatures. Thus, Athanasius says, the “Tropikoi’s” “kind of thinking is not foreign to the Arians. For having once denied the Word of God, it is natural for them also to disparage his Spirit in the same way.”

Athanasius builds on this assertion by arguing that although the “Tropikoi” think they understand divine unity (since they affirm the essential unity of the Father and Son), the “Tropikoi’s” doctrine of the Spirit proves otherwise.

One should marvel at their [the Tropikoi’s] stupidity! For if they do not wish the Son of God to be a creature—and in this matter at any rate their thinking is good—then how are they content to countenance that the Spirit of the Son is a creature? For even if on account of the unity of the Word with the Father they do not wish the Son to be one of things that have come into existence, but—as is truly the case—they think that he is the Creator of things that are made, why do they say that the Holy Spirit, who has the same unity with the Son as the Son has with the Father, is a creature?  
(*Serapion* 1.2)

Athanasius’s rhetoric highlights the inconsistency of the “Tropikoi’s” theology. By treating the Spirit as a creature, the “Tropikoi” make the Trinity a composite of created and uncreated beings. If the “Tropikoi” actually understood divine unity, they would realize that the Trinity cannot be divided into different natures. This principle, in turn, would tell them that if they call the Spirit a creature, then, by extension, they are calling the Father and Son creatures as well.

### **5. The Trinity and the Holy Spirit in *Serapion***

In *Serapion*, the primary change that we find regarding the unity of the Trinity is that Athanasius chooses to unequivocally affirm what had been implicit within his depiction of the “Arian” Trinitarian “blasphemies” and his polemical Trinitarian arguments—the Holy Spirit, being part of the

eternal, irreducible Trinity, coexists with the Father and Son, being identical to them in glory and nature. The next two sections will highlight this amplification, which, I argue, demonstrates that with respect to the unity of the Trinity, *Serapion* neither departs from, nor significantly develops on, the views contained in the first *Orations*. Instead, in this regard, it demonstrates a remarkable degree of continuity with the first two *Orations*. The fact that Athanasius makes the Spirit's coexistence and unity of nature with the Father and the Son implicit in the *Orations* and explicit in *Serapion* is due to the works' distinct polemical contexts and rhetorical purposes. With respect to the unity of the Trinity, *Serapion* contains the logical and timely articulation of views that were developed and implicit in the first *Orations*.

Athanasius reuses many of his anti-"Arian" arguments, adapting them as necessary to show the consequences of the "Tropikoi's" particular division of the Trinity. Each of his Trinitarian arguments for divine unity reappears, and they serve to demonstrate the flaws in the "Tropikoi's" reasoning. In the process of adapting the arguments to address the "Tropikoi," Athanasius articulates the pneumatology that was previously implicit in these arguments and the theology that supported them. However, as the last subsection will explain, Athanasius also advances his pneumatology in two major ways. These advances represent significant logical steps forward for his doctrine of the Spirit. Yet they, like the other pneumatological perspectives in *Serapion*, build on the foundation provided in the *Orations*.

#### *The Return of the "Incomposite Trinity Argument"*

To begin, Athanasius adapts his argument from *Orations* 1.17 for the Trinity being incomposite. In *Orations* 1.17, this argument accused "Arianism" of logically leading to the blasphemy of a composite Trinity, meaning the Trinity is divided into a composite of created and uncreated

natures. Athanasius brings a form of this argument against the “Tropikoi” in *Serapion* 1.2. Here, Athanasius highlights one of the major problems with the “Tropikoi’s” division of the Trinity into a composite of Creator (Father and Son) and creature (Holy Spirit). More importantly for our purposes, Athanasius also articulates two views about the Spirit that were previously implicit in his polemical Trinitarian argument about the Trinity being composite or incomposite. For these reasons, his argument is worth quoting at length.

For even if on account of the unity of the Word with the Father they do not wish the Son to be one of the things that have come into existence, but—as is truly the case—they think that he is the Creator of things that are made, why do they say that the Holy Spirit, who has the same unity (ένότητα) with the Son as he [the Son] has with the Father, is a creature? Why hasn’t it dawned on them that, just as by not dividing the Son from the Father they preserve the unity of God (τὸ ἕνα θεὸν), so too, by dividing the Spirit from the Word they no longer preserve the divinity in the Trinity as one,<sup>71</sup> but rupture it, and mix with it a nature that is foreign to it and different in kind, and reduce it to the level of creatures? This in turn renders the Trinity no longer one but compounded (συγκεμμένην) of two distinct natures, because the Spirit, as they imagine among themselves, is different in substance. So then, what sort of theology makes a compound (συγκεμμένη) of Creator and creature? For either there is not a Trinity, but a dyad plus a creature, or, if there is a Trinity—as in fact there is—then how can they rank the Spirit of the Trinity with the creatures who come after the Trinity? For once again this amounts to dividing and dissolving the Trinity. Therefore, because of their faulty thinking about the Holy Spirit, not even their thinking about the Son is sound. . . . Erring in this way they do not even have sound faith about the Father.

(*Serapion* 1.2 TM)

Athanasius argues that the “Tropikoi” are right in wishing to protect the unity of God but wrong in their execution. They rightly affirm that Father and Son are eternally united and of the same nature, but they fail

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<sup>71</sup> Διαιροῦντες ἀπὸ τοῦ λόγου τὸ πνεῦμα, οὐκέτι μίαν τὴν ἐν τριάδι θεότητα σώζουσι.

to realize that by treating the Spirit as a created being, they make God composite—which compromises the unity of God. Acknowledging the unity of the Father-Son relationship is an essential step in properly respecting the unity of God, but more is required. Divine unity, in Athanasius’s understanding, means the Godhead is “one” because it has a unity of nature. The Godhead, however, is comprised of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Therefore, the orthodox doctrine of the unity of God affirms that all three members of the Trinity are of the same divine, uncreated nature. By the “Tropikoi” failing to grasp the unity between the Son and the Spirit, they are like the “Arians” insofar as they fail to properly understand the unity of God.<sup>72</sup>

Here, Athanasius articulates two pneumatological points that were only implicit when this argument about the Trinity being incomposite occurred in *Orations* 1.17. As noted above,<sup>73</sup> in the *Orations* this argument seemed to imply that the Holy Spirit is both uncreated and also of the same divine nature as the Father and Son. Beginning with *Serapion* 1.2, Athanasius makes these two points explicit. Against the views of the “Tropikoi,” Athanasius believes that there are not “two distinct natures” in the Trinity, nor is the Holy Spirit “different in substance” from the Father and Son.<sup>74</sup> Instead, because the Trinity is incomposite, the nature of the Holy Spirit, like that of the Father and the Son, must be uncreated

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<sup>72</sup> Athanasius also claims that the essential unity of the Trinity also discredits the Tropikoi’s understanding of the Father and Son. As in *Serapion* 1.1, Athanasius argues that if the Tropikoi regard the Holy Spirit as a creature, then the logical implication of this is that the Son must also be a creature because the Spirit and the Son are have a common nature as a result of the unity of the Trinity. This, in turn, implies that the Tropikoi must also lack the Father because the common nature of the Trinity would make him a creature as well.

<sup>73</sup> See above, pp. 178–179.

<sup>74</sup> Here, Athanasius also articulates a point that seemed to be implicit in *Orations* 1.6: the Holy Spirit is not different from the Father and Son according to essence. See above, pp. 169–172.

and divine.

*The Return of the “Glorious Trinity Argument”*

Athanasius also reuses his polemical Trinitarian argument about the Trinity being glorious and worthy of worship. This argument supports his incomposite Trinity argument by demonstrating further problems that arise from a composite Godhead. As a result of the pneumatological controversy at hand, Athanasius’s reworking of the argument expresses what was implicit when he used this argument in *Orations*: the Holy Spirit is worthy of worship.

The first occurrence of this argument and emphasis on the Spirit’s glory occurs as Athanasius criticizes the “Tropikoi” for their eagerness to interpret Amos 4:13 as a sign that the Spirit is created. Athanasius writes:

“But since the oracle mentions Christ,” our opponents say, “it follows that what is called ‘spirit’ must be understood as nothing other than the Holy Spirit.” So you have observed that the Holy Spirit is named together with Christ. But you have not learned that by nature he is different and separated from the Son. Why is it that Christ you do not call a creature, but the Holy Spirit you do call a creature? Furthermore, it is absurd to name together and glory together things that are by nature unlike. For what sort of commonality or what sort of likeness is there between a creature and the Creator? You are determined to classify and join together with the Son the creatures brought into existence by the Son.

(*Serapion* 1.9)

With respect to Amos 4:13, it is clear that the “Tropikoi,” seeing that “christ” (τὸν χριστὸν), “spirit” (πνεῦμα), and “the Lord almighty” (κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ) all occur in the same verse, reasoned that these names must refer to the persons of the Trinity. This, in turn, led them to conclude that the phrase “creating spirit” (κτίζων πνεῦμα) speaks of the Holy Spirit being created. In *Serapion* 1.9, Athanasius rejects their conclusion, asserting that their interpretation disproves the validity of

their pattern. He writes: “It is absurd to name together and glorify together things that are by nature unlike. For what sort of commonality or what sort of likeness is there between a creature and the Creator?” (*Serapion* 1.9).<sup>75</sup> If the “Tropikoi’s” interpretation of Amos 4:13 is correct and the Holy Spirit is a creature, then it would be very strange for Scripture to contain a pattern that names and glorifies a creature (the Spirit) alongside the uncreated Father and Son. Therefore, by *reductio ad absurdum*, this pattern must be fallacious—which makes the “Tropikoi’s” interpretation regarding the Spirit also fallacious. Instead, Athanasius argues, it is appropriate to “name together and glory together” the Holy Spirit with the Son, since the Holy Spirit has the same divine nature as the Son.

*The Return of the “Eternally Perfect Trinity Argument”*

Athanasius also recycles his argument about the eternal perfection of the Trinity, which originally challenged the blasphemy of the expanding monad. In *Serapion*, Athanasius combines this argument with his incomposite Trinity argument. In the process, he repeats his previous three points that the Holy Spirit is uncreated, of the divine nature, and worthy of worship. However, Athanasius also adds a fourth point that, as with the previous three points, appears to have been implied in the polemical Trinitarian arguments put forth in the *Orationes*.

Athanasius argues that if the Trinity is a composite of created and uncreated beings, then the Godhead developed over time. By a creature being added to the Godhead, the Godhead grows from its original state as

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<sup>75</sup> Καὶ ἄτοπόν ἐστι τὰ ἀνόμοια τῇ φύσει συνονομάζειν καὶ συνδοξάζειν. ποία γὰρ κοινωνία, ἢ ποία ὁμοιότης τῷ κτίσματι πρὸς τὸν κτίστην. Shapland omits “καὶ συνδοξάζειν,” judging it to be non-Athanasian language; however, as DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, and Ayres noted in an early draft of *Works on the Spirit*, the co-glorification of the Spirit also occurs in *Serapion* 2.15 [3.6 BE]. See also *Serapion* 1.31.

an incomposite Monad (or Dyad) into a composite Trinity. While summarizing his understanding of the church's faith in the Trinity, Athanasius uses this argument to make two related points. First, the "Tropikoi's" doctrine attributes deficiency to the Godhead. The church believes that the Trinity is comprised exclusively of uncreated beings, Athanasius explains, because otherwise it would be necessary to say that the Trinity was deficient until the created member of the Trinity was made and added to the Trinity. Athanasius writes:

For what could God have lacked such that he needed to add something alien and be glorified along with it? God forbid! Such is not the case. He himself said: "I am full" [Isa. 1:11]. Therefore the Lord himself ranked the Spirit together with the name of the Father in order to show that the Holy Trinity is not compounded of two different things, that is, Creator and creature, but that there is one divinity in the Trinity.

(*Serapion* 2.15 [3.6 BE])<sup>76</sup>

Second, Athanasius argues, the "Tropikoi's" disparagement of the Spirit also attributes change and progress to the Godhead.

Let them tell us whether the Trinity is always a Trinity or whether there was a point when the Trinity was not a Trinity. So then, if the Trinity is eternal, the Spirit is not a creature since he exists eternally with the Word and is in him. For there was a point when creatures did not exist. But if the Spirit is a creature, and if creatures are from nothing, it is clear that there was a point when the Trinity was not a Trinity but a dyad. But could anyone utter something more impious than this? Our opponents are claiming that the Trinity has been established by a process of change (μεταβολῆς) and progress

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<sup>76</sup> Τί γὰρ ἔλειπε τῷ θεῷ, ἵνα ἀλλοτριούσιον προσλάβηται, καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ δοξάζεται; μὴ γένοιτο! οὐκ ἔστιν οὕτως. »πλήρης«, αὐτὸς εἶπεν, »εἰμί«. διὰ τοῦτο αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτὸ συνέταξεν· ἵνα δείξη, ὅτι οὐκ ἐκ διαφόρων, τουτέστιν ἐκ κτίστου καὶ κτίσματος, συνέστηκεν ἡ ἅγια τριάς· ἀλλὰ μία ταύτης ἡ θεότης ἐστί.

(προκοπῆς), that when it was a dyad it waited for the generation of a creature so that this creature would be ranked together (συνταχθῆ) with the Father and Son, and thereby become the Trinity.  
(*Serapion* 2.16 [3.7 BE])

From this summary of his argument, we can see that Athanasius repeats the previous three points noted above. Because the Trinity is incomposite, there is only one nature in the Trinity, which means that the Holy Spirit must be both uncreated and divine, just as the Father and Son are uncreated and divine (*Serapion* 2.15 [3.6 BE]). Also, because the Holy Spirit is part of this Trinity and the same nature as Father and Son, the Spirit is worthy to be “glorified along with” the Father and Son (*Serapion* 2.15 [3.6 BE]).

Athanasius also makes two additional points about the Holy Spirit. The first point concerns the eternity of the Spirit and the Trinity. The Trinity, being comprised only of the uncreated divine nature, has never undergone change or development; it is eternal. Therefore, since the Holy Spirit is a member of this eternal Trinity, the Holy Spirit must also be eternal (*Serapion* 2.16 [3.7 BE]). Related to this, the second point concerns the Spirit’s eternal relationships within the Trinity. Since the Trinity is eternal, the Holy Spirit “exists eternally with the Word and is in him” (*Serapion* 2.16 [3.7 BE]). With the articulation of these two points, we have now witnessed Athanasius clearly express five pneumatological points that, as we noted, seem to have been implicit in Athanasius’s polemical Trinitarian arguments in the *Orations*. In *Serapion*, Athanasius unequivocally announces that the Holy Spirit is uncreated, divine, worthy of worship, eternal, and always in union with the Son.

#### *Pneumatological Continuity and Development*

Although the purpose of this thesis is to study Athanasius’s early pneumatology rather than to go into detail on the developments in

*Serapion*, we can better appreciate the significance of Athanasius's early pneumatology when we are aware of how close this early pneumatology is to his mature pneumatology. Therefore, here we will briefly consider the question of continuity and development in *Serapion*.

We have now seen that in *Serapion* Athanasius not only repeats polemical strategies and arguments from the *Orations* but also articulates pneumatological points that were only implicit when these arguments occurred in *Orations*. This suggests that there is pneumatological continuity between the *Orations* and *Serapion*. But what kind of continuity, exactly? One possible answer is that in *Serapion* Athanasius is simply expressing views that he tacitly held when he wrote the *Orations*. On the other hand, it is also possible that in *Serapion* Athanasius is arriving at these views for the first time. I would argue, however, that the relationship between the *Orations* and *Serapion* is more complex than either of these answers alone can account for. Instead, a third answer is required.

With respect to the pneumatological relationship between the *Orations* and *Serapion*, I suggest that the *Orations* prepared the way for what would follow in *Serapion*. Specifically, I think that, in the course of writing *Orations* 1-3 and developing arguments that touch on the Trinity and the Holy Spirit, Athanasius came to consciously believe that the Holy Spirit is eternal, uncreated, inseparably united to the Son, worthy of worship, and essential for salvation. These became, I propose, tenets of his theology. The last tenet, concerning the Spirit's importance for salvation, is not implied not by the *Orations* material that we looked at in this chapter. However, in Chapter 2 we observed that it appears to be a tenet of Athanasius's theology in the early pastoral works. Chapter 5 will show that, in *Orations* 1, Athanasius further emphasizes the soteriological necessity of the Spirit while interpreting Ps. 45:7.

In the following chapters, I will support my claim about the *Orations'*

pneumatological views preparing the way for *Serapion*. I will argue that these views were tenets that provided the necessary “core” or foundation for the pneumatology that Athanasius develops in *Serapion*. What I mean by this is that in *Serapion* Athanasius reaffirms and builds upon these tenets. Indeed, a result of these points, in 340 Athanasius was only a step away from the new pneumatological conclusions that he would reach while writing *Serapion*.

Of the numerous pneumatological conclusions expressed in *Serapion*, only two mark major steps forward from what was previously implicit in Athanasius’s pneumatology. The first of these conclusions is about the reason for the Spirit’s divinity. Beginning in *Serapion* 1.2, Athanasius attributes the Spirit’s eternality, divine uncreated nature, and other divine qualities to the Spirit’s procession from the Father,<sup>77</sup> which is a point that is not clearly implied in the *Orations*. The second key point relates to creation. In *Serapion* 1.24, Athanasius credits the Holy Spirit with playing a role in the creation of the world. This point occurs as a result of Athanasius building on his belief that God’s activities in the world are Trinitarian. The Father operates in the world “through” his Word and “in” the Holy Spirit.<sup>78</sup> In the *Orations*, however, Athanasius limits the Spirit’s roles in the united activity to salvation. By including the Spirit in the activity of creation in *Serapion* 1.24, Athanasius’s pneumatology takes a major step forward.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> See *Serapion* 1.2, 1.11, 1.22, 2.11, 3.3–4, 3.6. For discussion of the Spirit’s procession “from God” as proof of the Spirit’s divinity and unity with the Father and Son in *Serapion*, see Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 78–83; Laminski, *Der Heilige Geist*, 147–55; Morales, *La théologie trinitaire d’Athanasie d’Alexandrie* 116–36.

<sup>78</sup> On Athanasius’s belief that the Trinity has a united activity in the world, see below, pp. 299–311, for the subject in the *Orations*. On the subject in *Serapion*, see Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 138–43.

<sup>79</sup> On the Spirit’s creative role in *Serapion* 1.24 and related sections, see Campbell, “Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” 421–24; Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 86–88; T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (London: SCM Press, 1965), 213–19.

The other pneumatological advances that occur in *Serapion* are largely derivative, being minor developments upon points implicit in the *Orations*. For example, when Athanasius writes that the Holy Spirit is “proper” to the Son (*Serapion* 1.2), he is articulating in clearer language his earlier belief that the Holy Spirit has an inseparable union with the Son; when he states that “the Spirit’s rank and nature vis-à-vis the Son corresponds to the Son’s vis-à-vis the Father” (*Serapion* 1.21), he is expressing an implication of his earlier arguments that there is only one nature in the Trinity (*Orations* 1.17–18); when he argues that the Holy Spirit is unlike creatures since the Spirit is immutable, omnipresent, and one (*Serapion* 1.26–27), he derives these characteristics from his earlier tenet that the Holy Spirit is uncreated; and, finally, when he argues that the Spirit must be divine because the Spirit is essential for salvation, involved in the united activities of the Trinity, and joins us to God (*Serapion* 1.22–23, 1.19–20, 1.24), he is building upon the pneumatological tenets, chain of union, and the united soteriological pattern that he developed in the *Orations*.<sup>80</sup>

### Conclusion

Thus far I have argued that Athanasius’s charges against the Trinitarian “blasphemies” of “Arianism,” along with Athanasius’s Trinitarian polemical arguments developed in the *Orations*, imply at least four foundational points about the Holy Spirit. However, it is important to also acknowledge that, based on these Trinitarian arguments alone, we cannot determine if they were actually part of Athanasius’s views on the Spirit. Therefore, in the following three chapters, we will carefully explore other relevant sections of the *Orations* in order to learn more about the state of Athanasius’s pneumatology when he wrote the *Orations*.

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<sup>80</sup> On the chain of union and the united soteriological pattern that Athanasius develops in the *Orations*, see below, pp. 286–311.

From these investigations, we will see that Athanasius does, in fact, seem to have consciously believed that the Holy Spirit is eternal, uncreated, united to the Son, and worthy of worship. Further, we will see that the *Orations* contain Athanasius's most advanced account of the Spirit's roles in salvation, which is a Trinitarian activity. By these views becoming tenets of Athanasius's thought in the *Orations*, Athanasius's early pneumatology was logically only a few steps away from the conclusions he reached in *Serapion*, although it took the provocation of the "Tropikoi," who directly challenged him on the Spirit's nature, for Athanasius to make these steps.<sup>81</sup>

With this overarching argument outlined, we will now return to the *Orations*, where I will attempt to show that the implications we just noted are, in fact, tenets of Athanasius's thought. The best evidence can be found in Athanasius's vision of salvation as adoption and deification through union with the Son. We will discuss this vision and its pneumatological significance in the next three chapters.

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<sup>81</sup> For a table summarizing the development of these views, see Appendix B.

## Essential for Salvation: Psalm 45:7 and Christ's Reception of the Holy Spirit

### Introduction

As the previous chapter argued, Athanasius's depiction of the Trinitarian "blasphemies" of "Arianism" and Athanasius's polemical Trinitarian arguments in the *Orationes* have considerable implications for the subject of the Holy Spirit. They imply that the Holy Spirit is divine, uncreated, eternal, united to the Son, and worthy of worship. These implications, combined with the assumption that the Holy Spirit is essential for salvation, appear to have provided the pneumatological foundation for the theology that Athanasius develops in *Serapion*.

However, it must be acknowledged that these implications were observed in material in the *Orationes* that focuses on questions about the nature of the Son and about the Son's relationship to the Father. Given this focus, along with the fact that theologians are not always self-consistent or aware of the broader implications of their views, it is possible that Athanasius may have not recognized or endorsed these inherent implications about the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in order to show more clearly that Athanasius did, in fact, consciously hold these views, we will examine the pneumatological content of the *Orationes* in more detail.

This chapter begins an argument focused on the *Orationes* that develops over the next three chapters. The overarching argument's central claim is that part of the soteriology that Athanasius develops in the *Orationes* demonstrates that Athanasius does, in fact, hold four of the five

pneumatological points noted above. This means that, in the *Orations*, Athanasius believes the Holy Spirit is eternal, uncreated, always in union with the Son, and worthy to be praised by creatures. The core of this argument depends on understanding how Athanasius connects the Spirit to salvation.

Chapter 5 starts by briefly outlining this aspect of Athanasius's vision of salvation, which provides background necessary for my larger argument. This overview occurs in section 1, where we will see that Athanasius credits the Holy Spirit with joining humans to the Son. The Son, in turn, gives humans a share in his divinity and filial relationship with the Father, making humans "children of God" and even "gods" by grace. According to Athanasius, this union with the Son through the Holy Spirit was made possible by Jesus's baptism. Here, Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, received the Holy Spirit into his humanity during his baptismal anointing.

The pneumatological significance of this soteriology only becomes apparent when its underlying logic is understood. This logic tells us how Athanasius understands the Holy Spirit in relation to creatures and to the Father and Son. Therefore, sections 2 through 4 begin to develop my larger argument by uncovering this logic. These sections explore the interpretive tradition and logic behind Athanasius's understanding of Jesus's anointing with the Holy Spirit, which made it possible for Christians to receive union with Christ through the Spirit. In the process of uncovering the logic behind this aspect of Athanasius's soteriology, these sections also show that the Holy Spirit is essential for salvation, which confirms my earlier claim that this is a tenet of Athanasius's early pneumatology.

### 1. Salvation as Union

In the *Orations*, the subject of salvation first arises in *Orations* 1.6, as part of Athanasius’s summary of the blasphemies of “Arianism.” In the last chapter we looked at the last half of *Orations* 1.6, noting the portion of it that relates to the Trinity and comparing this with the blasphemies list in *Henos Somatos*. There, however, I intentionally omitted the first part of *Orations* 1.6, which relates to salvation, because it is more applicable to this stage of our study. The relevant portion reads:

[Arius] has dared to say, that “the Word is not the very God;” “though he is called God, yet he is not very God,” but “by participation of grace, he, as others, is God only in name.” And, whereas all beings are foreign and different from God in essence, so too is “the Word alien and unlike in all things to the Father’s essence and propriety,” but belongs to things originated and created, and is one of these.

(*Orations* 1.6)

Just a few sections later, in *Orations* 1.9, Athanasius contrasts this “Arian” view with Athanasius’s own understanding of the Son’s identity.

Athanasius writes about the Son:

He is very God, existing one in essence with the very Father; while other beings, to whom he said, “I said you are Gods,” (Ps. 82:6), had this grace from the Father, only by participation in the Word, through the Spirit.

(*Orations* 1.9 TM)

Despite their very different Christologies, both texts teach that human beings have the potential to be deified by grace.<sup>1</sup> In *Orations* 1.6,

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted, however, that Athanasius and Arius disagreed on why this deification is possible. Although Robert C. Gregg and Dennis Groh’s monograph, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), with its reassessment of the nature of early “Arianism,” has been criticized for overstating its claim that Arius’s theology was largely driven by his particular view of salvation, the monograph highlights the basic soteriological starting

Athanasius alleges that Arius believes the Son's sonship and divinity is due to deifying participation—which means that the Son is essentially no different than any other creatures that are glorified in this manner through grace. In *Orations* 1.9, Athanasius specifically rejects this notion, arguing that the Son is Son and God by nature, which is very different than creatures that are deified by grace (while remaining creatures by nature). Athanasius's statement also adds an important detail to this vision of salvation. Creatures are deified “only by participation in the Word, through the Spirit.” We will investigate how Athanasius understands deifying participation in the Son and the Spirit in Chapter 6. For now, however, it is only necessary for us to grasp the bigger picture: deification occurs through human beings receiving a special relationship of participation in the Son and Holy Spirit.

This vision of salvation raises an important question about how salvation is attained. Specifically, how do creatures acquire this special relationship to the Son and the Holy Spirit?

Athanasius provides part of the answer to this question in *Orations* 1.46–52, while countering an “Arian” interpretation of Ps. 45:7, which took the verse as further proof that the Son was promoted, deified, and adopted through participation. Here, Athanasius reveals that creatures can

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points assumed by Arius and Athanasius. For Arius, it seems, salvation required an exemplar to demonstrate the way of salvation, which primarily requires obedience. For Athanasius, on the other hand, salvation required human beings to be saved from death and sin, which had become internal within human beings. This salvation was only possible through the Word of God assuming a human body, so he might defeat sin and death, and secure the hope of salvation. See *ibid.*, especially 58–69. In terms of the monograph's larger argument about the nature of Arianism, see the criticisms in Hanson, *The Search*, 96–98, and Anatolios, *Coherence*, 170–180. Anatolios concludes: “It might well be that Gregg and Groh have developed a soteriology that is logically consistent with Arian doctrine and that would be agreeable to some “Arians” if they were presented with it, but there is no evidence that the Arians themselves espoused such a soteriology” (173).

receive this special relationship to the Word and the Spirit because of Jesus's baptism. When Jesus was baptized, he gave the Holy Spirit to his humanity. This has made it possible for other human beings to subsequently receive the presence of the Holy Spirit—which, as we will see in Chapter 7, is synonymous with participation in the Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

Athanasius's remarks about Jesus's baptismal reception of the Holy Spirit are complex but crucial for understanding his vision of salvation and the underlying principles that bear upon his doctrine of the Spirit. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter carefully presents and analyzes Athanasius's statements in *Orations* 1.46–52 about Christ's reception of the Holy Spirit within their literary context, which, as noted, focuses on the interpretation of Ps. 45:7, which reads: “You have loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore God, even your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows.”

Athanasius's engagement with Ps. 45:7 follows a discussion of Phil. 2:9–10, “Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.” Both texts appear to have been used by Arius and others to show that the Son was promoted to “Son” and “God” rather than eternally existing as genuine Son and God by nature. One of the problems that Athanasius sees with this “Arian” reading is that it makes the Son mutable, which has major implications for salvation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 292–295. The synonymy also occurs in Origen; see above, p. 89

<sup>3</sup> On the “Arian” use of Ps. 45 to show the Son's alterability and progress, see Gregg and Groh, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation*, 14–20, 56–57. Gregg and Groh propose that Arius was influenced by Stoic ethical theories that connected “willing” (βούλησις) with indifference (ἀπάθεια). Whether or not this is indeed the background behind Arius's conception of the Son's alterability, Gregg and Groh's judgment is surely correct that when Arius and supporters “said Jesus was changeable, they meant improvable” (18). See also *ibid.*, 1–30.

Athanasius counters the “Arian” Scriptural arguments with his own interpretation of the verses. While doing so, Athanasius makes the same principal argument throughout *Orations* 1.37–52, namely that the Son took on these experiences for the sake of human beings. In *Orations* 1.38–45 Athanasius focuses on the account of Jesus’s exaltation in Phil. 2:9–10. Athanasius disagrees with the interpretation that Jesus’s exaltation shows Jesus was promoted because of his faithfulness to the Father. For Athanasius, such a reading implies that Jesus was at some point imperfect. Athanasius argues instead that Jesus, being the incarnate Son and himself “God,” never lacked anything. Further, Jesus’s anointing, death, resurrection, and exaltation were not for his own promotion but for the promotion of human beings. Athanasius focuses on Ps. 45:7, which he says the “Arians” use as further evidence of Christ’s alterable nature and promotion. Against their reading of Ps. 45:7, Athanasius argues that because the Son is God,<sup>4</sup> and therefore complete, the Son’s exaltation was not for his own benefit but for the benefit of the human race.

## 2. History of Interpretation of Psalm 45:7

Before exploring Athanasius’s treatment of Ps. 45:7, it will be beneficial to look at the interpretive traditions that preceded it. This background will help us appreciate the uniqueness of Athanasius’s interpretation, which places new emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in the anointing of Christ and his followers.

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<sup>4</sup> On the Son’s divinity, see especially *Orations* 1.39: “Therefore He was not man, and then became God, but He was God, and then became man, and that to deify us” (Ὁὐκ ἄρα ἄνθρωπος ὦν, ὕστερον γέγονε Θεός· ἀλλὰ Θεὸς ὦν, ὕστερον γέγονεν ἄνθρωπος, ἵνα μᾶλλον ἡμᾶς θεοποιήσῃ).

*The Book of Hebrews*

Most extant Christian interpretations of Ps. 45:7 (44:8 LXX) before *Orations* 1 interpret the verse as a reference to Christ's rank.<sup>5</sup> The earliest interpretation identifies the verse as a prophetic witness to Christ's rank above the angels (Heb. 1:8–9). According to the author of Hebrews, the Son is superior to the angels because God, speaking through the prophets, describes the angels as created servants but the Son as a "God" above the angels. The author of Hebrews writes:

Of the angels he [God] says, "He makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire." But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."  
(Heb. 1:7–9)

In this interpretation, the Son, who is anointed because of his love of righteousness, is contrasted with angels and other servants of God, who are simply creatures made by God. This interpretation, with its contrast between Christ and other creatures, guided subsequent interpreters, including Irenaeus of Lyons.

*Irenaeus*

Irenaeus's interpretation is relevant to our study because it links the Holy Spirit with Christ's anointing. Irenaeus interprets the "oil of gladness" as a reference to the Holy Spirit, which begins a tradition that will be continued by Eusebius and Athanasius. While discussing how the

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<sup>5</sup> Psalm 45:7 is also occasionally used to help show that Jesus is the Christ ("anointed one"). Lactantius, *inst.* 4.13. Cf. *Apostolic Constitutions*, 5.20.

Scriptures show that “the Father is God and the Son is God” Irenaeus writes:

David speaks about the Father and Son in this way, “Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever. You have loved righteousness <and> hated iniquity; therefore God [has] anointed you with the oil of gladness about your fellows,” for the Son, as he is God, receives from the Father, that <is>, from God, the throne of the everlasting kingdom, and the oil of anointing above his fellows; and the “oil of anointing” is the Spirit by whom he is the Anointed, and his “fellows” are the prophets and righteous and apostles and all who receive participation in his Kingdom, that is, his disciples.

(*Prf.* 47)

Here, Irenaeus presents the verse as a prophecy about the pre-established divinity of Jesus, whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit. It is important to notice that Irenaeus does not attribute the Son’s divinity to this anointing. Instead, Irenaeus links the Son’s divinity to his being begotten of the Father. Just before the quotation above, Irenaeus writes: “Therefore, the Father is Lord and the Son is Lord, and the Father is God and the Son is God, since he who is born of God is God” (*Prf.* 47). For Irenaeus, God anointed and enthroned the Son because of who the Son already was—namely, “God.”

Irenaeus’s interpretation also has soteriological implications. Although Christ is superior to his “fellows,” Irenaeus implies that human beings can become these “fellows” through faith. In this manner, Christ is contrasted with his “fellows,” whom he is superior to. These “fellows,” however, having “participation in his Kingdom,” are contrasted with (and superior to) the rest of the human race.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> These “fellows” appear to be superior to other humans in the sense that they get to participate in the divine nature and in Christ’s kingdom—their own human nature does not become superior to that of other humans. As Norman Russell notes, Irenaeus believes creatures always possess deifying immortality as a gift from God rather than as something that belongs to their nature (Russell,

Irenaeus's identification of the "oil of gladness" as the Holy Spirit is important for study because it becomes common practice by the fourth century. It occurs in works by Ambrose,<sup>7</sup> Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem,<sup>8</sup> and Eusebius of Caesarea, who were likely influenced by the pre-fourth-century tradition of associating the unguent used in baptism with the Holy Spirit, which can be seen not only in Irenaeus but also Ignatius,<sup>9</sup> Novatian,<sup>10</sup> and liturgical texts such as the *Didascalia* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*.<sup>11</sup>

### *Origen*

Origen built on the early tradition of associating the verse with Christ's rank.<sup>12</sup> He saw the verse as a prophetic justification for Christ's divine status. In *princ.*, he explains that Jesus's pre-incarnate soul was united to the Word of God because of its unalterable dedication to righteousness. Origen uses Ps. 45:7 to illustrate this promotion.

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*Deification*, 110; see also Blackwell, *Christosis*, 54).

<sup>7</sup> Ambrose, *Spir.* 1.100–103.

<sup>8</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *catech.* 21.3.

<sup>9</sup> Ignatius of Antioch writes: Jesus "accepted the ointment upon his head for this reason: that he might breathe incorruptibility upon the church" (*Eph.* 17). This is a reference to John 20:22, where Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on his disciples. Thus in this text Ignatius associates the unguent with the Holy Spirit.

<sup>10</sup> See Novatian *Trin.* 29. He speaks of Christ as the source of the Holy Spirit, who remains in Christ upon baptism. The Spirit supplies various graces and makes baptism effective for rebirth.

<sup>11</sup> On the Spirit as unguent in *Didascalia*, the *Apostolic Constitutions*, and Scripture, see Alexis James Doval, *Cyril of Jerusalem, Mystagogue: The Authorship of the Mystagogic Catecheses* (Washington, D.C.: North American Patristic Society, 2002), 113–115.

<sup>12</sup> Origen uses Ps. 45:7 to explain Christ's unique relationship to God the Father. Christ, having been anointed by God, is given the title of "God" from God the Father (*Cels.* 1.56). Origen also uses Ps. 45:7 briefly in *Jo.* 1.42 as proof that Christ is the Word, distinct from the Father.

It was on this account also that the man became Christ, for he obtained this lot by reason of his goodness, as the prophet bears witness when he says, “Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; wherefore God hath anointed thee, thy God with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Ps. 45:7). It was appropriate that he who had never been separated from the Only-begotten should be called by the name of Only-begotten and glorified together with him.  
(*princ.* 2.6.4 Greek)

The remainder of Origen’s argument only exists in Rufinus’s Latin translation. Rufinus’s translation briefly identifies the oil of gladness as the Holy Spirit, but this identification plays no part in the larger argument, which goes on to describe in more detail how the oil of gladness is the Word of God. According to this description, the relationship between the Word of God and the soul of Jesus is like anointing oil that is stored in a vase. Further, the relationship between Jesus’s possession of the oil and that of subsequent souls is like comparing the fragrant oil-filled vase to a person who has “run through” the fragrance. The soul of Jesus fully received the Word of God, which is why it ranks above all other souls.

The reliability of Rufinus’s translations remains the subject of debate,<sup>13</sup> but the fact that the text essentially glosses over the notion of the oil tells us something of the Greek original. It suggests that in the Greek original, Origen likely did not place much emphasis on the oil being the Holy Spirit (if, on this occasion, he expressed the connection at all).<sup>14</sup> Whether the reference to the Holy Spirit in *princ.* is authentic or not, the main point of Origen’s interpretation clearly focuses on the effect

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<sup>13</sup> On the reliability of Rufinus as a translator of Origen, see above, p. 81n24.

<sup>14</sup> This is supported by the fact that the extant Greek manuscripts of Origen’s works never connect the Holy Spirit with the verse. (Based on my consultation of TLG, Origen, *Cels.*, *comm. in Eph.*, *Jo.*, *Or.*, *princ.*) However, the Holy Spirit is identified as the oil of gladness in *Cant.* 1.3. (translated by Rufinus) and *Hom. 1 in Cant 2* (translated by Jerome).

of Christ's anointing: Jesus's soul alone received the fullness of the Word before the creation of the world, which ranks him above all other created beings.<sup>15</sup>

Origen presents a similar interpretation of Ps. 45:7 in *Cels.* Here, Jesus reigns above creation because he was anointed with God's "divine Spirit" (θείου πνεύματος) (*Cels.* 6.78–9). Origen is not clear about what exactly the "divine Spirit" refers to. Although it could refer to the Holy Spirit, in this context, with its emphasis on the role this "divine Spirit" plays in elevating Jesus above creation, it seems more likely that the "divine Spirit" refers to some aspect of the Father's own divine being.

In both treatises, Origen also indicates the implications of this anointing for human beings. In *princ.* he asserts that if human beings draw near to Christ by faith, then they can become fellows of Christ and participants (*participes*) in part of Christ's divine unction. In *Cels.*, Christians, being "fellows" / "partakers" (μέτοχοι) of Christ, possess a limited share in the "divine Spirit." This share in the spirit grants them a share in the divine nature, but it also safeguards Jesus's unique rank because Jesus alone was anointed with the complete "oil of gladness" (divine Spirit), and therefore Jesus remains anointed above his fellow "christs" (*Cels.* 6.79).

It is important to note three points concerning Origen's interpretation of Ps. 45:7. First, Origen interprets the verse as an explanation for Christ's rank. Second, Origen teaches that Christ was anointed with the full "oil of gladness" (which, in *princ.* is the Word of God) and that Christians can become limited partakers (μέτοχοι / *participes*) of the same anointing (*Cels.* 6.79.25; *princ.* 2.6.6). Third, in *Cels.*, Origen identifies Christ's unction with the "divine Spirit," which Origen seems to distinguish from the Holy Spirit. This last point is especially relevant to our study because it marks a key difference between the

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<sup>15</sup> *Princ.* 2.6.4–6, 4.4.4; *fr. princ.* 20; *Cels.* 1.56, 6.79.

pneumatologies of Athanasius and Eusebius of Caesarea, whom we will discuss after we see how Origen's views on Ps. 45:7 influenced earlier fourth-century writers.

*Arius, Achilles, and Alexander*

In the fourth century, Origen's approach to Ps. 45:7 is continued by Arius and Achilles, who apply it within their own theological framework. Like Origen, these writers view the verse as an explanation of Jesus's divine status. However, the logic behind their interpretation differs significantly from Origen's, which leads to two Christologies that, when read within their respective historical theological contexts, are significantly different from one another.

As we noted, Origen's interpretation teaches that Jesus's pre-existent soul was anointed with the full oil of gladness (the Word of God or the divine Spirit) before the creation of the physical world, which raised it above all other souls. Origen introduced this interpretation in order to indicate and argue for Jesus's divine rank against pagan objectors—not to discuss in fourth-century categories the question of whether Jesus has a “beginning.” His interpretation assumes the pre-existence of souls and the eternity of the Word, and it teaches that the union between Jesus's soul and God's Word occurred before the creation of the world. However, it leaves the question of Jesus's eternity open—at least to fourth-century readers.

When readers such as Arius and Achilles stripped Origen's interpretation of its double cosmology and theoretical distinction between Jesus and the Word,<sup>16</sup> they were left with an interpretation that suggested, at least according to their categories, that Jesus was originate rather than always divine, and that he shared in the Father's divinity only

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<sup>16</sup> See *princ.* 2.63–4; Charles Kannengiesser, “Christology,” in *The SCM Press A-Z of Origen*, ed. John McGuckin (London: SCM Press, 2006), 76–78.

by means of his anointing with the “divine Spirit.”

Alexander of Alexandria provides us with an account of how Arius and Achilles used Ps. 45:7 to support their larger polemical argument about the question of the Son’s eternality. In the letter to his namesake in Byzantium, abbreviated as *ep. Alex.*, Alexander accuses Arius and Achilles of teaching that human beings can become divine in the same degree and manner as Christ (*ep. Alex.* 11–14). Alexander identifies Ps. 45:7 as one of their proof texts for this perspective. They interpreted the verse as an indication that God adopted Jesus because he foreknew that Jesus, though mutable by nature, would never commit evil. As we will see in *Orations* 1.37, Athanasius also attributes this view to Eusebius of Nicomedia.

Alexander rejects this perspective because he believes that it denies the natural and eternal divinity of the Son. In the letter, Alexander insists that the fatherhood of God requires the eternality of the Son, that the Son is therefore son of God by nature, that humans can only become sons by adoption rather than by nature, and that the Son’s sonship is therefore infinitely above that of Christians (*ep. Alex.* 26–34). Although Alexander does not offer his own interpretation of Ps. 45:7, he does advocate two Christological perspectives that Athanasius would later affirm in his interpretation of Ps. 45:7: Jesus naturally possesses his divine rank and sonship; natural sonship, which refers to Christ who is a son by nature, is to be distinguished from adoptive sonship, which refers to human beings who are called children of God but remain creatures by nature.

#### *Eusebius of Caesarea*

Eusebius of Caesarea revises and recontextualizes Origen’s approach. Like Origen, Eusebius interprets the verse as an explanation of Christ’s rank. Accordingly, Christ is the first and only person to have been anointed with the fullness of the “oil of gladness.” Eusebius also identifies the “oil of gladness” with the impersonal divine power of the Father’s spirit.

However, Eusebius's interpretation, which occurs in the *Demonstration of the Gospel*, abandons Origen's presupposition about the pre-existence of souls. Instead, Eusebius replaces the pre-existence of souls with apophatic ambiguity about the Son's generation, frequently asking "Who shall declare his generation?" (Is. 53:8).<sup>17</sup> Eusebius will only say that Christ has always been anointed (*d.e.* 4.16), which he qualifies by noting that the Son does not co-exist with the Father (*d.e.* 5.1). Eusebius also avoids Origen's ambiguity concerning the spirit and the Word by focusing on Origen's main point: Jesus received the divine Spirit, which brought him participation in the Father's divinity. In *d.e.* Eusebius writes:

It is thus the power of this Being, the all strong, the all-good, the source of all beauty in the highest unbegotten Godhead (θεότητος), the divine Spirit (τὸ θεῖον πνεῦμα) (which by the use of a proper and natural analogy) it calls the (Oil of God), and therefore it calls one who partakes of it Christ and Anointed.... Therefore the prophetic word by this analogy referring to the highest power of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, calls him the Christ and the Anointed, Who is the first and only one to be anointed with this oil in its fullness, and is the sharer of the Father's divine fragrance communicable to none other, and is God the Word sole-begotten of him, and is declared to be God of God by his communion with the Unbegotten that begat him, both the First and the Greater. (*d.e.* 4.15).

Following Origen, Eusebius interprets the unction as a symbol of the divine Spirit that gives Christ his divine rank. By receiving this spirit, Christ shares in the Father's divinity (Cf. *b.e.* 1.3.13–15; *d.e.* 4.15) and is ranked as "God." The fullness of this anointing makes Christ "God from God" (θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ) (*d.e.* 4.15), which indicates his unique status. For

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<sup>17</sup> Hanson, *The Search*, 50–52, rightly highlights Eusebius's apophaticism concerning the generation of the Son. For Eusebius, the most we can say is that the Son's generation is "after" the Father, who is unoriginate, but "before" all ages.

Eusebius, Christ's divinity derives from the Father, and this fact places Christ in a unique, mediating position. On account of his anointing, Christ simultaneously ranks above the rest of creation and below the Father, who is supreme God and far above Christ (*d.e.* 4.15).

Like Origen, Eusebius also believes Ps. 45:7 reveals the relationship between Christ and subsequent "christs." Christ remains unique and "above his fellows" because he alone was anointed by the Creator of the universe and received the fullness of the unction. However, those who believe in Christ are also rightly called "christs" because they partially bear the divine Spirit and participate in Christ (*d.e.* 4.15, 5.2).

Further, Eusebius also repeats Origen's vague identification of the anointing "oil of gladness" as the "divine spirit" (τὸ θεῖον πνεῦμα). Indeed, it is important to note that Eusebius seldom speaks of the Holy Spirit, especially in *d.e.*<sup>18</sup> Instead, Eusebius primarily refers to "the spirit" (τὸ πνεῦμα), "the divine Spirit" (τὸ θεῖον πνεῦμα), and "the Spirit of God" (τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ). Though his language is inconsistent and ambiguous, he seems to use "divine Spirit" / "spirit of God" in a similar manner as Origen, namely, as a reference to some aspect of the Father's divine being or power,<sup>19</sup> although some interpreters assume this language is

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<sup>18</sup> The main points of Eusebius's doctrine of the Holy Spirit can be summarized as follows. The Holy Spirit is a distinct personal agent (*ep. Caes.* 5), who ranks below the Father and Son but above creation (*p.e.* 7.15, 11.20; *e. th.* 3.6), who receives what he has from the Father and the Son (*p.e.* 7.15), and who mediates the presence and powers of God to humanity (*e. th.* 7.15). These aspects of Eusebius's pneumatology are relatively well documented. See, for example, Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, trans. John Bowden, 2nd ed. (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1975), 170–73; Hanson, *The Search*, 52, 55–56; Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 66–67.

<sup>19</sup> Jon M. Robertson and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz also interpret this ambiguity about the "divine Spirit" in the same manner. Robertson writes: "Here [*d.e.* 4.15] Eusebius seems to refer to the Spirit as merely the impersonal divine power" (*Christ as Mediator*, 52n49). Similarly, Radde-Gallwitz observes: "In this dense discussion [*d.e.* 4.15], Eusebius mentions the Spirit a number of times, but he

synonymous with the Holy Spirit.<sup>20</sup> However, in *d.e.* 4.15, Eusebius provides us with evidence that he, like Origen, understands the “divine Spirit” to be a reference to something of the Father’s divine being or power. While discussing the typological meaning of Christ’s anointing with this oil, Eusebius explains that the oil represents the divine power of the Father. Eusebius writes:

[This oil typifies] the only good and only truly sweet and noble, the cause of all life, and the gift bestowed on all in their being and their well-being, that this One Being was believed by the Hebrew reason to be the first cause of all, and Itself the highest and the All-Ruling and the All-Creating God. It [the oil] is thus the power of this Being, the all strong, the all-good, the source of all beauty in the highest unbegotten Godhead, the Divine Spirit (which by the use of a proper and natural analogy) it calls the (Oil of God), and therefore it calls one who partakes of it Christ and Anointed.... The prophet teaches that the Christ has been anointed not with a prepared unguent, but with the spiritual and divine anointing of his Father’s Divinity, conferred not by man but by the Father.... As he says further on, “Therefore God, even your God, anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows” (Ps. 45:7). And by what name else could one call Him that is here acknowledged to have been anointed by the Supreme God Himself, but Christ? So we have here in this passage two names of the subject of the prophecy, Christ and the Beloved, the author of this anointing being one and the same: and it shews the reason why He is said to be anointed with the oil of gladness, which will be plain to you, when we proceed a little further... so that the Anointer, being the Supreme God, is far above the Anointed, He being God in a different sense.

(*d.e.* 4.15)

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appears to be simply equating the Spirit with the simple unbegotten divinity” (“Gregory of Nyssa’s Pneumatology in Context: The Spirit as Anointing and the History of the Trinitarian Controversies,” *J ECS* 19, no. 2 (2011): 265–66).

<sup>20</sup>W. J. Ferrar’s translation of *d.e.* hides the frequency of τὸ θεῖον πνεῦμα / πνεῦμα θεῖον and τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ by frequently translating these as “the Holy Spirit.” John K. Mackett, “Eusebius of Caesarea’s Theology of the Holy Spirit” (PhD diss., Marquette University, 1990), 199–200, assumes the divine Spirit in *d.e.* 4.15 is the Holy Spirit.

From this, we can see that Eusebius follows Origen in identifying the oil of gladness with the Father's divine being or power rather than with the Holy Spirit. The pre-incarnate Son owes his rank to this anointing, which makes him "Christ," the anointed one.

Although Eusebius's focus is on his Christological point, Eusebius also writes about the saints receiving this anointing:

David in Ps. 104 [LXX] when touching the stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the very men who were his godly ancestors, who lived before Moses' day, calls them Christs, for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, in which they shared, and for that alone.... You see from these instances how David... called the godly men of old and the prophets Christs, though they were not anointed with the earthly unguent. For how could they have been, since it was in after years that Moses commanded the unction of the High Priest?... So far, then, we have learned that they who are called "Christs" in the highest sense of the term are anointed by God, not by men, and with the divine spirit (πνεύματι θείῳ), not with a prepared unguent. (d.e. 4.15 TM)<sup>21</sup>

Again like Origen, Eusebius believes that humans can receive a share in this anointing with the "divine Spirit." When the Scriptures speak of Old Testament figures who existed before the Mosaic law as "anointed ones," the Scriptures are describing persons who had been anointed with this "divine Spirit," which makes them and subsequent Christians "christs" or types that point to Christ.

### 3. Athanasius on Psalm 45:7

With this historical background in place, we turn to Athanasius's discussion of Ps. 45:7 in *Orations* 1. Here, Athanasius describes Arius's interpretation of Ps. 45:7, which he also attributes to Eusebius of Nicomedia. Athanasius also modifies this interpretation, which, as we saw, was originally adapted from Origen. Athanasius modifies it in such a way

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<sup>21</sup> Ferrar translates πνεύματι θείῳ as "Holy Spirit."

that he can remain at least partially in continuity with the Origenian interpretive tradition of Ps. 45:7 while also avoiding any hint that the Son owes his divine identity to promotion.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, as we will see, Athanasius teaches, *pace* Eusebius of Caesarea, that Christ and Christians are anointed with the same unction. This “oil of gladness” is unequivocally identified as the Holy Spirit.

As Athanasius develops his interpretation of Ps. 45:7, part of the logic behind Athanasius’s vision of salvation as deifying union with Christ through participation in the Holy Spirit begins to emerge. Athanasius’s interpretation provides key insights into how Christ’s reception of the Holy Spirit benefits other human beings and makes this deifying union possible. These details, however, are complex, and they cannot be grasped apart from their contexts. Therefore, in this section we will trace Athanasius’s arguments particularly closely.

Following the interpretive tradition begun with Heb. 1:8–9, Athanasius and his opponents identify the person of Ps. 45:7 as Jesus, the Saviour. Jesus is the one who was anointed by God with “the oil of gladness,” which raised him above his “fellows.” Athanasius portrays the “Arian” interpretation of this verse, as with Phil. 2:9, as teaching a form of deification in which Jesus receives his Biblical divine titles on account of God’s grace. The problem with such an interpretation, in Athanasius’s mind, is that it denies the Son’s immutability and eternal status as the proper Son of God.

In Athanasius’s account, the “Arian” interpretation is supported by three textual arguments. First, Arius and Eusebius (of Nicomedia) allegedly see the use of *διὰ* in Ps. 45:7 as evidence that Jesus received these

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<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that although Athanasius rejects aspects of Origen’s thought, Athanasius respects (and remains indebted to) the “labour-loving Origen” (*Decrees* 27). In Krastu Banev’s assessment, this description “discloses Athanasius’ admiration for the *magister* and makes it clear that for him that name remained still free from any taint of heresy” (Banev, *Theophilus of Alexandria*, 12).

titles as a reward for his actions, which would mean that he experienced change (*Orations* 1.37). Second, they build on this, arguing that Jesus must have done these actions intentionally, which would indicate that he is “altogether of an alterable nature” (τρεπτήs ἐστι πάντως φύσεως).<sup>23</sup> Third, the phrase, “you have loved righteousness and hated iniquity” (Ps. 45:7) includes verbs of passion, which may indicate that the Word experienced emotions, further confirming that he is of an alterable nature.<sup>24</sup>

In *Orations* 1.37, Athanasius begins his response to the “Arian” interpretations of Phil. 2:9 and Ps. 45:7 by focusing on the question of Christ’s sonship. In the process of arguing for the legitimacy of this sonship, Athanasius establishes a sharp dichotomy between what we can describe as natural sonship and adoptive sonship (in relation to God as Father). Athanasius assumes this dichotomy multiple times in the *Orations* and *Serapion*, frequently in contexts that include the Spirit, making it an important subject for our study.<sup>25</sup>

In *Orations* 1.37, Athanasius uses this dichotomy to support his argument against the “Arian” reading. Athanasius argues that if, as the “Arian” interpretations maintain, the Son received his sonship and divinity as a reward for his works, then his sonship and divinity is nominal

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<sup>23</sup> *Orations* 1:37: “[They say] ‘If He was exalted and received grace, on a “wherefore,” and on a “wherefore” He was anointed, He received a reward of His purpose; but having acted from purpose, He is altogether of an alterable nature.’ That is what Eusebius and Arius have dared to say, nay to write.”

<sup>24</sup> *Orations* 1:51: “Nor do the words, ‘You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity,’ which are added in the Psalm, show, as again you suppose, that the Nature of the Word is alterable (τρεπτήν), but rather by their very force signify His unalterableness (ἄτρεπτον).”

<sup>25</sup> We will return to this dichotomy when we explore *Orations* 2.59. Origen appears to have been particularly influential in developing this distinction between being a child of God by adoption through grace rather than by nature. See Russell, *Deification*, 151–153. This distinction also occurs in Irenaeus’s theology. See, for example, the discussion of *haer.* 3.6.1 in Blackwell, *Christosis*, 44–45.

rather than essential. Athanasius contrasts this kind of sonship with natural sonship, which is sonship that comes through being begotten by another person of the same nature. Such a being is a “true offspring” (ἀληθινόν ἐστι γέννημα), just as Isaac was to Abraham. On the other hand, an individual can also become a child of another person or being through adoption. In this case, the nature of the individual is not affected by its adopted parent’s nature. The individual becomes a child in name as a result of this gift of adoption, but the adopted person’s nature remains unchanged. About this, Athanasius writes:

For what is from another by nature, is a real offspring, as Isaac was to Abraham, and Joseph to Jacob, and the radiance to the sun; but the so-called sons from virtue and grace, have but in place of nature a grace by acquisition and are something else besides the gift itself; as the men who have received the Spirit by participation.  
(*Orations* 1.37)

Athanasius finds this distinction between natural and adoptive sonship useful because it allows him to contrast his understanding of the Son’s filial relation with the view that he attributes to the “Arians.” As a result of this contrast, Athanasius presents the “Arians” as once again teaching that the Son is a creature in the same manner as all other creatures, while he presents his view as maintaining the Son’s essential divinity and sonship.

Beginning in *Orations* 1.46, Athanasius focuses entirely on the interpretation of Ps. 45:7. Athanasius rejects the view held by Origen, Arius, Achilles, and Eusebius of Caesarea that Ps. 45:7 prophetically describes the cause of Christ’s divine status. Athanasius insists that Jesus, the incarnate Word, is eternally God and King; therefore, Jesus had no need for promotion or deification. Athanasius writes:

He is here “anointed,” not that he may become God (οὐχ ἵνα Θεὸς γένηται) for he was so even before; nor that he may become King, for he had the Kingdom eternally, existing as God’s Image, as the sacred Oracle shows... (*Orations* 1.46)

Unlike Origen and Eusebius, Athanasius locates Christ’s anointing in time and space: Jesus was anointed in the Jordan, during his incarnate ministry (*Orations* 1.46). This reinforces Athanasius’s belief that Christ’s rank preceded his anointing. Athanasius argues that Christ, being eternal and divine, did not himself need this anointing. Therefore, in Ps. 45:7, the phrase “your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows” means that Christ was anointed for the benefit of his “fellows” or “partakers” (μέτοχοι).<sup>26</sup> By doing this, Athanasius adapts the interpretive tradition of his predecessors. He insists that it was Christ’s humanity that was anointed, and that Christ received this anointing in order to make it possible for other human beings to be saved.

As Athanasius continues his detailed interpretation of Ps. 45:7 in *Orations* 1.46, he expands on his basic argument that Christ was anointed “for our sakes” by describing how the anointing benefitted human beings. In doing so, Athanasius develops a complex account of the relationship between the Holy Spirit, the Son as the giver of the Spirit, the Son’s humanity as the recipient of the anointing with the Spirit, and other human beings. Athanasius writes:

[The Son] being God, and ever ruling in the Father’s Kingdom, and being himself he that supplies the Holy Ghost, nevertheless is here said to be anointed, that, as before, being said as man to be anointed with the Spirit, he

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<sup>26</sup>The appearance of μέτοχοι in association with Christ’s anointing did not escape Athanasius’s notice. He understands this as a reference to Christians, who receive a participation in the Son through participation in the Holy Spirit—all made possible by Christ’s anointing. We will look at the subject of participation in Chapters 6 and 7.

might provide for us men, not only exaltation and resurrection, but the indwelling and intimacy of the Spirit.<sup>27</sup>

(*Orations* 1.46.)

In the text above we can already see these complexities emerging. Athanasius says that the Son was anointed so “he might provide for us men... the indwelling and intimacy of the Spirit,” but he does not explain how the Son’s anointing accomplishes this.

Athanasius’s next remarks are intended to provide insight into this matter of how the Son’s anointing benefits human beings, but they initially bring further complexity. He continues:

And signifying this the Lord himself has said by his own mouth in the Gospel according to John, “I have sent them into the world, and for their sakes do I sanctify myself, that they may be sanctified in the truth.” In saying this he has shown that he is not the sanctified, but the Sanctifier; for he is not sanctified by other, but himself sanctifies himself, that we may be sanctified in the truth. He who sanctifies himself is Lord of sanctification. How then does this take place? What does he mean but this? “I, being the Father’s Word, I give to myself, when becoming man, the Spirit; and myself, become man, do I sanctify in him, that henceforth in me, who am Truth (for your Word is Truth), all may be sanctified.”

(*Orations* 1.46)

Rather than providing a clear answer to our question of how humans are helped by the Christ’s anointing, Athanasius instead introduces the subject of sanctification while carefully safeguarding the Son’s

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<sup>27</sup> Throughout his interpretation of Ps. 45:7, Athanasius vigilantly defends the Son’s immutability, consistently arguing that the Son was not altered by his anointing. Consequently, as Athanasius explains how the Son’s anointing benefited humankind, he is careful to include details that support the Son’s divinity and immutability. In the text above, we can see this in Athanasius’s statement about the Son as the giver of the Spirit. If the Son is “himself He that supplies the Holy Ghost” then it would be absurd to think that the Son himself is promoted by this Spirit.

immutability. The Son, Athanasius says, is “the Lord of sanctification” or the one who bestows sanctification. In contrast, the Son’s humanity is what receives sanctification. Here, as throughout his interpretation, Athanasius’s priority is to defend the Son’s immutability by attributing change to the Son’s human aspect.<sup>28</sup>

Athanasius concludes the text above by speaking about the Son’s teaching on sanctification. According to Athanasius, the Son taught that he bestows the Holy Spirit and sanctification on his humanity so that “in me, who am Truth (for your Word is Truth)... all may be sanctified” (cf. Jn 17:17). Our question, however, remains unanswered: How does Christ’s reception of the Holy Spirit benefit other human beings? The answer to our question is buried within Athanasius’s convoluted account of the relationship between Christ’s humanity and that of other human beings, which is diffused throughout *Orations* 1.37–52. We will turn to this subject now.

#### 4. Christ’s Humanity as a Channel of Grace

In *Orations* 1.37–52, Athanasius presents Christ’s humanity as the locus and object of Christ’s reception of exaltation, sanctification, and the Holy Spirit. According to Athanasius, it is not “the essence of the Word that is exalted” but his “manhood,” “his human nature,” “flesh,” and his “body” (*Orations* 1.41–2). “The Word was not impaired in receiving a body... but

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<sup>28</sup> This strategy also occurs in *Incarnation*. See, for example, *Incarnation* 17–18. In the *Orations*, this distinction results in Jesus being simultaneously passible and impassible: passible on account of his humanity; impassible on account of his divinity. Consequently, Athanasius can insist in 1.46–52 that Jesus’s reception of the Holy Spirit does not apply to “the Word, considered as the Word and Wisdom” (*Orations* 1.47), that is, to Jesus’s divine nature. Jesus’s reception of the Spirit only affects his human aspect, and this ensures that, in respect to his divine nature, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever’ (Heb. 13:8), remaining unalterable, and at once gives and receives, giving as God’s Word, receiving as man” (*Orations* 1.48).

rather he deified that which he put on” (*Orations* 1.42). It is important to note here that Athanasius uses the language of “flesh” and “body” to refer to Christ’s human aspect. When Athanasius speaks of Christ’s “flesh” and “body,” Athanasius is using these terms within a dialectical framework between the two extremes of God and the world. In this framework, Athanasius uses the language of Christ’s flesh and body to represent that which is “closest” or most intrinsic to human beings. Thus, within this framework, “flesh” and “body” represent both Christ’s material body and also Christ’s human nature.<sup>29</sup> We can see this through the combination of phrases quoted above from *Orations* 1.41-42, and we can also discern it in *Orations* 1.46-47. According to Athanasius, Christ was anointed “as man” (*Orations* 1.46), sanctified after having “become man,” (*Orations* 1.47), and baptized in the Jordan “as man,” as one “in the flesh.” The body that is sanctified is “his,” and “it is not the Word, considered as the Word and Wisdom, who is anointed with the Spirit which he himself gives, but the flesh assumed by him which is anointed in him and by him” (*Orations* 1.47). Through these statements, Athanasius insists that Christ’s human experiences exclusively affected and occurred in his humanity, which seems to include a human body and human soul,<sup>30</sup> rather than in his

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<sup>29</sup> For Athanasius’s dialectical framework and his language about the body, see Anatolios, *Coherence*, 64, 71-74. Although Athanasius never speculates about Christ’s two natures, Athanasius’s statements about the Word assuming a human body and becoming human for the sake of humanity point to this reality, and thus, for the sake of rhetorical clarity, I use the expression “human nature” at times to express this aspect of Athanasius’s thought. As Anatolios notes, when Athanasius speaks of the incarnation, Athanasius is more focused on the dialectical relationship between God and the world that has been established through the incarnation than on providing an analysis of “how the divine-human being of Christ is internally constituted” (*ibid.*, 74).

<sup>30</sup> The question of whether Athanasius believed that Christ possessed a human soul has been the subject of considerable debate. Grillmeier and Hanson argued that Athanasius holds a Logos-sarx Christology in which the Word essentially takes the place of Jesus’s soul, making Jesus devoid of a truly human soul and

divine nature. But how, if at all, does this reception benefit other human beings?”

*Kinship and Christ's Humanity*

In *Orations* 1.37–52, Athanasius makes it clear that he believes Christ's reception of these benefits can extend to other human beings, whom Athanasius assumes are connected to Christ. To return to the quotation above, it was not Christ as the Word who was anointed, “but the flesh assumed by him which is anointed in him and by him; that the sanctification coming to the Lord as man, may come to all men from him.” Athanasius's statement implies that the flesh forms a link between Christ and human beings.

Athanasius presents the idea of Christ's body—his humanity—providing a link between Christ and other human beings earlier in *Orations* 1, when discussing the subject of Christ's exaltation. Christ's exaltation includes entrance into heaven, and Christ received exaltation

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making Athanasius, in Weinandy's words, a “Nestorian before Nestorius!” (Thomas G. Weinandy, *Athanasius: A Theological Introduction*, Great Theologians Series (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 92; Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon*, 310–16; Hanson, *The Search*, 446–58). While Grillmeier and Hanson are correct that Athanasius says remarkably little about Christ's soul, their conclusion is unfounded. As Anatolios and Weinandy have argued, Athanasius attributes human experiences to Christ such as fear and ignorance that require a human soul in order to be experienced. As we have seen, Athanasius safeguards the Word's immutability by insisting that the Word experiences human passions through his humanity rather than his divinity. By affirming Christ's experience of these passions, Athanasius shows that he does not believe that the Word takes the place of Christ's human soul. Further against Grillmeier's arguments, when Athanasius speaks of Christ's body as an “instrument” (ὄργανον) such as in *Incarnation* 41, Athanasius is not attempting to offer an analysis of how the Word operates within his humanity - Athanasius's point is that Christ's human body is the “instrument” of activity through which the incarnate Word operates in the world (Anatolios, *Coherence*, 71-73).

for the sake of other human beings, “so again in the Christ himself we might be highly exalted, being raised from the dead, and ascending into heaven” (*Orations* 1.41). Accordingly, “the heavenly powers will not be astonished at seeing all of us, who are one body with him (συσσώμους), introduced into their realms,” which would not have been possible unless “he who existed in the form of God had taken on him a servant’s form, and had humbled himself, yielding his body to come unto death” (*Orations* 1.42). Athanasius’s use of σύσσωμος echoes Eph. 3:6, and it is possible that he may be intentionally referencing Paul’s “body of Christ” and “in Christ” motifs in order to imply that human reception of Christ’s benefits involves incorporation into the church. However, Athanasius’s main point—and our main point—concerns the affect that Christ’s humanity has upon other other human bodies. Athanasius’s remarks here imply a connection between Christ’s humanity and that of other persons—particularly Christians. The angels should not be surprised to see Christians enter heaven with Christ because Christians share one “body”—that is, the same human nature—with Christ, and therefore his human experiences also affect them.

The implied connection between Christ’s humanity and that of other persons becomes clear in Athanasius’s subsequent summary of what Christ accomplished through his body. According to Athanasius, through the incarnation Christ conquered the external problems of death, idolatry, and demons. But, as we will see, Christ also ensured that humans have the possibility of receiving the intimate grace of union with himself and the Holy Spirit. The reception of grace is possible because there is a connection between Christ’s “body” (which represents his entire humanity) and that of other human beings. Athanasius writes about this:

For the fact that the Lord, even when come in human body and called Jesus, was worshipped and believed to be God’s Son... shows, as has been said, that not the Word, considered as the Word, received this so great grace, but we.

For because of our relationship to his body (τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ συγγένειαν) we too have become God's temple, and in consequence are made God's sons, so that even in us the Lord is now worshipped, and beholders report, as the Apostle says, that God is in them of a truth.  
(*Orations* 1.43)

In this paragraph, Athanasius reveals his belief in there being a connection between Christ and human beings by means of the human body (which, as noted, symbolizes the entire human nature). Again, despite resonances with Eph. 3:6 and with Paul's "in Christ" language, which could suggest that our kinship is to the corporate body of Christ (i.e. the church), Athanasius's focus is on the achievements of Christ's humanity. The implications of these achievements for human beings indicates that the kinship is due to Christ and other human beings possessing a common humanity or human nature.<sup>31</sup>

#### *Kinship and Salvation*

Athanasius's language of kinship and his various assertions that "we" participate in Christ's exaltation, sanctification, and anointing, may initially appear to suggest that Christ's benefits are universally and automatically received by all human beings. However, as Alvyn Pettersen rightly notes, Athanasius's apparently corporate and universalistic statements must be interpreted in light of his anti-"Arian," polemical purposes.<sup>32</sup> This does not mean that Athanasius's use of soteriological examples to support and articulate his Christology required him to misrepresent or contradict his own understanding of salvation.<sup>33</sup> But,

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<sup>31</sup> On this relationship, see also Athanasius's remark in *Orations* 2.11.

<sup>32</sup> Alvyn Pettersen, *Athanasius and the Human Body* (Bristol: Bristol Press, 1990), 63.

<sup>33</sup> Indeed, in presenting Christ's human nature as the locus and object of the reception of his benefits, Athanasius makes an argument that continues and expands his earlier perspectives on both Christ and salvation, which suggests that

Athanasius's central purpose is Christological rather than catechetical, and thus he gives his primary Christological point priority over systematic soteriological clarity. In opposition to the perspectives of Origen and Eusebius, Athanasius asserts that it was neither Christ's soul nor the essence of the Word that was anointed with the Holy Spirit but rather Christ's humanity. Athanasius's statements about humans being exalted, baptized, and sanctified "in Christ" should therefore be interpreted in light of Athanasius's emphasis on the receptivity and passibility of Christ's human nature in contrast to the non-receptivity and impassibility of the divine nature of the Word. What I mean by this is that when Athanasius speaks of "us" experiencing certain benefits "in Christ," as a result of Christ's anointing, Athanasius's primary point is that this anointing benefited the Word's humanity, which, sharing a kinship with that of other human beings, serves as a channel of grace that makes these benefits available to other persons.

For example, in the quotation below, Athanasius's point is not primarily about "us" as individuals but rather about how it was Christ's human part rather than his divine part that was affected by his anointing. Athanasius writes:

If then for our sake he sanctifies himself, and does this when he is become man, it is very plain that the Spirit's descent on him in the Jordan was a descent upon us, because of his bearing our body... For when the Lord, as man, was washed in the Jordan, it was we who were washed in him and by him. And when he received the Spirit, it was we who were made recipients of it by him.... For, when he is now said to be anointed in a human respect, it is we who are anointed in him; since also, when he is baptized, it is we who are baptized in him.

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both his Christological and soteriological statements in *Orations* 1.37–52 are valid expressions of his theological vision. Whereas in *Pagans-Incarnation*, Christ freed humanity from the bondage of sin, death, Satan, and idolatry by means of his body, here Christ's exaltation, sanctification, baptism, and anointing with the Holy Spirit affect other human beings by means of his humanity.

(*Orations* 1.47–48 TM)

Here, “we” primarily refers to Christ’s humanity. “We” are baptized, sanctified, anointed, and exalted “in Christ” first and foremost in the sense that Christ’s human nature—rather than his divine nature—experienced these benefits.

Before we consider how exactly these benefits can be attained by individuals, it will be helpful to grasp Athanasius’s argument about why Christ’s reception of the Holy Spirit was necessary for human beings.

*The Purpose of Christ’s Reception of the Holy Spirit*

Although Christ’s baptism, anointing, sanctification, and exaltation do not automatically or universally apply to human beings,<sup>34</sup> they do affect all of humanity. Athanasius makes this point most clearly while discussing the reasons for Christ receiving the Holy Spirit and casting out demons through the Spirit. Athanasius writes that in the Gospels:

The Lord himself, the Giver of the Spirit, does not refuse to say that through the Spirit he casts out demons... [and] refused not to say, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me,” in respect of his having become flesh, as John has said; that it might be shown in both these particulars, that we are they who need the Spirit’s grace in our sanctification, and again who are unable to cast out demons without the Spirit’s power. Through whom then and from whom behooved it that the Spirit should be given but through the Son, whose also the Spirit is? And when were we enabled to receive it (Πότε δὲ λαμβάνειν ἡμεῖς ἐδυνάμεθα), except when the Word became man? and, as the passage of the Apostle shows, that we had not been redeemed and highly exalted, had not he who exists in form of god taken a servant’s form, so David also shews, that no otherwise should we

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<sup>34</sup>This claim is supported by two points. First, Athanasius insists that Christians must receive graces such as baptism and the Holy Spirit for themselves. Second, Athanasius makes qualifying statements about the communication of grace (for example, he says that Christ only gives the Holy Spirit “to the worthy” *Orations* 1.47).

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. And therefore have we securely received it, he being said to be anointed in the flesh; for the flesh being first sanctified in him; and he being said, as man, to have received for its sake, we have the sequel of the Spirit's grace, receiving "out of his fullness."

(*Orations* 1.50)

Athanasius's comments stress that when Christ received baptism, sanctification, and the Holy Spirit, he only received these things into his own humanity, but this reception enabled all human beings to subsequently receive these things for themselves because of their kinship to Christ's humanity.<sup>35</sup>

This perspective is indicated by Athanasius's concluding remarks and also by the gospel accounts that he references. When Athanasius writes that Christ was "anointed with the Spirit for us. And therefore have we securely received it, he being said to be anointed in the flesh; for the flesh being first sanctified in him," Athanasius makes two points. First, he reaffirms that Christ's reception of these benefits affected all human beings. By Christ securely receiving sanctification and the Holy Spirit into his human nature, Christ has ensured that all human beings have securely attained the ability to receive these benefits. But secondly, Athanasius states that human beings are given "the subsequent (*ἐπακολουθοῦσαν*) grace of the Spirit, receiving 'out of his [Christ's] fullness'" (1.50). Athanasius's point here is that the Holy Spirit, having been securely received by Christ and having securely sanctified Christ's humanity, is now available to other human beings, so that we may also receive the Spirit and sanctification. When humans receive these benefits, we receive them "out of his fullness," by which Athanasius means both from Christ, because all of these benefits are ultimately given by him, and

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<sup>35</sup> Athanasius's use of "we" again refers to human nature itself.

also because of Christ, who securely received these benefits into his human aspect so that we would be enabled to subsequently receive them for ourselves.

Finally, we should not overlook the fact that in the gospels themselves, which Athanasius refers to throughout his discussion of Christ's baptism and Ps. 45:7, Christ's baptism and the descent of the Holy Spirit precedes his disciples' reception of baptism and the Holy Spirit. Christ was baptized, anointed, and filled with the powerful Holy Spirit at the beginning of his ministry, but, as the Gospels clearly indicate, the disciples did not automatically receive these benefits "in Christ." Instead, the disciples lacked the Holy Spirit until after the resurrection, at which time they received the Spirit for themselves from the Son (John 20:22, Acts 2:1-4). The same pattern seems to apply in Athanasius's understanding of salvation. Christ received the Holy Spirit during his baptismal anointing, but other humans receive the Spirit later, perhaps during their own baptismal anointing. The key point is that reception of the Holy Spirit is neither automatic nor universal.

*The Change Effected by the Descent of the Holy Spirit*

Athanasius's remarks about the Holy Spirit in *Orations* 1.46–52 present the Spirit as an agent of human change and enablement. By descending on Christ's humanity, the Spirit enables all human beings, by means of their kinship to Christ's humanity, to be able to bear the Spirit. This idea is well summarized in *Orations* 1.47:

If then for our sake he sanctifies himself, and does this when he is become man, it is very plain that the Spirit's descent on him in the Jordan was a descent upon us, because of his bearing our body. And it did not take place for promotion to the Word, but again for our sanctification, that we might share his anointing, and of us it might be said, "Do you not know that you are God's Temple, and the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16) For

when the Lord, as man, was washed in the Jordan, it was we who were washed in him and by him. And when he received the Spirit, it was we who were made recipients of it by him.

(*Orations* 1.47 TM)

Athanasius's "we" language here again primarily expresses the idea that Christ received baptism, the Spirit, and sanctification into his humanity, which other humans have a kinship with. Through this kinship, we do not automatically receive these benefits, but our humanity is enabled to be able to receive these benefits, which they were formerly unable to bear (*Orations* 1.50). Thus, when the Spirit descended on Christ's humanity, the Spirit changed our nature, making it possible for us to subsequently receive the washing of baptism, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the sanctification of our bodies.<sup>36</sup>

This aspect of Athanasius's pneumatological vision represents an expansion of Athanasius's earlier pneumatological perspectives. It assumes that the Holy Spirit is a principal agent in the work of sanctification, but it also builds on this presupposition in order to explain how Christ's anointing benefited human beings. As such, Athanasius's pneumatology in *Orations* 1.46–52 does not depart from his earlier principles but rather follows and builds on them.

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<sup>36</sup>In *Orations* 1.47 Athanasius also describes the effect of our individual reception of the Holy Spirit. When we share in Christ's anointing by having personally received these benefits, we are God's temple and the Spirit of God dwells in us. In this instance, the point of Athanasius's temple reference seems to concern our reception and preservation of the Holy Spirit. If we preserve the presence of the Spirit by living in a way that does not expel the Spirit, then, by means of the Spirit's presence in us we will become a "temple of God" in the sense that we are morally conformed to holiness and are a locus of a member of the Triad.

*The Sanctifying Work of the Holy Spirit*<sup>37</sup>

In Chapter 4, I claimed that, in addition to the five pneumatological points that seem to be implied by Athanasius's depiction of the "Arian" Trinitarian "blasphemies" and Athanasius's Trinitarian polemical arguments, Athanasius also regards the Holy Spirit as essential for salvation. The remainder of this chapter provides additional evidence to support this claim.

As we have seen, Athanasius believed that the Holy Spirit's descent on Christ enabled human beings to receive the Spirit. In *Orations* 1.46–52, Athanasius maintains that Christ received the Spirit (and thereby enabled humans to receive the Spirit) primarily for one reason. Christ did these things in order to make it possible for the Holy Spirit to sanctify individuals. Here, Athanasius presents the Holy Spirit as a principal agent in the work of sanctification.

Athanasius connects the Spirit with sanctification throughout *Orations* 1.46–52. According to him, Christ received the Spirit into his human body and nature "for our sanctification," and so "that the sanctification coming to the Lord as man, may come to all men from him" (*Orations* 1.47), that Christ "sanctifies all by the Spirit" (*Orations* 1.48), and that we, as human beings, cannot be sanctified without the presence of the Holy Spirit because "we are they who need the Spirit's grace in our sanctification" (*Orations* 1.50). From Athanasius's statements about the Spirit and sanctification in these sections, both the Word and the Holy Spirit emerge as the agents and efficient causes of the sanctification of humankind. The Word is the indirect efficient cause of sanctification because he gives and receives the Holy Spirit, who is the direct efficient cause of sanctification and the one who makes human beings holy.

It is important to note that although many of Athanasius's

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<sup>37</sup> For more on the Spirit's role in sanctification, see also 89–95, 111–120, 257–262.

pneumatological remarks in *Orations* 1.46–52 focus on the past work of the Spirit in Christ's humanity, Athanasius also indicates that the sanctifying presence and activity of the Spirit is now available to all human beings. As the result of Christ's anointing with the Spirit "we have therefore securely received it [the Spirit], He being said to be anointed in the flesh; for the flesh being first sanctified in him, and he being said as man, to have received for its sake, we have the sequel of the Spirit's grace, receiving 'out of his fullness'" (*Orations* 1.50). When Christ received the Spirit into his human aspect, Christ secured the opportunity and ability for all humans to subsequently receive the Spirit because of the change that began in Christ's humanity. Humans are intended to receive the Holy Spirit for themselves, so that they might have the grace of the Spirit that follows Christ's anointing. Indeed, the entire purpose for the Holy Spirit's past work in Christ was so that humans might subsequently receive the sanctifying presence and grace of the Spirit, by which humans are joined to Christ.

### Conclusion

This chapter has argued that, in the *Orations*, Athanasius regards the Holy Spirit as essential for salvation. While presenting his interpretation of Ps. 45:7, Athanasius argues that Christ received baptism, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and sanctification through the Spirit in order to make it possible for other humans to receive these graces. This argument reflects Athanasius's conviction that salvation is incomplete without individuals receiving these graces. Although Athanasius's arguments in *Pagans-Incarnation* emphasize that the Word took a human body in order to make it possible for humans to regain immortality and the knowledge of God, these works also note that eternal life without holiness would lead to unending horrors worse than destruction.<sup>38</sup> In the *Festals* and other

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<sup>38</sup> See above, p. 51.

pastoral works, Athanasius presents this holiness as the “wedding garment” necessary for salvation. In these works, as in his interpretation of Ps. 45:7 in *Orations* 1, Athanasius makes the Holy Spirit essential for attaining this holiness—which, in turn, also makes the Spirit essential for salvation. In the following two chapters, we will examine the *Orations*’ sophisticated account of the Spirit’s roles in salvation. These chapters will argue that as Athanasius speaks of the Holy Spirit helping Christians to receive the related graces of holiness, union with the Father and Son, adoption, deification, and eternal life in heaven, Athanasius’s discussions provide further evidence that he considers the Holy Spirit to be eternal, uncreated, inseparably united to the Son, essential for salvation, and worthy of creatures’ worship.

## Participation in the Holy Spirit: Principles and Pneumatological Implications

### Introduction

Chapters 6 and 7 explore Athanasius's remarks in the *Orationes* about creatures participating in the Holy Spirit. Together, these chapters support my previous claim, made in Chapter 4, that in the *Orationes* Athanasius seems to regard the Holy Spirit as uncreated, eternal, worthy of worship, and inseparably united to the Son. This chapter provides evidence for the first three points. It argues that Athanasius's theology of participation confirms that the Spirit's uncreated nature, eternal existence, and worthiness to be worshipped are tenets of Athanasius's thought. This chapter also argues that Athanasius's understanding of participation means the Holy Spirit is essentially holy—a characteristic that further supports my claim about the Spirit's uncreated nature.

Chapter 7 examines Athanasius's understanding of the Trinity's united activity in salvation and of how participation in the Holy Spirit gives creatures union with the Son and adoption as children of God. This investigation will provide additional evidence for my claim that Athanasius believes the Holy Spirit is eternal and inseparably united to the Son.

Chapter 6 is comprised of three main sections. Section 1 briefly introduces Athanasius's argument about participation in *Orationes* 1.15–16. Here, Athanasius temporarily adopts the “Arian” language of participation in order to explain and argue for his understanding of the

Father-Son relationship. Athanasius's reasoning depends on several presuppositions about participatory relationships. Section 2 supplies background on these presuppositions, and it traces their development in earlier writers. This section is particularly important because the arguments of both chapters depend on recognizing the logic and presuppositions behind Athanasius's theology of participation.

Section 3 applies this background to *Orations* 1.15–16 and begins my pneumatological argument. It contends that when *Orations* 1.15–16 is interpreted in light of Athanasius's principles about participation, these texts show that Athanasius conceives of the Holy Spirit as uncreated, eternal, worthy of worship. Lastly, section 4 provides support for these conclusions by examining the pneumatological points that Athanasius makes in the course of arguing that Christ is not inferior to the Holy Spirit (*Orations* 1.50). This section argues that Athanasius's discussions about Christ as equal to the Spirit and the giver of the Spirit contain three points that confirm the pneumatological conclusions of section 3.

### 1. Overview: Participation and *Orations* 1.15–16

In this section, we will briefly summarize Athanasius's previous uses of participation language and his argument about the Son's participation in the Father (*Orations* 1.15–16). This overview will prepare us for sections 2 and 3, which, respectively, explain key principles behind Athanasius's use of participation language in the *Orations* and demonstrate the pneumatological implications of these principles.

#### *Athanasius and Participation Language*

As noted in Chapter 1, in *Pagans-Incarnation*, Athanasius uses noun and verb forms of “participation” (μετοχή, μετέχω) to establish creation's ontological distinction from and dependence on God. Before the introduction of sin and death, participation in the Word sustained human

beings, providing them with eternal life as long as their participation persisted. After humans turned their contemplation to bodily things, they ceased their participation in the Word, which had granted them rationality and life.

In *Pagans-Incarnation*, Athanasius also uses participation language to explain the soteriological significance of the Word's incarnation. The Word "takes to himself a body capable of death, in order that it, participating in the Word who is above all, might be sufficient for death on behalf of all, and through the indwelling Word would remain incorruptible, and so corruption might henceforth cease from all by the grace of the resurrection" (*Incarnation* 9). Through participation language, Athanasius can describe how Christ's body possessed the presence of the Word and received the benefits of this presence while also fully remaining a human body with a created nature.

In the *Orations*, Athanasius uses participation language for two new purposes. Beginning in *Orations* 1.9, Athanasius uses participation language to describe how creatures can receive soteriological graces from the Trinity, such as adoption, sanctification, and deification. In *Orations* 1.15–16, while addressing views from *Thalia* A, Athanasius momentarily co-opts *Thalia* A's use of participation language. Athanasius adopts this terminology to rebut the Christology of *Thalia* A and argue for his own understanding of the Father-Son relationship in the "native language" that he attributes to his opponents. This is the first and only instance in which Athanasius speaks of the Son's derivation from the Father in terms of participation. Despite Athanasius's unusual use of participation language to speak about the Son, Athanasius's account in *Orations* 1.15–16 provides a complicated but faithful summary of his view on the Son's derivation from the Father.

*The Son's Participation in the Father: Context*

Beginning in *Orations* 1.15, Athanasius sets out to rebut the theology of *Thalia* A. Athanasius starts his response by targeting the “Arian” view that the Son is separate from the Father according to essence.<sup>1</sup> Athanasius claims that his opponents “deny that the Son is the proper offspring of the Father’s essence, on the ground that this must imply parts and divisions.”<sup>2</sup> The basis of this denial is quite traditional, dating back to at least the time of Origen, who argued that derivation from the Father’s essence implies material divisions.<sup>3</sup> Arius, in his letter to Alexander, expresses the same concern about essential derivation as Origen. Here, Arius emphatically rejects any account of the Son’s generation that has material connotations, including accounts that speak of emanation or abscission of the Son from the Father.<sup>4</sup>

Athanasius responds to Arius’s concerns by accusing the “Arians” of being the ones who are actually thinking materially (σωμάτων ἐνθυμούμενοι) about the immaterial Godhead (τοῦ ἄσωμάτου). Indeed, Athanasius claims, the “Arians” “do not understand how God is” because they “measure” the Son’s generation in human terms.<sup>5</sup> The “Arians,” he says, have rightly rejected the notion of physical emanation or division within God, but they fail to understand the Father–Son relationship because they believe the Son’s origination from the Father mirrors that of

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Orations* 1.6.

<sup>2</sup> *Orations* 1.15: τὸ δὲ εἶναι τοῦτον τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς ἴδιον γέννημα ἀρνοῦνται, ὡς μὴ δυναμένου τούτου εἶναι χωρὶς τῆς ἐκ μερῶν καὶ διαιρέσεων ὑπονοίας.

<sup>3</sup> See Williams, *Arius*, 134.

<sup>4</sup> Arius, *ep. Alex.* 5. Mark Edwards, “Alexander of Alexandria and the Homoousion,” *VC* 66, no. 5 (2012): 484–485.

<sup>5</sup> Athanasius frequently uses the verb μετρέω (“measure”) with respect to time (χρόνος), and this meaning suits his argument here. On Athanasius’s use of μετρέω, see Guido Müller, *Lexicon Athanasianum* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1952), 904. Also observe its use in *Orations* 1.12 and 1.20.

human children from their parents.<sup>6</sup> Just as the birth of children is preceded by the existence of their parents, so, the “Arians” believe, the Son’s origination must be temporally preceded by the Father’s existence—which means that the Son did not exist before his generation.

*The Son’s Participation in the Father: Argument*

Having apparently shown that the “Arians” think of the Son in material terms, Athanasius now begins his response to the statements in *Thalia A* about the Word owing his exalted titles to participation. The most important statements occur in the following excerpts from *Thalia A*:

“For God,” [Arius] says, “was alone, and the Word as yet was not, nor the Wisdom. Then, wishing to form us, he [God] then made a certain one, and named him Word and Wisdom and Son, that he [God] might form us by means of him.” Accordingly, he [Arius] says that there are two Wisdoms, first, the attribute co-existent with God, and next, that in this wisdom the Son was originated, and was only named Wisdom and Word as partaking of it.... In like manner, he says, that there is another Word in God besides the Son, and that the Son again, as partaking of it, is named Word and Son according to grace.... Moreover he has dared to say, that “the Word is not the very God;” “though he is called God, yet he is not very God,” but “by participation of grace, he, as others, is God only in name.”

(*Thalia A* in *Orations* 1.5–6)

Athanasius chooses to temporarily adopt the “Arian” participation language to rebut their account of the Son’s relationship to the Father. Because of the complexity of Athanasius’s rebuttal, I will trace his argument in stages. Athanasius’s use of participation language to explain the Father-Son relationship begins midway through *Orations* 1.15.

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<sup>6</sup> Here I follow Blaising, “Contents and Structure,” 89, but with a slightly different emphasis. He concludes that Athanasius claims the Arians’ material thinking is evidenced by their belief that the Son is a creature; in the context of Athanasius’s argument in *Orations* 1.15, however, the precise point is that the Arians think of the Son’s generation in human terms.

Athanasius writes:

If then, as you say, “the Son is from nothing,” and “was not before his generation,” he, of course, as well as others, must be called Son and God and Wisdom only by participation; for in this way all other creatures consist, and by sanctification are glorified.

(*Orations* 1.15)

Here, Athanasius entertains the “Arian” premise that if the Son has come into existence from nothing, then he could only possess his titles as a result of participation. Athanasius, Arius, and Asterius all believed that God’s properties must be eternal, coexisting with God. This means that if the Son does not coexist with God, being instead created at some point by the will of God, then he cannot be God’s genuine Power, Wisdom, and Word.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, if the Son is made from nothing, then his titles must be due to him receiving a share in God’s preexisting properties, including Word, Wisdom, and Power. Athanasius concludes that there are only two possible answers to the question of who the Son participates in. These are the Father and the Holy Spirit.

From here, Athanasius considers the possibility that the Son participates in the Holy Spirit. Athanasius acknowledges that the Son could participate in the Holy Spirit because all things that are glorified “partake of the Spirit.” However, Athanasius then immediately dismisses this possibility on the basis of John 16:14–15, where Jesus says that the Holy Spirit “will take what is mine and declare it to you.” Athanasius reasons that since “the Spirit himself takes from the Son, as he himself says” then “it is not reasonable to say that the [Son] is sanctified by the [Spirit]. Therefore it is the Father that he partakes” (*Orations* 1.15). However, this raises new problems that can only be resolved if the Son is

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<sup>7</sup> On the theologies of Arius, Asterius, and Athanasius concerning the Son as the Word, Wisdom, and Power of God, see also below, pp. 272–282.

in fact the proper and eternal offspring of the Father.<sup>8</sup>

When Athanasius considers the “Arian” claim that the Son is from nothing, he approaches the problem with certain key presuppositions about participation in place. Of these presuppositions, there are two principles about participation that are particularly relevant. These helped inspire his conclusion about how and why the Son’s participation would have to be in the Father. More importantly for our study, they also have important implications for Athanasius’s theology of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we will discuss these principles before looking in more detail at the argument of *Orations* 1.15–16 itself.

## 2. Two Principles of Participation

In his monograph on participation in the works of Gregory of Nyssa, David Balás offers a brief history of the use of participation before Gregory.<sup>9</sup> Balás’s survey looks at Plato and the subsequent Greek philosophical tradition, Philo of Alexandria, and a handful of key Christian writers from the first through fourth centuries. The brevity of Balás’s summary whets the reader’s appetite—there is clearly much fruit left for others to pick. Although there is a need for comprehensive studies on participation language before Gregory of Nyssa, this task is both beyond the scope of the thesis and also unnecessary to my argument. Instead, my intention is to highlight three underlying principles of

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<sup>8</sup> None of my arguments in this thesis depend on going into more detail about Athanasius’s discussion about the Son’s participation in the Father. However, Athanasius’s discussion does provide additional insight into his theology. Therefore, I have included an explanation his argument in Appendix C (pp. 319–322).

<sup>9</sup> Balás, *Μετουσία θεοῦ*, 1–18. The Christian appropriation of participation language is also helpfully discussed by Norman Russell. See *Deification*, especially 2–15, 79–92, 105–113.

Athanasius's doctrine of participation that, when understood, provide insight into Athanasius's pneumatology in the *Orations*.

*Plato: Asymmetrical Participation  
and Hierarchy of Being*

Here we will briefly sketch the development of Plato's theory of the communion of forms, from which we will see two of the key principles about participation emerge as part of this theory. The origin of these principles can be traced to the *Euthyphro*.

In this early dialogue, Socrates asks Euthyphro about piety. Euthyphro comes to agree with Socrates that every pious action must be alike, and that every impious action must also be alike, having "one form or appearance (ἰδέαν) in so far as it is impious" (*Euthyph.* 5d). When asked to define piety, Euthyphro provides examples of pious actions, but Socrates observes that Euthyphro has not actually answered the question of what piety is. Socrates reminds Euthyphro of the real matter at hand:

Bear in mind then that I did not bid you tell me one or two of the many pious actions but that form (εἶδος) itself that makes all pious actions pious, for you agreed that all impious actions are impious and all pious actions pious through one form (ἰδέα), or don't you remember? ... Tell me then what this form itself is, so that I may look upon it and, using it as a model, say that any action of yours or another's that is of that kind is pious, and if it is not that it is not.  
(*Euthyph.* 6d–e)

This dialogue between Socrates and Euthyphro introduces the intertwined concepts of forms, being, and participation.<sup>10</sup> In this dialogue,

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<sup>10</sup> Plato's theory of forms and talk of participation was not well received by Aristotle. Aristotle criticized participation for its obscurity, accusing it of being "nonsense" that ultimately tells us nothing. To say that forms "are paradigms and that other things participate in them is to say nothing and to give poetic metaphors" (Aristotle, *Met.* A 9.991a20–23, 9.992a26–29. ET: Lawson-Tancred,

there is one universal form (εἶδος, ἰδέα) of piety, which is the exemplar according to which every action can be judged as being pious. Further, the form of piety *is* piety according to its essence or being.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, although the dialogue lacks participation language, we can see that the notion is present. Every action can be described as being impious to the degree that it has the single universal form of impiety. In the middle dialogues, Plato introduces the language of participation to describe the kind of relationship of possession that exists here between an instantiation of impiety and the form of impiety.<sup>12</sup>

With the development of Plato's theory of forms also comes the notion that forms, which can be participated in, are ontologically superior to the sensible things that participate in them. Even in *Euthyphro*, the form of piety stands over pious actions because these actions owe their piousness to their participation in the form of piety. In his middle dialogues, Plato elaborates on the superiority of forms over particular representations of the form.<sup>13</sup> Forms have independent being, but "particulars" owe their existence to participation in forms. Further, forms are intelligible, simple, unchanging, and perfect; particulars are sensible, composite, subject to change, and incomplete representations of the form.

Our first main principle about participation arises from these discussions. This principle informs how we understand the relationship between intelligible realities (forms) and sensible particulars. According to this principle, the intelligible realities that sensible particulars participate in are always of a higher reality than the sensible participants. Further, the form does not participate in the particular (and thus only the particular is

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*Aristotle: The Metaphysics* (New York: Penguin, 1998), 34).

<sup>11</sup> On Plato's understanding of the ontology of forms, see Allan Silverman, *The Dialectic of Essence: A Study of Plato's Metaphysics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 137–81, especially 14–17.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, *Prm.* 129a–e, 132c–133e; *Phd.* 100c, 101c.

<sup>13</sup> See the summary of particulars in Silverman, *Dialectic of Essence*, 16–22.

changed). This kind of participation can be described as “asymmetrical” participation.

In Plato’s later metaphysics, the relationship between forms and their participants becomes more nuanced, but these developments are not crucial for our study of Athanasius’s pneumatology.<sup>14</sup> However, there is a second main principle that is especially important for the study of Athanasius’s use of participation language.

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<sup>14</sup> Plato’s more nuanced theory of participation includes one principle, summarized in this footnote, that may help explain why Athanasius can reject a hierarchy of being within the Trinity but also speak of the Son participating in the Father.

This additional principle emerges in the *Sophist*, as the Eleatic Stranger discusses rest, motion, being, sameness, and difference (*Soph.* 251a–257a). Here, Plato’s doctrine of participation evolves to allow forms to participate in other forms. The dialogue also highlights characteristics of the “communion of forms” (see Silverman, *Dialectic of Essence*, 91–93). Certain forms are incompatible for participation with one another, such as rest and motion. Indeed, forms are like letters in the alphabet in the sense that some combinations are compatible, making words, and some are not (*Soph.* 252d–253c). Also, just as every letter in the alphabet can join with at least one other letter to form words, so every form is capable of participating in at least one other form (*Soph.* 253a). Further, there is at least one form, being, that is participated in by every other form (Plato, *Soph.* 253c1–2, 256a7–8. Alexander Nehamas, “Participation and Predication in Plato’s Later Thought,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 36, no. 2 (1982): 343).

As a result of these developments, the relationship between forms and participants is refined. Now, forms are not necessarily superior to their participants, and participants are not necessarily sensible things. Instead, two distinct kinds of participatory relationships are now apparent. The original relationship (participation of a sensible particular in a form) remains. However, now there is also the possibility of one intelligible form participating in another. According to this principle, intelligible realities can participate in other intelligible realities without one necessarily being considered superior to the other. For example, no hierarchy is implied between forms A, B, and C if A participates in B, which participates in C, which participates in A. We can describe this kind of relationship as symmetrical participation because it involves participation between intelligible realities without the participatory relationship implying a hierarchy between the realities.

The second principle about participation arises from Plato's idea of the Good and the hierarchy of being or reality that accompanies this idea. The Good is the first principle of the forms and the means by which forms are knowable. Further, the Good is also transcendent, being superior to the forms and to being (*Rep.* 507bd–509b). Much could be said about the Good, but for our purposes what matters is that Plato has expressed a hierarchical metaphysics. This hierarchy places the Good at the highest level of being possible, with intelligible forms below the Good, and sensible particulars below the forms. This metaphysics provided the philosophical ingredients for the chain of being that was developed in Neoplatonism.<sup>15</sup> From shortly after Plato until at least the eighteenth century, models based on this principle—the principle of a hierarchy of being—were the predominant schemes for understanding all that exists, and this hierarchy was assumed by many important Christian figures, including Origen, the “Eusebians,” and Athanasius.

We have now observed in Plato two principles that relate to participation. These are the principles of asymmetrical participation and the hierarchy of being. In section 3 of this chapter, we will see that Athanasius's theology of participation assumes these principles, and that these principles shape Athanasius's understanding of the Holy Spirit's ontological relationship to creatures and to the Father and Son. Before considering Athanasius's remarks about participation, however, it is necessary for us to consider how these principles developed in Christian theologians before Athanasius. Therefore, the present discussion of participation and metaphysics now leaps from Plato to the second century after Christ, where the concepts of participation and hierarchy are expressed in a Christian framework.

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<sup>15</sup> Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), 61. On the predominance of the concept of a chain or hierarchy of being, see *ibid.*, vii.

*Irenaeus*

In the second century, Irenaeus and Justin Martyr both use participation language in a manner that reveals that they assume a hierarchy of being. They speak of human beings and other corporeal things participating in non-corporeal realities, such as life,<sup>16</sup> the seminal Word,<sup>17</sup> and the Spirit of God.<sup>18</sup> Irenaeus also demonstrates this principle when arguing about the common glory of the stars, saying that each star participates in the same “star” nature (*haer.* 2.17.5). These are all examples of asymmetrical participation, and they assume a hierarchy of being that places the intelligible objects of participation above the corporeal participants.

Irenaeus is a particularly important figure for our study because his understanding of the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit places all three at the top of the hierarchy, with neither Son nor Spirit owing their unique relationship to the highest God to a chain of being. As Anthony Briggman observes, “as the Hands of God, they themselves are members of the One Creator God.”<sup>19</sup> As a result of his polemic against gnosticism, Irenaeus thoroughly rejects any notion of a hierarchy of divinity. Instead, he uses participation to establish a strict demarcation between God and creation by including participation in the definition of what it means to be a creature.<sup>20</sup> Creatures owe their existence and hope of union with God to participation; the Son and Holy Spirit are, by definition, members of the Godhead according to being

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<sup>16</sup> Irenaeus, *haer.* 5.4.2, 5.5.1, 5.7.2.

<sup>17</sup> Justin Martyr, 1 *apol.* 46.

<sup>18</sup> Irenaeus, *haer.* 5.6.1., 5.9.3, 5.13.4. For a general overview of participation in these figures, see Balás, *Μετουσία Θεοῦ*, 8–9.

<sup>19</sup> Anthony Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 122–23.

<sup>20</sup> Julie Canlis, “Being Made Human: The Significance of Creation for Irenaeus’ Doctrine of Participation,” *SJTb* 58, no. 4 (2005): 434–54, 434–454.

rather than participation. For the purposes of our study, we can describe Irenaeus's vision of the Godhead as non-hierarchical, in the sense that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all divine and ontologically superior to creation.

In terms of the Godhead and creaturely participation, Irenaeus's theology closely anticipates Athanasius's. We will see that Athanasius, like Irenaeus, uses participation language to express creation's dependence on God and its subordinate place in the hierarchy of reality, rejects the notion of hierarchy or subordination within the Godhead, and identifies the Spirit and the Son as members of the Godhead who share the same place as the Father in the broad hierarchy of reality (meaning, he understands the mutual relationships within the Godhead to be non-hierarchical).<sup>21</sup>

However, there is also a notable difference between the use of participation language in the theologies of Irenaeus and Athanasius. Whereas Irenaeus completely avoids participation language when speaking of either the Son or the Spirit's relationship to the Father, Athanasius finds a way to co-opt participation terminology in order to express his vision of the Trinity in the "native language" he attributes to his opponents.

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<sup>21</sup> Additionally, Irenaeus also assumes that when creatures participate in these members of the Godhead, creatures gain a similitude to the participated member. For example, when creatures participate in the Spirit, they become spiritual, which Irenaeus associates with moral perfection and spiritual fruit (*haer* 5.6.1, 5.11.1). Athanasius holds a similar vision, speaking, for example, of creatures becoming sons through participation in the Son, and becoming rational through participation in the rational Word. For Athanasius, this is due to creatures being given a share in the properties of the participated entity.

*Origen*

In the third century, Origen advances the Christianization of participation, using it to provide a more sophisticated account of the relationships between different levels of reality.<sup>22</sup> Three features of Origen's usage, however, are particularly relevant for our study. First, Origen teaches that participation in the Holy Spirit is exclusive or limited. The Holy Spirit will not dwell in the "unworthy;" instead, only those who seek to overcome sin and "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4) receive the gift of the Spirit (*princ.* 1.3.7). As Origen puts it, the Holy Spirit "dwells in the saints alone" (*princ.* 1.3.5).

Second, Origen maintains the notion of participation as asymmetrical, meaning the entity being participated in is superior to the entity doing the participating. As Norman Russell observes, when Origen uses participation to describe "how the specific is related to the universal, or how that which exists in a contingent sense is related to that which exists of itself," Origen seems to distinguish between "what may be called a natural or ontological participation" and "a supernatural participation which is the result of the free human response to the operations of the Trinity and has the power to transform."<sup>23</sup> The notion that participation is asymmetrical is apparent in both kinds of participatory relationships. In "natural" participatory relationships, such as creatures receiving a share in rationality through participation in the Word and a share in existence through participation in the Father (*princ.* 1.3.6), these participating creatures are clearly of a lower level of reality than the Father and the Word. Likewise, when Origen speaks of creatures receiving a "supernatural" participation in the Spirit, who gives them a share in holiness (*princ.* 1.3.6), or in Christ, who gives them a share in his wisdom, righteousness, light, and life (*princ.* 1.3.8), or in the Father, who is the

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<sup>22</sup> Balás, Μετουσία θεοῦ, 9–11.

<sup>23</sup> Russell, *Deification*, 148–49. This paragraph follows *ibid.*, 148–50.

ultimate source of these attributes, these creatures are again clearly inferior to the members of the Trinity that they are participating in.

Third, Origen seems to envision that within the Trinity there is a hierarchy of being.<sup>24</sup> The Father alone is “the God” (ὁ θεός) and “true God” (αὐτόθεος), being “the uncreated cause of the universe” and “the God who is over all” (*Jō.* 2.2.12–17). Consequently, the Father is superior to everything, including the Word, who owes his existence and divinity to the Father. Yet, the Word is distinct from others because he is the first being to be with God and to have been deified. Further, “it was by his [the Word’s] ministry” that they [creatures] became gods” (*Jō.* 2.2.17). Therefore, the Word is the second highest being and thus rightly called “God” (θεός). The Holy Spirit, in turn, is the third highest being, ranking below the Father and Son but above all else.<sup>25</sup>

Origen appears to understand the soteriological “chain of participation” that he develops in light of this hierarchy. The Holy Spirit provides the first link, giving creatures a special participation in the Word. The Word, in turn, gives creatures participation in the Father (*princ.* 1.3.8).<sup>26</sup> In this manner, creatures ascend from participation in the lower member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, to the higher member, the Word, to the highest member, the Father.

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<sup>24</sup> It is possible that Origen supported this hierarchy on the basis of each Person’s scope of activity. The Father is highest, since he gives existence; the Son is second, since he works in those who have reason; the Spirit is lowest, since he only works in the saints. See Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 12–13, who quotes Justinian *Or.* (PG 86/1. 982 B–C).

<sup>25</sup> Based on John 1:3, Origen “considers the Spirit to be the most honorable and first in rank of all things which the Logos brought into existence” (Mackett, “Theology of the Holy Spirit,” 168).

<sup>26</sup> See Russell, *Deification*, 144, 149–50. On a hierarchy of being in the Trinity, see also G. W. H. Lampe, “Christian Theology in the Patristic Period,” in *A History of Christian Doctrine*, ed. Hubert Cunliffe-Jones (New York: T&T Clark, 1978), 73–74, 77–78; Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 11–17.

In what follows, we will see that Athanasius agrees with Origen that participation in the Spirit is limited and participation itself is usually asymmetrical; however, *pace* Origen, Athanasius rejects the notion of hierarchy within the Trinity.

### 3. Participation in the Holy Spirit

With this background in place, we will soon return to *Orations* 1.15–16, where Athanasius rhetorically considers the possibility that Christ owes his titles to participation in the Holy Spirit. We will see that, despite its brevity, Athanasius's discussion is complex. Athanasius assumes both participation principles that we discussed above. As a result of these principles, Athanasius's statements about the Spirit as an object of participation are richer than they may initially appear. I will argue that Athanasius agrees with Origen that participation in the Holy Spirit is limited to those persons seeking Christ and that participatory relationships are asymmetrical. Most importantly, I will attempt to show that when Athanasius's statements about the Spirit in *Orations* 1.15 are read in light of two sources of illumination, namely Athanasius's principles about participation and Athanasius's preceding comments about participation in *Orations* 1.9, these statements reveal that Athanasius considers the Holy Spirit to be ontologically distinct from and superior to creatures and to be essentially holy.

Before exploring *Orations* 1.15–16, however, it is important to note that Athanasius disagrees with Origen on the subject of essential hierarchy within the Godhead. As we saw above, Origen believes that the Father is ontologically superior to the other members of the Trinity because the Father is the first principle of everything else that exists. The Word, in turn, is superior to the Spirit, who is superior to all else.

While it is true that Athanasius maintains a certain ordering in the Godhead, in that he identifies the Father as the source of all that the Son

has,<sup>27</sup> Athanasius rejects any notion of a graded ontological hierarchy.<sup>28</sup> To put this in positive terms, Athanasius believes there is only one glory, one level of divinity, one uncreated divine nature.<sup>29</sup> With this noted, we can now consider the pneumatological implications of *Orations* 1.15–16. I will attempt to show that Athanasius’s argument about the possibility of the Son participating in the Holy Spirit provides textual support for my claim that Athanasius regards participation in the Spirit as exclusive and regards the Holy Spirit as uncreated, eternal, and deserving of worship.

*The Exclusivity of Participation in the Holy Spirit*

We begin by returning to the text itself. Part of Athanasius’s argument was quoted above, but now it is worth quoting the full argument.

Athanasius writes:

If then, as you say, “the Son is from nothing,” and “was not before his generation” he, of course, as well as others, must be called “Son” and “God” and “Wisdom” only on account of participation; for thus all other creatures consist, and by sanctification are glorified. Tell us then, what does he [the Son] partake of? All other things partake of the Spirit, but he [the Son], according to you, what is he a partaker of? Of the Spirit? No—the Spirit himself receives from the Son, as he [the Son] himself says (John 16:14); and it is not reasonable to say that the latter is sanctified by the former. Therefore it is the Father that he participates in.  
(*Orations* 1.15 TM).

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<sup>27</sup> See above, p. 104.

<sup>28</sup> As Anatiolios describes it, “whereas Eusebius has a hierarchical chain of being, with the Son in the crucial middle position between the transcendent Unbegotten and the rest of creation, Athanasius presents a strict ontological dialectic between a creation that comes to be from nonbeing and an uncreated divinity” (Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 104–105).

<sup>29</sup> This perspective seems to logically imply that the Holy Spirit is not only uncreated and worthy of worship but also divine. For my assessment on the matter, see below, pp. 256–257, 262–264.

When Athanasius mentions participation in the Holy Spirit, he says that “all other things partake of the Spirit.” This may initially appear to mean that Athanasius believes all created things participate in the Spirit. If this is the case, then Athanasius has taken a step away from the pneumatology of Origen, who, as we noted, restricts participation in the Holy Spirit to “the saints” (*Princ.* 1.3.5 Greek). However, such an interpretation is myopic; Athanasius’s meandering reasoning makes it easy to forget both his preceding comment about sanctification and glorification and also his focus on the question of how the Son possesses Sonship. These factors reveal that Athanasius is thinking specifically of the experience of participation that is traditionally associated with salvation and restricted to Christians. When we interpret Athanasius’s statement that “all other things partake of the Spirit” in light of this context, the meaning is radically different. Rather than denoting all created things, “all things” refers exclusively to the same persons that the phrase “by sanctification are glorified” refers to.

To clarify what I mean by this, it may help to quickly summarize Athanasius’s reasoning in the quotation above. In short, Athanasius’s argument is as follows: If the Son is a creature, then he must possess his titles through participation. This is because Athanasius believes creatures receive a share in incorporeal qualities such as wisdom by means of participation. For example, as we have seen, Athanasius holds that all creatures owe their existence to participation in a truly existent being. Likewise, individuals who receive sanctification, and thus “are glorified,” also owe their experience of sanctification to participation in a truly holy being (*Orations* 1.15). Based on this, Athanasius asks, who does the Son participate in? Athanasius recognizes that if, as he believes, everyone who experiences sanctification receives sanctification through participation in the Holy Spirit, then it is possible that the Son participates in the Holy Spirit. Thus he momentarily voices this as an option, writing: “All other

things partake of the Spirit, but he [the Son], according to you, what is he a partaker of? Of the Spirit?” However, Athanasius immediately rejects this possibility on the basis of sanctification. Answering his own question about if the Son participates in the Spirit, Athanasius writes: “No—the Spirit himself receives from the Son, as he [the Son] himself says (Jn 16:14); and it is not reasonable to say that the latter is sanctified by the former. Therefore it is the Father that he participates in” (*Orations* 1.15 TM).

That Athanasius believes participation in the Holy Spirit is exclusive, limited to those who seek Christ, is also apparent in *Orations* 1.9. Here, after declaring that the Son is true God, Athanasius contrasts the Son’s genuine sonship with that of creatures, writing:

He is not a creature or work but an offspring proper to the Father’s essence, because of which he is true God, existing one in essence (ὁμοούσιος) with the true Father, while other beings, to whom he said, “I said you are Gods” (Ps. 82:6), had this grace from the Father only by participation in the Word, through the Spirit.  
(*Orations* 1.9 TM)

In this text, Athanasius associates participation with deification, and he limits this participation to particular creatures. The only creatures who experience this kind of soteriological participation are those whom the Father chooses to give this grace to. Athanasius also introduces a perspective about participation that he will repeat multiple times in the *Orations* and subsequent writings: saving participation is “participation in the Word, through the Spirit” (μετοχή τοῦ λόγου διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος). We will explore his understanding of this relationship in more detail later,<sup>30</sup> but for now what matters is that this statement implies a kind of chain of participation. Creatures who seek God may receive participation in the

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<sup>30</sup> See below, pp. 257–262 and the discussions of union with the Son through the Spirit in Chapter 7.

Word. This special soteriological participation in the Word is exclusive because it depends on participation in the Holy Spirit, which, as we have seen, is exclusive.

*The Nature of the Holy Spirit*

In this section, I will argue that Athanasius's identification of the Holy Spirit as an entity whom creatures can participate in reveals that Athanasius does not consider the Holy Spirit to be a creature. As we have seen, in the tradition begun with Plato, sensible particulars (and corporeal creatures) can only participate in intelligible realities, which are superior to them. This principle of asymmetrical participation remained common in the fourth century after Christ, amidst the debates over how to reconcile the Scriptural affirmations of unity and plurality in the Godhead with the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. Even if theologians such as Athanasius and Eusebius of Caesarea disagreed over the question of hierarchy in the Godhead, they agreed that participation involving creatures is asymmetrical. Meaning, creatures can only participate in beings that are of a higher reality than themselves. For example, in Eusebius, human beings cannot participate in each other, but they can participate in the Word because the Word, though inferior to the Father, is superior to human beings. Likewise, the Word can participate in the Father because the Father is of a higher reality than the Word.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Arius and Asterius seem to have taught that the Son participates in God's own properties of Wisdom and Power, which are superior to the Son because they belong to God.<sup>32</sup>

Although Athanasius rejects the notion of hierarchy within the

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<sup>31</sup> Lampe, "Christian Theology in the Patristic Period," 92; J. Rebecca Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology: Models of Divine Activity in Origen, Eusebius, and Athanasius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 114–15.

<sup>32</sup> See below, pp. 272–274.

Godhead, because in his binary cosmology there are no intermediary beings or levels of reality between God and creation, Athanasius agrees with the “Eusebians” that creaturely participation is hierarchical. Like his contemporaries, Athanasius believes that when creatures participate in other entities, the participated entity must be of a higher reality than the participating creature. In *Pagans–Incarnation*, for example, Athanasius never speaks of creatures participating in other creatures, but he does speak of creatures participating in the Word,<sup>33</sup> which is possible because the Word, being the Word of God, is uncreated and therefore of a higher reality than creatures. This assumption about the asymmetrical nature of participation is also apparent in *Orations* 1.15. Athanasius reasons that if, as the “Arians” say, the Son is a creature, then he must owe his titles to participation. Moreover, since creaturely participation is asymmetrical, creatures cannot participate in other creatures. Therefore, the Son’s participation must be in either the Father or the Holy Spirit.<sup>34</sup>

This reasoning has major implications for Athanasius’s understanding of the Holy Spirit. If creaturely participation is always hierarchical, with the participant partaking in a higher reality, and if all creatures are of the same level of reality since there are only two levels within the cosmological hierarchy, then creaturely participation in the Spirit is an asymmetrical relationship. Put more simply, when creatures participate in

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<sup>33</sup> See above, pp. 41–43.

<sup>34</sup> It should be noted that when Athanasius concludes that the Son must participate in the Father, and that this participation is essential, meaning the essence of the Son participates in the Father, making the Son himself “what is from the essence of the Father” (*Orations* 1.16), the Father-Son relationship is in line with the kind of symmetrical participatory relationships observed above in Plato. According to Athanasius, the Son participates in the Father, but this is a participatory relationship involving two uncreated beings. Therefore, this is not an asymmetrical participatory relationship between creature and Creator. Instead, it is a symmetrical relationship, in the sense that it is a relationship between two eternal, uncreated entities.

the Spirit they cannot be participating in another created being because of Athanasius's assumptions about participation and cosmology. Instead, these creatures must be participating in a being who is superior to them. Further, because Athanasius rejects the idea of ontological hierarchy in the Godhead, there is only one nature and glory in the Trinity. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is ontologically distinct from and superior to creatures, just as the Word is in *Pagans–Incarnation*. Moreover, like the Word, the Holy Spirit, being uncreated and above creatures, must be eternal, glorious, and worthy of worship by creatures.

These conclusions about the Holy Spirit provide evidence for three of the four the pneumatological implications that we observed in Chapter 4. Consequently, they support my claim that, in the *Orations*, Athanasius came to regard the Holy Spirit as eternal, uncreated, and worthy of worship. In the words of Athanasius, the “Triad is not originated; but there is an eternal and one Godhead in a Triad, and there is one Glory of the Holy Triad” (*Orations* 1.18).

At this point, it is important to observe that Athanasius's theology of participation, especially when combined with his statement about there being “one Godhead in a Triad,” may also imply that the Holy Spirit is, like the Father and Son, divine.<sup>35</sup> Thus, we are left to ask, based on *Orations* 1–2, does Athanasius seem to consciously believe the Holy Spirit

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<sup>35</sup> This is particularly true when one recognizes that Athanasius seems to reject the notion of levels of divinity and graded hierarchy within the Godhead—a point that makes Athanasius's theology significantly different from that of Origen and subsequent writers who retained Origen's conception of ontological hierarchy within the Godhead, such as Eusebius of Caesarea. For these writers, the Holy Spirit, like the Word, is by nature a mediator between God and the world, possessing a nature that is above that of other creatures but below the Unbegotten. However, it is one thing to say that Athanasius rejects a hierarchy of being within the Trinity, but it is another to prove that Athanasius consciously recognized that this mean the Holy Spirit must be truly divine like the Father and Son.

is “true God”? Although this point may be implied here, I believe there is insufficient evidence in *Orations* 1–2 to conclude that Athanasius did, in fact, consciously regard the Holy Spirit as being divine in the same manner and degree as the Father and Son—that is, as “true God.” Instead, what we can be certain of—and thus, what my argument in this thesis focuses on—is that Athanasius regards the Holy Spirit as uncreated, eternal, and appropriate to glorify in worship. These points are but a small step from the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is “true God” and of the same substance as the Father and Son, but, based on all available evidence, Athanasius does not seem to consciously reach this conclusion until the late 350s, when he is directly confronted with the question of the Spirit’s nature.

*Sanctification and the “Ownership”*

*Principle of Participation*

The Spirit’s sanctifying role is mentioned at various points in the thesis,<sup>36</sup> but in the *Orations*, Athanasius uses a framework of participation to explain this activity. Athanasius’s account of sanctification through participation provides not only additional details into the process of sanctification but also further evidence that he regards the Holy Spirit as a being distinct from and superior to creatures.

This evidence becomes apparent when we recognize that Athanasius’s remarks about sanctification through participation in the Holy Spirit rely on one additional principle about participatory relationships. Athanasius assumes this principle in all of his discussions about creatures receiving attributes from participation in members of the Godhead. To my knowledge, the principle was first highlighted in Athanasius’s thought by Maurice Wiles, who observed that Athanasius assumes the principle is universally apparent. The principle, which I will refer to as the

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<sup>36</sup> See especially pp. 89–95, 111–120, 232–233.

“ownership” principle, is this: in relationships of participation, the participated entity can only give participants a share in things that are intrinsic to or truly belong to the participated entity itself. Wiles describes this principle similarly: “One can only communicate to others that which is in the fullest sense one’s own.”<sup>37</sup>

Athanasius expresses this principle most clearly in *Synods* 51, which was written in 359.<sup>38</sup> Athanasius writes:

By partaking of him [the Word], we partake of the Father; because the Word is the Father’s own (ἴδιον τὸν λόγον). If he [the Word] was who he is from participation (ἐκ μετουσίας) and not from his being essential God (οὐσιώδης θεότης) and image of the Father, he could not deify, being deified himself. For it is not possible that he, who merely possesses from participation, should impart of that partaking to others, since what he has is not his own, but belongs to the giver [namely, the Father]; and what he has received, is barely grace sufficient for himself.

(*Synods* 51 TM)

Wiles objects to Athanasius’s assumption that the principle is axiomatic, arguing that “it is not clear that this principle is self-evidently true and it is difficult to see how it could be established.”<sup>39</sup> Wiles is correct that this principle is not axiomatic, but I believe he exaggerates its peculiarity. At the least, a form of the principle is present in Origen’s theology. In Origen, the members of the Trinity can give creatures a share in goodness because the members of the Trinity all possess good essentially (*princ.* 1.6.2). For example, the Word can give a share in attributes such as wisdom, rationality, and life to creatures who participate

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<sup>37</sup> On this principle, see Maurice Wiles, “In Defence of Arius,” *JThS* 13 (1962): 346.

<sup>38</sup> With the exception of sections 30–31, *Synods* was finished in late 359. Sections 30–31 were likely written two years later. For a recent discussion of the subject, see Gwynn, *The Eusebians*, 43–45.

<sup>39</sup> Wiles, “In Defence of Arius,” 346.

in him. This is because, as Balás puts it, the Word “has the essential possession” of these perfections.<sup>40</sup> Likewise, as we will discuss below, the Holy Spirit can provide partakers in the Spirit with holiness because the Spirit is essentially holy.

Athanasius assumes the ownership principle many years before writing *Synods*. The principle is implicit in *Pagans* 41, where he teaches that God, being good, offset creation’s natural propensity for dissolution by giving it a participation in the Word, who truly exists. God arranged the world in a manner that would allow it to “remain in existence, since it participated in the really being Word out of the Father and is helped by him to its existence, lest it experienced what it would have experienced if the Word did not preserve it, I mean non-being.”<sup>41</sup> Athanasius assumes that if the Word existed through participation, then he, being naturally unstable, would be unable to provide creation with stable existence.<sup>42</sup> Instead, Athanasius emphasizes, the Word “has true existence.” This ownership is why the Word can give creatures participation in existence. Athanasius also assumes this principle in *Orations* 1.9, while contrasting the Son’s divinity with the deification available to creatures through participation in the Son. Creatures may be deified through union with the Son because the Son, being “an offspring proper to the Father’s essence” and “true God” (*Orations* 1.9), truly possesses the divine nature and thus can give creatures a share in it, making them “gods” by grace.<sup>43</sup>

Having observed the presence of the ownership principle in Athanasius’s works, including in early writings such as *Pagans* and *Orations* 1, we can now consider its influence on Athanasius’s understanding of sanctification through the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>40</sup> Balás, Μετουσία Θεοῦ, 10.

<sup>41</sup> *Pagans* 41. ET from Meijering, *Contra Gentes*, 136.

<sup>42</sup> See Meijering, *Contra Gentes*, 137.

<sup>43</sup> On deification in Athanasius, see above, pp. 58n40, 58–61.

*The Holiness of the Spirit*

Our discussion of Irenaeus and Origen showed, among other things, that some ante-Nicene writers associated participation in the Holy Spirit with the reception of qualities belonging to the Spirit. Irenaeus taught that those who partake of the Spirit become spiritual. Origen provided more details on this participatory relationship. Only those persons seeking God and holiness can participate in the Holy Spirit. Further, the Holy Spirit, being an incorporeal sanctifying power and member of the Trinity, has an essential possession of goodness and holiness. Importantly, when humans come to participate in the Holy Spirit, they gain a participation in the Spirit's holiness (*princ.* 1.3.8 Latin).

Unlike Origen's *princ.*, Athanasius's *Orations* lack technical discussions about the nature and mode of existence of the Holy Spirit. Athanasius never speaks of the Holy Spirit as an incorporeal sanctifying power (cf. *Princ.* 1.1.3), nor does he explicitly teach that the essence of the Spirit truly possesses goodness and holiness (cf. *princ.* 1.6.2, 1.3.8). However, despite Athanasius's silence on such technical matters, the theology that he develops in the *Orations* about the work of the Holy Spirit suggests that he believes at least the third point, namely that the Holy Spirit is essentially holy and truly possesses holiness.

Following Scripture and Christian tradition, Athanasius associates the Holy Spirit with helping human beings attain holiness. In Chapters 2 and 3, we observed this theme while exploring Athanasius's pastoral works, but it also frequently occurs in the *Orations*.<sup>44</sup> This creaturely attainment of holiness is what Athanasius usually refers to when speaking of sanctification. In the previous chapter, as we looked at Athanasius's

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<sup>44</sup> On the sanctifying work of the Spirit in the pastoral writings, see above, pp. 85–99, 111–120. For examples of the subject in the *Orations*, see *Orations* 1.15, 1.46–48, 1.50, 2.14, 2.18, 3.1.

interpretation of Ps. 45:7, we noted Athanasius's emphasis on the Word receiving the Holy Spirit and sanctification into his body for the sake of making it possible for other humans to receive sanctification through the Spirit. Yet, we did not consider why Athanasius believes the Holy Spirit is an agent capable of sanctifying creatures. Now, however, we can answer this question. For Athanasius, the Holy Spirit has the ability to sanctify human beings because the Holy Spirit is essentially holy. In line with the "ownership" principle, this essential holiness means the Holy Spirit is capable of giving creatures a share in holiness. Athanasius believes that when creatures receive the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit begins working to make them active partakers of holiness. In this respect, Athanasius's pneumatology and soteriology remains in continuity with his pastoral works. As Chapters 2 and 3 showed, the pastoral works insist both that sanctification is necessary for eternal life and that the Holy Spirit is the primary agent who helps "clothe" Christians with this holiness by empowering them to overcome sin. Athanasius repeats these views in the *Orations*. As we have just observed, and as the next chapter will further demonstrate, in the *Orations* the Holy Spirit helps Christians attain the holiness that Christ calls them to. In this way, the Holy Spirit perfects or completes the soteriological initiative begun by the Father and Son.<sup>45</sup>

Athanasius's belief that the Holy Spirit is essentially holy provides additional evidence suggesting that at this stage in his career he regarded the Spirit as distinct from creatures, being instead eternal, uncreated, and glorious. Athanasius's doctrine of salvation reflects his vision of the dialectical relationship between God and creation. In this vision, creatures owe their experience of everything good, including participation in virtues and intelligible things, to God (*Incarnation* 3). In the next chapter, we will observe Athanasius discuss how the Father gives grace to creation through

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<sup>45</sup> See below, pp. 310–311.

his Son and Holy Spirit. In *Incarnation* 3, however, the emphasis on divine giving is already in place. When God made human beings, he gave them a share in the Word, who gives them a share in his rationality. In *Pagans-Incarnation* and the *Orations*, creatures' participation in the Word shows that the Word is not a creature.<sup>46</sup> As a result of Athanasius's emphasis on the giving of grace as a divine work, the gift of participation in holiness through the Holy Spirit, like participation in rationality through the Word, has doctrinal implications. When the Word gives creatures a share in his own rationality, this activity is an example of goodness being given by "God" in two senses. First, the gift is given by the Father working through the Son, and thus we can say that "God" (the Father) is the source of the grace. Second, because the Son is giving participation in a divine grace, this shows that the Son is himself divine; therefore, the gift is also given by "God" the Son. Likewise, the Holy Spirit giving creatures a participation in holiness is another example of God the Father giving grace through one of his "hands" (if we may borrow the language of Irenaeus), but this activity also distinguishes the Holy Spirit from the created order. The Holy Spirit gives creatures participation in the Spirit's own essential holiness—an attribute that no creature naturally possesses. This giving of grace implies that the Spirit, like the Son, is eternal, uncreated, ontologically superior to creatures, and, therefore, worthy of worship.<sup>47</sup>

*The Holy Spirit's Reception from the Son*

In *Orations* 1.15, while considering the possibility of the Son owing his titles to participation in the Holy Spirit, Athanasius speaks of the Holy

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<sup>46</sup> See, for example, *Pagans* 41, 46; *Incarnation* 11; *Orations* 1.16, 1.28, 3.1. See also Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius, The Early Church Fathers* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 34–35.

<sup>47</sup> Athanasius explicitly develops forms of this argument in *Serapion*. See especially *Serapion* 1.22 and 1.27.

Spirit receiving from the Son in a manner that may parallel the Son's receiving from the Father. Athanasius also repeats this idea in *Orations* 3.24 and 3.44. In *Orations* 1, Athanasius writes:

Tell us then, what does he [the Son] partake of? All other things partake of the Spirit, but he [the Son], according to you, what is he a partaker of? Of the Spirit? No—the Spirit himself receives from the Son, as he [the Son] himself says (John 16:14); and it is not reasonable to say that the latter is sanctified by the former. Therefore it is the Father that he participates in. (*Orations* 1.15)

In the quotation above, and also in *Orations* 3.24 and 3.44, Athanasius does not say that the Spirit participates in the Son, but Athanasius's statements about the Spirit receiving from the Son could reflect his doctrine of the Son's reception from the Father.<sup>48</sup> Thus, several scholars, interpreting Athanasius's remarks about the Spirit receiving from the Son in this manner, take these remarks as an indication that Athanasius believed the Holy Spirit receives the divine nature and divine attributes from the Son, just as the Son does from the Father. If this is the case, then, since Athanasius rejects the notion of levels of divinity, it would seem that by the 340s Athanasius regarded the Holy Spirit as being of the same divine nature as the Father and Son, and thus "true God." However, what these scholars do not acknowledge is that it is also possible that in the *Orations* Athanasius understands the Spirit's reception from the Son in a much less complicated manner. The Spirit receiving from the Son is based on John 16:13–14, which is a verse that, when read within its Biblical context, speaks only of the Spirit receiving his message from the Son.<sup>49</sup> Significantly, when Athanasius references this verse in *Orations*

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<sup>48</sup> For further supplementary details on the Son's participation in the Father (and reception from the Father) in *Orations* 1.15–16, see below, Appendix C (pp. 319–322).

<sup>49</sup> In John 16:12–15, Jesus says: "I still have many things to say to you, but you

3.44, it is in regard to the Holy Spirit receiving knowledge about the day of Christ's return. Therefore, based on the evidence available to us, we cannot be certain that in the *Orations* Athanasius believed the Holy Spirit receives the divine nature and attributes from the Son. It could well be that he did not read John 16:13–14 in this manner until he began to respond to the "Tropikoi."

#### 4. Pneumatology in *Orations* 1.50

In *Orations* 1.50, Athanasius discusses Christ's ability to give the Holy Spirit to creatures. As we will see, Athanasius makes Christological points based on this economic activity. Athanasius's discussion of Christ giving the Spirit arises over the question of if the Son is inferior to the Spirit, and his discussion touches on related subjects, including the exorcism of demons through the Holy Spirit, the blasphemy against the Spirit, and the equality between the Son and the Spirit. In this section, I will argue that in *Orations* 1.50 Athanasius makes three points about the Holy Spirit that support my claims about his pneumatology: the Holy Spirit can cast out demons and sanctify, therefore the Spirit is not a creature; blaspheming against the Spirit is unforgivable, therefore the Spirit is not a creature; the Spirit and the Son are equal, therefore the Spirit is, at least, eternal, uncreated, and worthy of worship. We will begin by observing Athanasius's discussion about Christ as the giver of the Holy Spirit.

#### *Anthropology and Christology*

The *Orations* contain over a dozen references to the Son giving the Holy Spirit to creatures.<sup>50</sup> Although this giving occurs in the economy of

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cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

salvation, to Athanasius it has implications for theology proper. This is perhaps most apparent in *Orations* 1.50, where Athanasius addresses “Arian” notions that Christ must be inferior to the Spirit (and certainly inferior to the Father) because Christ was anointed with the Spirit, cast out demons through the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:28), and said that “whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven” (Matt. 12:32). Significantly, as we will now see, Athanasius takes the Son’s economic giving of the Spirit as proof of a theological reality about the Son.

In the first part of *Orations* 1.50, Athanasius contrasts the Holy Spirit’s abilities with those of Christ’s humanity. Athanasius writes:

What is there to wonder at, what to disbelieve, if the Lord who gives the Spirit, is here said himself to be anointed with the Spirit, at a time when, necessity requiring it, he did not refuse in respect of his manhood to call himself inferior to the Spirit? For the Jews saying that he cast out devils in Beelzebub, he answered and said to them, for the exposure of their blasphemy, “But if I through the Spirit of God cast out demons” (Matt. 12:28). Behold, the Giver of the Spirit here says that he cast out demons in the Spirit; but this is not said, except because of his flesh. For since man’s nature is not equal of itself to casting out demons, but only in power of the Spirit, therefore as man he said, “But if I through the Spirit of God cast out demons.” Of course too he signified that the blasphemy offered to the Holy Spirit is greater than that against his humanity, when he said, “Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him;” such as were those who said, “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” but they who blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, and ascribe the deeds of the Word to the devil, shall have inevitable punishment....

(*Orations* 1.50)

Here, we can see that Athanasius is drawing theological conclusions from economic activities. Specifically, Athanasius makes conclusions

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<sup>50</sup> For examples of these references, see *Orations* 1.16, 1.43, 1.46, 1.47, 1.48, 1.49, 1.50 2.18, 2.51, 2.59, 2.61, 3.19, 3.23, 3.24, 3.25.

about anthropology, Christology, and Pneumatology. These conclusions are repeated in the second part of *Orations* 1.50, and so it will be helpful to quote that portion of the text before discussing the conclusions themselves. Speaking of the Son, Athanasius writes:

To the disciples showing his Godhead and his majesty, and intimating that he was not inferior but equal to the Spirit, he gave the Spirit and said, “Receive the Holy Ghost,” and “I send him,” and “He shall glorify me,” and “Whatsoever he hears, that he shall speak.” As then in this place the Lord himself, the Giver of the Spirit, does not refuse to say that through the Spirit he casts out demons, as man; in like manner he the same, the Giver of the Spirit, refused not to say, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me” (Isa. 61:1), in respect of his having become flesh, as John has said; that it might be shown in both these particulars, that we are they who need the Spirit’s grace in our sanctification, and again who are unable to cast out demons without the Spirit’s power. Through whom then and from whom should the Spirit be given but through the Son, whose also the Spirit is (οὗ καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμά ἐστι)?  
(*Orations* 1.50)

In these portions of *Orations* 1.50, Athanasius makes points about the nature and limitations of human beings, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We will begin with his points about anthropology.

Athanasius argues that Christ’s experience of the Holy Spirit, namely his anointing with the Spirit and need for the Spirit’s assistance to cast out demons, demonstrates humanity’s natural limitations and need for grace. Human bodies, including Christ’s own human body, are naturally incapable of casting out demons; the human body requires the assistance of the Holy Spirit in order to cast out demons.

Continuing on the subject of anthropology, Athanasius also makes an important but less obvious point about the moral limitations of human beings. In Chapter 5, while looking at Athanasius’s interpretation of Ps. 45:7 in *Orations* 1.46–1.50, we noted that Athanasius argues that the Son received the Holy Spirit into his human body for the benefit of human

beings. Part of this benefit included sanctification. Christ's reception of the Spirit and the sanctification of his body made it possible for other human bodies to subsequently receive the Spirit and experience sanctification. In the quotation from *Orations* 1.50 above, Athanasius makes a point that relates to the subject of sanctification and anthropology. Athanasius argues that the Son's experience with the Holy Spirit shows not only that human beings need the Spirit in order to cast out demons, but also that human beings need the Holy Spirit in order to attain holiness. As Athanasius puts it, "we are they who need the Spirit's grace in our sanctification" (*Orations* 1.50).<sup>51</sup> With this statement, Athanasius explicitly states what he seems to have assumed in many of his earlier works: sinful human beings are incapable of experiencing sanctification—of becoming holy—without divine grace, in general, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, in particular.

Athanasius's primary point in the quotations above concerns Christology. He recognizes that Christ's need for the Holy Spirit could be interpreted as a sign that the Son is ontologically inferior to the Spirit. To refute this view, Athanasius argues that it was only Christ's humanity that needed the help of the Spirit. In Athanasius's view, the Son's giving of the Holy Spirit shows that the Son is "not inferior but equal to the Spirit" (*Orations* 1.50). This means that the Son is also naturally capable of casting out demons and, like the Spirit, is not a creature.

Athanasius justifies this Christological claim, that the Son is not inferior to the Spirit, by pointing to the Son's role as giver of the Holy Spirit. Following the teaching of the New Testament and the Christian

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<sup>51</sup> The relevant portion of *Orations* 1.50 reads: "[Christ] the Giver of the Spirit, refused not to say, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me,' (Isaiah 61:1) in respect of His having become flesh, as John has said; that it might be shown in both these particulars, that we are they who need the Spirit's grace in our sanctification, and again who are unable to cast out demons without the Spirit's power."

tradition, Athanasius credits the Son with giving the gift of the indwelling and active presence of the Holy Spirit to human beings. To Athanasius, it is fitting for the Son to give the Holy Spirit, and this giving implies that the Son is not inferior to the Spirit.<sup>52</sup> There is more to say about the Son's giving of the Spirit, but we will return to this subject after first considering the pneumatological implications of Athanasius's arguments about the Son's equality with the Spirit.

*Equality between the Son and Holy Spirit*

In the course of Athanasius developing his Christological argument in *Orations* 1.50 that the Son is not inferior but equal to the Spirit, three points related to pneumatology arise. The first point emerges from Athanasius's anthropological perspectives, discussed above, that human beings cannot cast out demons or attain holiness without the aid of the Holy Spirit. The pneumatological point is simple but still worth noting: the Holy Spirit is capable of exorcising demons and sanctifying human beings. In previous chapters, we witnessed Athanasius credit the Spirit with sanctifying human beings, and we even observed that this ability indicates that the Spirit truly possesses holiness. However, in the context of Athanasius's argument in *Orations* 1.50, this point about the Spirit's sanctifying power and authority to exorcise demons also tells us about the Spirit's nature. Because the Holy Spirit is capable of sanctifying human beings and exorcising demons, the Spirit must be more powerful than humans and demons. This implies that the Spirit is ontologically superior to humans, demons, and other creatures—meaning the Spirit is not a creature.

These implications also arise as Athanasius attempts to explain why

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<sup>52</sup> Because the Father sends the Son, and the Son helps send the Holy Spirit, Athanasius's theology maintains a sense of hierarchy of within the Godhead even though, as we have seen, Athanasius rejects an ontological hierarchy.

blasphemies against “the Son of Man” will be forgiven but blasphemies against the Holy Spirit “will not be forgiven, either in this age or the age to come” (Matt. 12:31–32). In Athanasius’s interpretation of these verses, which occurs in *Orations* 1.50, when Jesus spoke of blasphemies against “the Son of Man,” Jesus was referring to insults that are spoken against his human body and its natural limitations. Because these insults are against the Son’s assumed humanity rather than against the Son in and of himself, they are forgivable because, in principle, they are insults against “man” rather than “God.”<sup>53</sup> In contrast, when Jesus spoke of blasphemies against the Spirit, he was referring to insults that are spoken against the divine actions done in his body, which were made possible through the power of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Blasphemies of this kind are unforgivable because they insult members of the Godhead (the Son and the Holy Spirit).

The second point, therefore, is that Athanasius regards both the unforgivable nature of blasphemy against the Spirit and also the Spirit’s abilities to sanctify humans and to exorcise demons as indications that the Spirit is ontologically superior to creatures. Indeed, in *Orations* 1.50, Athanasius worries that these are such clear signs of the Spirit’s glory that some readers might conclude that the Spirit is superior to the Son.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Athanasius seems to assume that insults against God are unforgivable.

<sup>54</sup> Athanasius’s concern has similarities to a point that occur towards the end of Origen’s exposition on the Holy Spirit in the Latin translation of *princ.* There, Origen recognizes that since the Spirit works in the saints alone, and since the blasphemy against the Spirit cannot be forgiven, some readers might erroneously conclude that the Spirit is superior to the Father and Son (*princ.* 1.3.7 Latin). Origen emphasizes that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are inseparable and equal—a point that we would be inclined to argue Athanasius adapted, if it were not that case that this is likely an addition by Rufinus. It seems most likely to me that only Athanasius’s concern about the superiority of the Spirit was influenced (directly or indirectly) by *princ.* 1.3.7. On the possibility of Rufinus adding the point about the Spirit being inseparable and equal, see G. W. Butterworth, *Origen: On First Principles; Being Koetschau’s Text of the De Principiis Translated into*

Specifically, Athanasius seems to be worried that readers might conclude that, although the Spirit is a member of the Godhead, the Son is not. Thus, Athanasius emphasizes that the Son is the one who gives the Spirit, which demonstrates the Son's "Godhead and his majesty" (*Orations* 1.50).

The final point that I wish to note is implied by Athanasius's argument that the Son is equal to the Spirit. Athanasius's argument reinforces my earlier claim that, in the *Orations*, Athanasius believes the Holy Spirit is an uncreated, eternal, glorious being. By insisting that the Son is "not inferior but equal to the Spirit" (*Orations* 1.50), Athanasius seems to make the Spirit ontologically equal to the Son (who is himself ontologically equal to the Father). This may be the strongest piece of evidence in the *Orations* that Athanasius was coming to regard the Holy Spirit as "true God;"<sup>55</sup> however, even this text is not conclusive. Athanasius's focus in *Orations* 1.50 is on demonstrating that, despite the incarnate Son's human weaknesses, the Son is not a creature by nature. When Athanasius says the Son is "not inferior but equal to the Spirit," his point seems to be that the Son is like the Spirit—namely, eternal, uncreated, and a member of the Godhead (and, thus, appropriate to glorify with the Father and Son).

### Conclusion

In the *Orations*, Athanasius uses participation language to help explain the dynamic relationship that faithful Christians have with the Trinity and with the soteriological benefits that the Trinity confers to them, including

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*English, Together with an Introduction and Notes* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 37n6.

<sup>55</sup> On the importance of this text, I agree with Laminski, who notes that this text may provide the clearest indication in the *Orations* of the Spirit's divinity. However, I disagree with Laminski's conclusion that this text does, in fact, demonstrate that Athanasius believed the Spirit is divine. See Laminski, *Der Heilige Geist*, 44.

adoption, deification, and union. As with Christian writers before him, including Irenaeus and Origen, Athanasius assumes principles that can be traced back to Plato, including the notions of asymmetrical participation and a hierarchy of being. Based on these principles, Athanasius believes creatures cannot participate in other creatures; instead, creatures can only participate in entities who are ontologically superior to them—such as the members of the Godhead. This perspective has important implications for Athanasius’s understanding of the Holy Spirit. Because Athanasius believes creatures only participate in superior entities, when Athanasius speaks of creatures participating in the Holy Spirit, Athanasius implies that the Holy Spirit must be ontologically superior to creatures, which would mean that the Spirit, in contrast to creatures, is eternal and uncreated.

Unlike Origen, Athanasius rejects the notion of the hierarchy of being extending into the Trinity. For Athanasius, there is only one glory, one level of divinity, one uncreated divine nature—which seems to imply that the Holy Spirit may be not only uncreated but also divine. However, there is insufficient evidence in the *Orationes* to conclude that, at this point in his career, Athanasius consciously arrived at this conclusion. What we can say with much greater certainty, and thus what this thesis argues, is that Athanasius considers the Holy Spirit to be superior to creatures in the sense that the Spirit is uncreated, eternal, and worthy of worship. Further, as we have seen, Athanasius appears to have also conceived of the Spirit as essentially holy—a characteristic that further distinguishes the Spirit from creatures. The Holy Spirit can give creatures a share in holiness because the Spirit essentially possesses holiness. In the next chapter, we will see that this same logic guides Athanasius’s views on how participation in the Holy Spirit gives Christians union with Christ. The Spirit can join creatures to the Son because the Spirit possesses an inseparable union with the Son.

## The Spirit of the Son: The Holy Spirit's Union with the Son

### Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that in the *Orationes* Athanasius understands the Holy Spirit to have an inseparable union with the Son that mirrors the Son's union with the Father. To provide background for this claim, the chapter begins by examining Athanasius's account of the Son's union with the Father. As we will see, Athanasius uses the word ἴδιος to express the notion that the Son eternally belongs with the Father. Although Athanasius does not use ἴδιος to speak of the Spirit-Son relationship until *Serapion*, in the *Orationes* Athanasius seems to understand the Spirit-Son relationship in this manner. What this means is that the Holy Spirit always exists in relation to the Son, just as the Son does to the Father. In this chapter, this claim is developed and supported through careful analysis of four contexts where Athanasius seems to imply that the Spirit has an intrinsic union with the Son. These contexts pertain to the Spirit belonging to and being given by the Son, the Spirit being "in" the Word as the Word is "in" the Father, the Spirit giving creatures union with the Son, and the Spirit contributing to the united soteriological activity of the Trinity.

### 1. ἴδιος and the Father-Son Relationship

To begin, we will now consider the relevant background behind Athanasius's belief that the Son is ἴδιος ("proper") to the Father, which, as

the later sections of this chapter will show, provides the pattern for the Spirit's union with the Son. Our discussion starts with Arius, followed by Alexander and then Athanasius.

*Ἰδιος in Arius*

The use of ἴδιος (“proper”) to describe the Son’s relationship to the Father emerged in fourth-century Alexandria in a debate between Alexander and Arius over the interpretation of Scripture. Khaled Anatolios has recently highlighted this hermeneutical context, showing that Arius and Asterius discovered the usefulness of the language while attempting to reconcile the description in 1 Cor. 1:24 of Christ as the Power and Wisdom of God with the statement in Rom. 1:20 that God’s Power is eternal.<sup>1</sup> Arius and Asterius solved this problem by maintaining that the Scriptures speak of Power, Wisdom, and Word in two senses: personal and impersonal.<sup>2</sup> The impersonal sense refers to God’s

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<sup>1</sup> Anatolios, “Power and Wisdom,” 516–17. For the larger theological context of this debate, see also Chapters 3 and 4 in Michel René Barnes, *The Power of God: Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001).

One of the important advancements that has been made in the study of the fourth-century Trinitarian controversies is a deeper recognition that these controversies were, at their heart, rooted in the interpretation of Scripture. The assessment of Henry Gwatkin, *Studies of Arianism*, 2nd ed. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1900), 18–27, for example, that “Arianism” was “as much a philosophy as a religion,” has been shown to be inaccurate. Gwatkin, who regarded Athanasius as “the greatest of the Eastern Fathers” (71), accepted at face value the polemic that Athanasius and other pro-Nicene writers brought against “Arianism,” resulting in the conclusion that it focused on philosophical questions rather than exegesis. On the exegetical character of these controversies, see, for example, the arguments of Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that neither Arius nor Asterius describe their solution using this language, but the language does accurately capture their perspective. Anatolios, “Power and Wisdom,” 517, suggests this mirrors (but does not necessarily draw on) Porphyry’s use of ἴδιος.

possession of Power, Wisdom, and Word as impersonal attributes or properties that are intrinsic to God. When Rom. 1:20 says that God's Power is eternal, this statement refers to God's impersonal property of Power. The second sense of Wisdom, Power, and Word is personal, referring to the Son. This is the sense of the titles in 1 Cor. 1:24, which says Christ is "the Power of God and the Wisdom of God."

In Athanasius's depiction in *Orations* 1.5 of the "Arian" Trinitarian "blasphemies," Athanasius attributes this "two Words" and "two Wisdoms" doctrine to Arius.

He [Arius] says that there are two wisdoms, first, [the Wisdom] that is proper and co-existent with God (μίαν μὲν τὴν ἰδίαν καὶ συνυπάρχουσαν τῷ Θεῷ), and next, that in this wisdom the Son was originated, and was only named Wisdom and Word as partaking of it. "For Wisdom," says he, "by the will of the wise God, had its existence in Wisdom." In like manner, he says, that there is another Word in God besides the Son, and that the Son again, as partaking of it, is named Word and Son according to grace. (*Orations* 1.5 TM)

According to Athanasius, Arius denied that the Son is the Word and Wisdom that is "proper" (ἴδια) to and eternally coexistent with God. Instead, the Son receives the titles of Word and Wisdom through participation in the eternal impersonal properties of Word and Wisdom that are intrinsic to God's being.

Although Arius likely expressed his doctrine in a more nuanced manner than Athanasius's account suggests, Arius's concerns are clear. Arius wishes to remain faithful to the Scriptures, which consistently present Christ as a personal being. Consequently, Arius avoids speaking of the Son as God's "proper" Word and Wisdom because he believes this language would imply that the Son is merely an impersonal property of God.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Williams, "Logic of Arianism," 59; see also *Orations* 1.9, where Arius is said

*Ἰδιος in Alexander*

Alexander, on the other hand, uses ἴδιος to affirm the Son's intrinsic connection to the Father. While writing to his namesake in Byzantium,<sup>4</sup> Alexander presents a collection of Biblical texts that, he believes, provide an accurate account of the Son's divinity and relationship to the Father. Like Arius, Alexander sees the Son as a personal being and the interpretation of Scripture as the heart of any debate over exactly how the Son is related to the Father. Alexander's first collection of texts includes John 1:1–3, 1:18; Heb. 1:2; and Col. 1:16–17. Alexander alleges that these texts together show the Son's uncreated nature and inseparability from the Father. The Son, Alexander says, "is from the Father" and not created "from nothing;" also, the Son exists inseparably with the Father because there is no interval of time between the Father's existence and the Son's derivation from the Father.<sup>5</sup> Further, Alexander argues, these texts show that the Son has by nature the Father's "paternal divinity" (τῆς πατρικῆς θεότητος), meaning his sonship "differs by an unmentionable excess from those who have been adopted as sons through him by adoption" (*ep. Alex.* 29).

Alexander's use of ἴδιος occurs in the context of this argument, where he works to further distinguish the Son, who is "by nature the Son of the Father," from creatures, who may become "sons by adoption." As Alexander develops this contrast, he brings together a second collection of texts, all of which emphasize the intimacy, genuineness, and uniqueness of

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to have taught that the Son "is not proper to the Father's essence."

<sup>4</sup> Theodoret, *h.e.* 1.3., identifies Alexander of Byzantium as the recipient of Alexander's *ep. Alex.*; however, it is possible that the original recipient was Alexander of Thessalonica, who was a supporter of Athanasius. See Hanson, *The Search*, 135–136.

<sup>5</sup> Craig Alan Blaising, "Creedal Formation as Hermeneutical Development: A Reexamination of Nicaea," *Pro Ecclesia* 19, no. 4 (2010): 378–79.

the Son's relationship to the Father. These texts include Matt. 3:17, Ps. 2:7, 110:10, and—most importantly for the subject of ἴδιος—Rom. 8:32. Having just contrasted the Son's natural sonship with adoptive sonship, Alexander expounds on the Son's filial relationship, writing:

Therefore Paul made known his legitimate, distinctive, essential, and special sonship, saying about God, "...Who did not spare his own son (τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ) but delivered him for us" (who are clearly not sons by nature) [Rom. 8:32]. For to make a distinction between those who are not his own, Paul said that he was his own Son. And in the Gospel, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased" [Matt. 3:17]. In the Psalms the Savior says, "The Lord said to me, 'You are my son'" [Ps. 2:7]. Explaining the true Sonship, he indicates that there are not some other legitimate sons besides himself. What does the phrase "from the womb before morning I begot you" [Ps. 110:10 LXX] indicate?  
(*ep. Alex.* 32–34)

To Alexander, these texts speak of the Son's special filial relationship to the Father, and they show that the Son's relationship is not due to adoption or participation. Perhaps aware of the use of ἴδιος in Arius's doctrine of two Wisdoms, wherein ἴδιος is used to distinguish God's own attribute of Wisdom from the Son as "Wisdom,"<sup>6</sup> Alexander uses ἴδιος for a different purpose—to emphasize that the Son eternally belongs with the Father.

The Son, Alexander says, is ἴδιος to the Father but not in the sense of being an impersonal divine property. Instead, based on his reading of Scripture, Alexander believes the existence of the Son is fundamental to who God is.<sup>7</sup> In the previous paragraph (*ep. Alex.* 26–31), Alexander established a correlation between the fatherhood of God and the existence

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<sup>6</sup> See above, p. 274.

<sup>7</sup> As Andrew Louth puts it, for Alexander "the Son belongs to the substance of God and is not part of the created order." Andrew Louth, "The Use of the Term ἴδιος in Alexandrian Theology from Alexander to Cyril," *SP* 19 (1989): 198.

of the Son. God “is always the Father” because “he is the Father of the always present Son, on account of whom he is called Father” (*ep. Alex.* 26). In order to avoid attributing change to God, God must always be Father. This means, by correlation, that the Son must also always exist, since God cannot be Father without his Son.

To Alexander, the ἴδιος language of Rom. 8:32 testifies to the same reality. The Son is the Father’s very “own” Son, meaning he is truly “from” the Father rather than from “nothing,” and his relationship to the Father is completely different than a creature’s relationship to the Father. In particular, the Son was begotten from the Father before the creation of time or light, and the two have been inseparably united to one another ever since.<sup>8</sup> Creatures, on the other hand, begin estranged from God and only become children of God through the act of God’s will.<sup>9</sup>

In an attempt to communicate the uniqueness of this relationship, which Alexander sees expressed in Rom. 8:32 and these other texts, Alexander uses a related word, ιδιότροπον, alongside three other adjectives to emphasize the difference between the Son’s sonship and a creature’s adopted sonship. The Son’s sonship, Alexander says, is “legitimate” (γνησίαν), “essential” (φυσικὴν), “distinctive” (ἐξαιρέτων), and therefore unlike the adoptive sonship of creatures (*ep. Alex.* 32). The Son alone is truly the Father’s “own” Son (ιδιότροπον).<sup>10</sup> According to Alexander, Paul recognized this difference and used ἴδιος to verbalize it. “For to make a distinction between those who are not his own, Paul said that he was his

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<sup>8</sup> In *ep. Alex.* 34, Alexander interprets Ps. 110:10 LXX, which speaks of being begotten “before morning” as evidence that the Son existed before the creation of light and time (cf. Gen 1:3–5).

<sup>9</sup> On adoptive sonship as an act of God’s will, see *ep. Alex.* 11–14.

<sup>10</sup> *Ep. Alex.* 32. On ιδιότροπον, see G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 666. For this sense, see, for example, Dio Chrysostom, *Oration* 66.20, where ιδιότροπον describes a child’s own unique fear. The specific fear belongs only to that particular child.

own (ἰδιον) Son” (*ep. Alex.* 33). Alexander sees Rom. 8:32 as an unequivocal affirmation of the Son’s unique relationship to the Father. In contrast to creatures, the Son is the Father’s only begotten genuine Son. As such, being God’s “own” Son, the Son eternally exists in an inseparable union with the Father. This notion of a member of the Trinity existing in an eternal relationship with another because the one “belongs” to the other will prove important in our study of Athanasius’s pneumatology. We will see that Athanasius envisions the Spirit having an inseparable union with the Son because the Spirit belongs to the Son in a manner that mirrors the Son’s relationship with the Father. Therefore, before turning to pneumatology, we should look at how Athanasius picks up and develops Alexander’s conception of the Son being “proper” to and belonging to the Father.

*Ἰδιος in Athanasius*

As with Alexander and Arius, Athanasius’s conception of the Father-Son relationship is driven by the interpretation of Scripture. The prominence of Wisdom and Power language in the “Arian errors list” of *Orations* 1.5 shows, as we noted above, that 1 Cor. 1:24 was a particularly controversial text. Athanasius rejects the “two Wisdoms” interpretation of the verse. He argues that this kind of distinction between God’s intrinsic properties of Power and Wisdom and the Son’s titles of Wisdom and Power makes Christ no better than many of the other powers in the Scriptures. Indeed, Athanasius claims, the “Arian” doctrine of “two Wisdoms” makes Christ inferior to the locust and the caterpillar mentioned in Joel 2:25 because Scripture calls them “great powers.”

In response to this doctrine, Athanasius uses ἰδιος among other notable terms to present a positive account of the Son’s relationship to the Father. In *Orations* 1.9, Athanasius writes:

For, behold, we take divine Scripture, and thence discourse with freedom of the religious faith, and set it up as a light upon its candlestick, saying: “He is the true Son of the Father, natural and genuine, proper to his essence (ἴδιος τῆς οὐσίας), Wisdom only-begotten and true and only Word of God; he is not a creature or work but an offspring proper to the Father’s essence (ἴδιον τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς οὐσίας), because of which he is true God, existing one in essence (ὁμοούσιος) with the true Father, while other beings, to whom he said, ‘I said you are Gods,’ had this grace from the Father only by participation in the Word, through the Spirit; for he is the expression of the Father’s Person, and Light from Light, and Power, and true Image of the Father’s essence.”

(*Orations* 1.9 TM)

As Athanasius works to present his understanding of the Biblical doctrine of the Son of God, he uses the term ὁμοούσιος for the first time. However, despite the term’s later theological significance, here ὁμοούσιος serves as just one term in a lengthy, theologically thick exposition. Athanasius gives us no reason to believe that he or his audience would have considered ὁμοούσιος to be more important than the other expressions in the sentence.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, when Athanasius’s exposition is treated as a unit, the most important language appears to be at the beginning, in Athanasius’s thesis statement. He contends that the proper interpretation of Scripture shows that Christ is “the true Son of the Father, natural and genuine.” The statement’s language is remarkably simple, yet, to Athanasius, it is packed with meaning. Athanasius believes “true Son of the Father, natural and genuine” contains within it the affirmation of the Son’s divinity, eternal relation to the Father, and superiority over creation.

Athanasius uses a series of phrases to clarify his understanding of “true Son.” “Natural” and “genuine” come from Alexander, who used

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<sup>11</sup> On the significance of ὁμοούσιος here, see Ayres, “Defense of ‘Ὁμοούσιος’”: 340, 344n23. For additional details on ἴδιος in Athanasius, see also Louth, “Ἰδιος in Alexandrian Theology,” 198–202; Anatolios, *Coherence*, 102–7.

them to contrast the sonship of the Son from that available to creatures,<sup>12</sup> and Athanasius uses them in a related manner—to contrast the Son’s divinity from that available to creatures through deifying participation. The Son, being the “natural” and “genuine” Son of God, is not created but begotten of the Father. As a result of this derivation from the Father, the Son shares the same divine nature as the Father. A further implication of this is that, because the Son is of the divine nature and the Father is always “Father,” the Son is eternal, always existing in an inseparable filial relationship to the Father.

Athanasius’s phrases “Wisdom Only-begotten” and “very and only Word of God” counter the “Arian” doctrine of “two Words” and “two Wisdoms” by identifying the Son as the Wisdom and Word proper to God. To Athanasius, God’s “Wisdom” and “Word” are not impersonal divine properties—they are the living Son. Likewise, “true God” reinforces the distinction between the natural divinity of the Son and the divinity available to creatures through deification.

Athanasius’s use of ὁμοούσιος continues this thought, simultaneously maintaining the Son-creature distinction while also expressing what Athanasius takes to be a logical consequence of the Son’s derivation from the Father.<sup>13</sup> Because God is always Father of the Son, the Father’s relationship to the Son is part of his οὐσία (“essence” or “being”). To put it another way, the Son, being eternally begotten of the Father, is the reason why God is “Father.” The Son is intrinsic to who the Father “is,” and thus the Son always exists with, belongs with, and is “proper” (ἴδιος) to the Father.

Athanasius’s understanding of the Son as “proper” (ἴδιος) to the Father has numerous theological implications. For our purposes, one of the most important implications, noted above, is that the Son always exists

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<sup>12</sup> See *ep. Alex.* 32–34.

<sup>13</sup> Ayres, “Defense of ‘Ὁμοούσιος,’” 348–49.

in relation to the Father (and vice versa). Athanasius specifically develops this implication of the ἴδιος relationship in *Orations* 1.19–20. After arguing that the Son must be eternal because he is the proper offspring of the Father’s essence, Athanasius concludes:

[Therefore] we may neither say that God was ever without Word, nor that the Son was non-existent. For how a Son, if not from him? Or how Word and Wisdom, if not ever proper to him? When then was God without that which is proper to him?... For if, when Light exists, there be with it its Image, viz. Radiance, and, a Subsistence existing, there be of it the entire Expression, and, a Father existing, there be his Truth (viz. the Son).  
(*Orations* 1.19–20)

Against the theology of “Arians,” Athanasius believes the Son is eternal, and he uses the Son’s Scriptural titles, such as Word and Wisdom of God, as evidence for this eternity. As Athanasius develops this argument for the Son’s eternity, Athanasius bases his argument on an implicit theological principle—God, being eternal, immutable, and perfect, has never been without those things that are “proper to him” (*Orations* 1.19).<sup>14</sup> Thus, in the quote above, Athanasius assumes that God must have always possessed his Word, Wisdom, and Son, and Athanasius uses the Scriptural paradigm (παράδειγματα) of light and its radiance to illustrate this point.<sup>15</sup> Just as light is inseparable from its “image,” which humans refer to as its “radiance,” so God is inseparable from his own image, namely the Son, and from the other properties that are intrinsic to him—such as “Word” and “Wisdom.” “Radiance” is always with light; “Word,”

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<sup>14</sup>This principle was also held by Arius and Asterius, who would have agreed with Athanasius’s statement that God has never been without his Word and Wisdom. However, they rejected the notion that the Son has always coexisted with the Father. As we have seen, Arius and Asterius distinguished between the Son and God’s eternal properties of Word and Wisdom, proposing that the Son was made “Word” and “Wisdom” through participation.

<sup>15</sup>On the Light-Radiance paradigm, see below, pp. 301–305.

“Wisdom,” and “Son”—properties which all refer to and are embodied by the second Person—are always with the Father. This principle about God’s properties is important because, as we will see, Athanasius also assumes it when thinking about the Spirit-Son relationship.

## 2. The Holy Spirit’s Union with the Son

In the *Orationes*, Athanasius neither speaks of the Holy Spirit as “ἰδιος” to the Father or Son nor attempts to explain the Spirit’s theological relationship to the Father and Son. Nevertheless, as we will see, Athanasius seems to understand the Holy Spirit’s relationship to the Son in a manner that mirrors the Son’s relationship as “proper” to (and therefore inseparably united to) the Father. There are four contexts where the Spirit’s union with the Son appears to be particularly apparent. These are contexts where Athanasius speaks of: the Son being able to give the Spirit because the Spirit belongs to the Son, the Spirit being “in” the Word, the Spirit joining creatures to the Son, and the united soteriological activity of the Trinity. In the following sections, we will look at each of these contexts in turn, beginning now with the first.

At multiple points in the thesis, we have seen Athanasius speak of the Son as the giver of the Holy Spirit. These observations always occurred in the context of discussions focused on other matters. Now, however, we will briefly explore how Athanasius understands the Son’s communication of the Spirit. We will focus particularly on the question of why the Son is capable of giving creatures the gift of the Spirit.

In *Orationes* 1.50, which we discussed in the previous chapter, Athanasius says that the Son is able to give the Holy Spirit to creatures because the Holy Spirit belongs to the Son. Athanasius writes: “Through whom then and from whom should the Spirit be given but through the Son, whose also the Spirit is (οὗ καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμά ἐστι)?” Athanasius’s answer may appear simplistic, but, as the next section will show, this notion of the

Spirit belonging to the Son is integral to Athanasius's soteriology.

Before proceeding, however, we should note that the Son's possession of the Holy Spirit precedes the incarnation. Although the Son received the Holy Spirit into his humanity during his baptismal anointing, this does not mean that the Son previously lacked the Spirit. Instead, the Son is the one who gives the Spirit to his humanity (*Orations* 1.46, 1.47), which shows that the Son possessed the Spirit before this anointing. Further, Athanasius says that the Word is the one who gave the Holy Spirit to the Old Testament saints and prophets (*Orations* 1.48). This confirms that the Spirit belongs to the Word even before the incarnation. Indeed, for Athanasius, the Son has always been able to give the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is "God's gift" (*Orations* 2.18)—apparently meaning a gift that God the Father and Son have the authority to give at anytime according to their will.

This statement, that the Holy Spirit is "God's gift," is one of the few places in the *Orations* where Athanasius directly connects the Spirit with the Father. The implication of this statement seems to be that the Holy Spirit belongs to the Father ("God") and the Son (who is also divine and "God" over creation). If this is the case, then this would support my earlier observation, made in Chapter 4,<sup>16</sup> that Athanasius's polemical Trinitarian arguments imply that the Holy Spirit has an eternal union with both the Son and the Father. Unfortunately, Athanasius says little else that directly relates to the Father-Spirit relationship, and thus this point should not be pressed. As this chapter will show, we can speak with far more confidence about the Spirit-Son relationship.

But, what does it mean to say that the Holy Spirit belongs to the Son? As we approach this question, it will be helpful to recall aspects of the pneumatology of Irenaeus and Origen. In Chapter 6, we noted that Irenaeus included the Holy Spirit in the identity of God, describing the

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<sup>16</sup> See above, p. 178.

Spirit as one of the two “hands of God.”<sup>17</sup> As such, the Holy Spirit is inseparable from the Father and Son in God’s creative and redemptive activity, which Irenaeus presented as a Trinitarian activity (cf. *prf.* 5). Origen, similarly, also presented the Holy Spirit as inseparable from the Father and Son. As a result of Origen’s cosmology, with its doctrine of the eternity of souls, there was no doubt in Origen’s mind that the Holy Spirit is eternal.<sup>18</sup> Unlike Irenaeus, however, Origen restricted the activity of the Spirit to the sanctification of the saints.<sup>19</sup> By specifying that the Spirit is responsible for sanctification, Origen made the Spirit integral to God’s larger work in the world, which involves the Father creating and redeeming creatures through the Son and sanctifying these creatures through the Spirit.

In the last section of this chapter, we will look at Athanasius’s conception of the united activity of the Trinity in detail. Before doing so, however, it is important to notice that there is a parallel between Athanasius’s conception of the Son as the Word, Wisdom, and Power of God and the Holy Spirit as the “Spirit of God” and “Spirit of the Son.”

As we observed at the outset of this chapter, Athanasius identifies the Son as the Father’s genuine and eternal Power, Wisdom, and Word. Further, the point of Athanasius’s argument—namely that the Son is eternal and uncreated—depends on the assumption that God has always

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<sup>17</sup> See above, pp. 246–247.

<sup>18</sup> The Spirit, like the Father, the Son, and the souls of creatures, is eternal, but this eternity does not preclude hierarchy. As we noted earlier, Origen is also clear about the Spirit’s rank. To Origen, the Holy Spirit is the third highest being, ranking below the Father and Son but above everything else. Additionally, as Mackett, “Theology of the Holy Spirit,” 168, notes, although Origen considers the Holy Spirit to be brought into existence through the Word, this does not mean that Origen regards the Spirit as a creature.

<sup>19</sup> See above, p. 87. Mackett, “Theology of the Holy Spirit,” 169, observes that Origen attributes specific “realms of activity” to each person of the Trinity in order to emphasize the distinctness of each person of the Trinity.

possessed Power, Wisdom, and Word. This vision of how the Son belongs to (or is “proper to”) the Father provides a key insight into Athanasius’s pneumatology. I suggest that Athanasius conceived of the Holy Spirit as belonging to the Son in a manner that mirrors how the Son belongs to the Father. Just as the Father has never been without his Word, Wisdom, and Power, so, Athanasius seems to believe, the Son (and perhaps the Father) has never been without the Holy Spirit.<sup>20</sup> Further, the Holy Spirit belongs to the Son in the same manner that the Son, as God’s Word, Wisdom, and Power, belongs to the Father. Therefore, although Athanasius never speaks of the Spirit as ἴδιος to the Son until *Serapion*, the core of this conception seems to be established in the *Orations*. In *Serapion*, Athanasius draws on and articulates in clearer language this earlier tenet for the purpose of his arguments against the “Tropikoi.”

My suggestion, that Athanasius regards the Spirit as belonging to the Son in the same way that the Son, as Word and Wisdom and Power of God, belongs to God, is supported by three additional pieces of evidence, which will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter. Our approach here will begin with *Orations* 3, written shortly after *Orations* 1–2, because the view is clearest in *Orations* 3. In *Orations* 3, Athanasius explicitly speaks of the Spirit having a union with the Son that mirrors the Son’s union with the Father. Although this evidence provides the clearest support for my claim, the other two items of evidence, occurring in *Orations* 1–2, suggest that this view was prefigured in these earlier works.

The two remaining pieces of evidence arise in contexts related to deifying participation and the united activity of the Trinity, respectively. When Athanasius attributes the adoption and deification of creatures to participation in the Son and the Holy Spirit, Athanasius’s reasoning implicitly depends on the Holy Spirit essentially possessing union with

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<sup>20</sup> On question of the Spirit-Father relationship, see above, p. 283.

the Son. Similarly, in *Orations 2*, when Athanasius expounds on the united activity of the Trinity, he does so in a manner that highlights the inseparability and union that exists in eternity between the members of the Trinity, including the Holy Spirit. In what follows, we will examine each of these three lines of evidence in turn.

### 3. The Holy Spirit: “In” the Word

In *Orations 3*, which was likely written about two years after *Orations 1–2*, Athanasius makes a short but relatively clear statement about the Holy Spirit having union with the Son. This statement occurs as part of a much larger discussion, spanning *Orations 3.10–25*, that expounds on how the Son’s unity with the Father differs from the unity that the Son promises Christians will have with God and with one another. In the course of this discussion, Athanasius engages multiple Biblical texts, but the majority of these are Johannine. Key Johannine texts include John 8:44, 10:30, 17:11, 17:20–22, and 1 John 4:13 and 15. The portion of Athanasius’s discussion that is most relevant for our purposes looks at the latter two verses. In reference to these verses from 1 John, Athanasius writes:

Blessed John... will teach teach how we become in God and God in us; and how again we become one in him, and how far the Son differs in nature from us, and will stop the Arians from any longer thinking that they shall be as the Son, lest they hear it said to them, “You are a man and not God.”  
(*Orations 3.24*)

After quoting 1 John 4:13 (“By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit”), Athanasius then explains how this verse shows that the Son’s unity with the Father differs from that of Christians. Athanasius continues:

Therefore because of the grace of the Spirit which has been given to us, in him we come to be, and he in us; and since it is the Spirit of God, therefore through his becoming in us, reasonably are we, as having the Spirit, considered to be in God, and thus is God in us. Not then as the Son in the Father, so also we become in the Father; for the Son does not merely partake the Spirit, that therefore he too may be in the Father; nor does he receive the Spirit, but rather he supplies it himself to all; and the Spirit does not unite the Word to the Father... And the Son is in the Father, as his own Word and Radiance.

*(Orations 3.24)*

Here, Athanasius takes John's language of being "in God" as another way of speaking about union with God,<sup>21</sup> and Athanasius maintains that the Son, unlike creatures, does not owe his union with the Father to any form of grace, including the uniting work of the Holy Spirit. Instead, the Son naturally possesses union with the Father. Adopted creatures, on the other hand, depend on the grace of the Son and the Spirit for their sonship.

Next, Athanasius adds an account of how creatures receive union with the Father through the grace of the Son and the Spirit. This account is particularly relevant for our subject because it not only speaks of the Spirit's union with the Son, but it also reveals that this union is integral to Athanasius's conception of how creatures are united to the Son.

Athanasius writes:

We, apart from the Spirit, are strange and distant from God, and by the participation of the Spirit we are knit into the Godhead; so that our being in the Father is not ours, but is the Spirit's which is in us... The Saviour, then, saying of us, "As thou, Father, art in me, and I in you, that they too may be one in us" (John 17:20), does not signify that we were to have identity with him; for this was shown from the instance of Jonah; but it is a request to the Father, as John has written, that the Spirit should be given through him to those who believe, through whom we are found to be in God, and in this

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<sup>21</sup> This is apparent from how Athanasius moves from the language of being "in God" to discussing how the reason for the Son's union with God ("and the Spirit does not unite the Word to the Father").

respect to be conjoined in him. For since the Word is in the Father, and the Spirit is given from the Word, he wills that we should receive the Spirit, that, when we receive it, thus having the Spirit of the Word which is in the Father, we too may be found on account of the Spirit to become one in the Word, and through him in the Father.... It is the Spirit then which is in God, and not we viewed in our own selves; and as we are sons and gods because of the Word in us, so we shall be in the Son and in the Father, and we shall be accounted to have become one in Son and in Father, because that Spirit is in us, which is in the Word which is in the Father.

(*Orations* 3.24–25 TM)

In this text, while expounding on Christ's prayer for his disciples to have unity with each other and with God (John 17:20), Athanasius introduces what we might describe as a chain of union.<sup>22</sup> Athanasius teaches that although creatures are initially "strange and distant from God," this alienation can be undone through the work of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit offers creatures union with the Son, who in turn joins these creatures to the Father.<sup>23</sup> Yet, Athanasius is careful to emphasize that even when creatures receive this union with the Father, which also brings about inter-Christian unity, this union is not their own. That is to say, Christians do not possess this union in the stable and natural way that the Spirit and the Son possess it.

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<sup>22</sup> Here I adapt the language of Thomas G. Weinandy, *Athanasius: A Theological Introduction*, Great Theologians Series (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 107, who speaks of a "chain of unity" and accurately summarizes this theme in *Orations* 3.24–25. Weinandy's accompanying claim, made on the same page, that when Athanasius speaks of the Spirit receiving from the Son in *Orations* 3.24–25, Athanasius is thinking of the Spirit receiving the divine nature from the Son, cannot be as heartily endorsed. This point may be implicit within Athanasius's thought, but as it stands, Weinandy's discussion does not seem to provide enough support to justify the confident manner in which he states that "the Spirit comes to be the Spirit only because the Son bestows upon him the divinity that he himself has received from the Father."

<sup>23</sup> This same notion of a chain of union seems to be implied in Origen, *princ.* 1.3.8 Latin.

Athanasius's emphasis on this union truly belonging only to the Spirit and the Son, rather than Christians, points to a crucial characteristic of Athanasius's chain of union. Simply put, this chain of union operates on the assumption that each link—that is, each member of the Trinity—possesses union with the adjoining link—with the next member of the Trinity. Thus, the Holy Spirit is the link in the chain that connects creatures to the Son, and the Spirit is capable of bestowing this union because the Spirit has union with the Son. Likewise, the Son links creatures to the Father because of his intrinsic union with the Father. As Athanasius puts it, “we shall be accounted to have become one in Son and in Father, because that Spirit is in us, which is in the Word which is in the Father.” Creaturely union with God is possible because the Spirit has union with the Son, who has union with the Father.

This reasoning, with its emphasis on the Spirit and the Son giving creatures a share in the union that they (the Spirit and the Son) themselves possess, mirrors the kind of reasoning that we noted while looking at Athanasius's theology of participation in Chapter 6.

In Chapter 6, when we examined Athanasius's understanding of participatory relationships, we saw that it was shaped by several principles about participation, including what I have referred to as the “ownership” principle.<sup>24</sup> This principle, which Athanasius regarded as axiomatic, maintains that a participated entity can only give creatures a share in what the participated entity itself truly possesses. In the course of examining this principle, we noted its influence on Athanasius's reasoning about how creatures receive participation in the Son and in holiness through the Holy Spirit. There, I argued that, based on this principle, the Holy Spirit must have an essential possession of holiness, but we did not dwell on the Spirit's ability to give creatures participatory union with the Son. We are now in a position to briefly consider how the ownership principle relates

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<sup>24</sup> On the “ownership” principle, see above, pp. 257–259.

to the subject of union with the Son through the Spirit.

In *Orations* 3.24, Athanasius's account of the chain of union by which creatures receive union with God, adoption, and deification does not contain participation language. I would suggest, however, that Athanasius's reasoning was shaped by the ownership principle of participation.

According to this reasoning, the Son can give creatures participatory union with the Father because he has an essential possession of union with the Father; likewise, the Holy Spirit can give creatures participation in the Son because the Holy Spirit has the same kind of union with the Son. As Athanasius says, the Holy Spirit is "in" the Word as the Word is "in" the Father. This suggests that the Spirit's union with the Son is eternal and intrinsic to the Spirit's being. To put this another way, the Word has always had the Spirit "in" himself, just as the Father has always had the Son. All this points to the kind of relationship of belonging that I described in the previous section. The Holy Spirit has an eternal, intrinsic, and inseparable union with the Son, just as the Son, being the genuine Word, Wisdom, and Son of the Father, has an eternal, intrinsic, and inseparable union with the Father. In short, the Holy Spirit belongs to the Son as the Son belongs to the Father. This tenet about the Holy Spirit's union with the Son is also perceptible in *Orations* 1–2.

#### **4. Union with the Son through the Holy Spirit**

Although *Orations* 3.24–25 contains perhaps the most direct expression in the *Orations* about the Holy Spirit having union with the Son, the schema of a chain of union, with its assumptions about the Spirit's union with the Son and the Son's union with the Father, also occurs in *Orations* 1–2, albeit in a less systematic form. In this section, I will support this claim and my larger claim about the Spirit having union with the Son in all three *Orations*, by looking at Athanasius's remarks in *Orations* 1–2 about

creatures receiving adoption and deification through participation in the Holy Spirit. I will argue that these participation remarks are the precursors to the more explicit chain of union schema that occurs in *Orations* 3.24. I will also argue that these remarks, like the chain of union, assume that the Holy Spirit possesses union with the Son. With this outline of my argument in place, we can turn to Athanasius's understanding of adoption and deification through participation.

In the *Orations* 1–2, the pattern of Trinitarian activity embodied by the chain of union in *Orations* 3.24–25 first appears in *Orations* 1.9. In this text, Athanasius develops his initial positive statements about the Son's relationship to the Father. The Son, Athanasius says, “is very God, existing one in essence with the very Father.” Athanasius contrasts the Son's intrinsic divinity with that of deified creatures, explaining that “other beings, to whom He said, ‘I said you are Gods,’ [Ps. 82:6] had this grace from the Father, only by participation of the Word, through the Spirit.” In Athanasius's statement, these creatures were deified as a result of three initiatives that together anticipate the order expressed in the chain of union. First, the Son gave these creatures the gift of the Holy Spirit. Next, the Holy Spirit gave them participatory union with the Son. Lastly, the Son gave them a share in his divine nature and filial relationship with the Father, which led to the Father deifying (and adopting) these creatures because of their union with the Son.

For my argument about the Spirit's union with the Son, it is important to note that this soteriology is influenced by Athanasius's “ownership” principle of participation. The ownership principle provides the logic behind these initiatives. The Son can give creatures participation in his divine nature and in his filial relationship to the Father because, unlike creatures, the Son intrinsically possesses the divine nature and a filial relationship with the Father. This is why participation in the Son leads to adoption and deification, making creatures “children” and “gods”

by grace.<sup>25</sup> Further, as will become apparent from the discussions that follow, the Spirit can give creatures participation in the Son, which makes their deification possible, because union with the Son is intrinsic to the Spirit.

Later in *Orations* 1, while addressing the expression in Heb. 1:4 that the Son has “become” superior to angels, Athanasius provides us with another example of his assumption of the ownership principle. Athanasius argues that the linguistic similarities between “become” (γίνομαι) and “originate” (γενητός) do not indicate that the Son, who has “become” greater than angels, is himself “originate.”<sup>26</sup> The Son, Athanasius maintains, is “generate” or “begotten” (γεννητός), which is a characteristic foreign to creatures who are by nature originate (γενητός):

Things originate cannot be called generate, God’s handiwork as they are, except so far as after their making they partake of the generate Son, and are therefore said to have been generated also, not at all in their own nature, but because of their participation of the Son in the Spirit.

(*Orations* 1.56)

Athanasius’s argument is straightforward. Creatures, being originate by nature, can only be called “generate” when they are adopted (or “generated”) as children of God. Creatures receive this gift of adoption through participation in the Son because, when they participate in the Son, the Son gives them a share in his own sonship—that is, in the filial relationship with the Father that is proper to him. Creatures receive this participation in the Son through first becoming partakers in the Holy Spirit.<sup>27</sup> As in *Orations* 1.9, Athanasius’s soteriology is indebted to his

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<sup>25</sup> On deification in Athanasius, see above, pp. 58n40, 58–61.

<sup>26</sup> For more on Athanasius’s exegesis in *Orations* 1.56, see Ellen Muehlberger, *Angels in Late Ancient Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 64–69.

<sup>27</sup> Although Athanasius does not write that creatures receive their participation

“ownership” principle about participation. Creatures can receive participation in the Son through participation in the Spirit because, Athanasius assumes, the Spirit is intrinsically united to the Son. Likewise, these creatures, now participating in the Son, can receive participation in the Son’s filial relation to the Father because the Son is intrinsically united to (and “proper” Son of) the Father.

When speaking of this kind of relationship, in which creatures participate in the Spirit, Athanasius sometimes omits participation language, choosing to use simpler and more Scriptural language to refer to the relationship. To Athanasius, saying that creatures are indwelt by the presence of the Spirit expresses the same reality as saying that creatures participate in the Spirit. Likewise, if creatures are “in” or united to the Spirit, they are also experiencing the same participatory reality. The same synonymy is true regarding the Son. When we say that the Son is “in” a creature or a creature is “in” or united to the Son, we are saying that the creature is a partaker of the Son. This synonymy emerges in the *Orations*, and Athanasius maintains it throughout his lifetime.

We can observe this synonymy in *Orations* 1.37. Here, Athanasius attributes a creature’s reception of the Holy Spirit to participation in the Holy Spirit. As Athanasius does this, it becomes obvious that he considers the presence of the Spirit in a creature and a creature’s participation in the Spirit to be synonymous. Adopted children of God, Athanasius says, are those who “received the Spirit by participation.” Further, the grace of adoption is contingent upon the presence of the Spirit. As long as creatures preserve the Spirit’s presence within themselves, they remain children of God. From this relationship, we can see that Athanasius

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in the Son “through participation in Spirit,” by this point in *Orations* 1 Athanasius has already spoken of creatures gaining participation “in the Spirit” several times, and thus he has omitted “through participation” because he considers it redundant and unnecessary. In this context, “in the Spirit” referring to participation in the Spirit is, to Athanasius, self-evident.

equates the presence of the Holy Spirit in a creature with participation in the Spirit. These expressions describe the same reality, and this reality—whether described in terms of participation in the Spirit or the presence of the Spirit—provides creatures with a participation in the Son. The Son, in turn, gives these creatures a participation in his sonship, which makes them children of God by grace.

The same synonymity is evident in *Orations* 2.59. Once again contrasting the Son's existence from that of creatures, Athanasius reiterates that “generate” / “begotten” (γεννητός) and “become” (γίνομαι) have distinct meanings in Scripture.<sup>28</sup> For our purpose, we do not need to trace Athanasius's extended argument here because the synonymity of “participation” and “presence” language is readily apparent in Athanasius's statement about adoption. After quoting John 1:12–13, Athanasius writes:

This is God's kindness to man, that of whom he is Maker, of them according to grace he afterwards becomes Father also; becomes, that is, when men, his creatures, receive into their hearts, as the Apostle says, “the Spirit of his Son, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6). And these are they who, having received the Word, gained power from him to become sons of God; for they could not become sons, being by nature creatures, otherwise than by receiving the Spirit of the natural and true Son.  
(*Orations* 2.59)

In this example, Athanasius drops the language of participation entirely, yet his message has not changed. The gift of adoption is available to creatures through the Son and Spirit. When creatures receive the Spirit who belongs to the Son, they receive the Word, who gives these creatures power to become children of God.

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<sup>28</sup> Athanasius's claim here is part of a larger argument about the priority of “begot” over “created” in Proverbs 8:22–25. For a summary of the argument, see Widdicombe, *Fatherhood of God*, 217–21.

Athanasius then expands on this account, reminding his readers that only the Word is a Son by nature and that it is the presence of the Son in creatures that effects their adoption.

“Father” is proper to the Son; and not “creature,” but “Son” is proper to the Father. Accordingly this passage also proves, that we are not sons by nature, but the Son who is in us; and again, that God is not our Father by nature, but of that Word in us, in whom and because of whom we “cry, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6). And so in like manner, the Father calls them sons in whomsoever he sees his own Son, and says, “I begot” since begetting is significant of a Son, and making is indicate of works. And thus it is that we are not begotten first, but made; for it is written, “Let us make man” (Gen. 1:26); but afterwards, on receiving the grace of the Spirit, we are said thenceforth to be begotten also.  
(*Orations* 2.59)

Here, it is clear that Athanasius considers reception of “the grace of the Spirit” to be synonymous with gaining a participation in the Spirit. This relationship to the Spirit provides creatures with a unique relationship to the Son that can be described by the equivalent expressions of creatures “having received the Word” and having received “participation in the Son.”

It should be noted that although Athanasius quotes Gal. 4:6, his understanding of adoption follows the chronology that is clearer in Rom. 8:14–16 than Gal. 4:6. In Gal. 4:6,<sup>29</sup> Paul’s phrasing is ambiguous, and it can suggest that adoption precedes the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Rom. 8:14–16,<sup>30</sup> Paul seems to make the presence of the Holy Spirit a cause of adoption. Athanasius champions this chronology, treating the presence of

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<sup>29</sup> “And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Gal. 4:6).

<sup>30</sup> “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:14–16).

the Holy Spirit in believers as an essential factor in their adoption as children of God. The Holy Spirit brings union with the Son, and this union inspires the Father to adopt them as his children.

Returning to the subject of the Spirit's union with the Son, in the text above, Athanasius employs two titles that also point to the Spirit's union with the Son. These titles are both genitival constructions that relate the Spirit to the Son. The first title, "the Spirit of his Son," is Scriptural, and it occurs as part of a quotation of Gal. 4:6. The second title, "the Spirit of the natural (φύσει) and true (ἀληθινοῦ) Son," amplifies and expands on "Spirit of his Son" in order to emphasize the Son's propriety to the Father. In the quotation above, these two titles are vital to Athanasius's reasoning about adoption. Indeed, these titles provide the logical justification for the entire process of adoption. Together, they explain both why reception of the Holy Spirit leads to reception of the Son and why reception of the Son leads to adoption as children of God. When the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in a creature, the Spirit's presence provides the creature with the grace of the presence of the Son, which is, in fact, synonymous with participation in the Son.<sup>31</sup> The Spirit can give creatures this gift of participatory union with the Son because the Spirit is "the Spirit of the Son." Likewise, union with the Son can give creatures a share in the Son's filial union to the Father because, using the language of Gal. 4:6, the Son is "his" Son.

Throughout *Orations* 1–3, Athanasius seems to treat these titles and similar genitival constructions that relate the Spirit to the Son in the same manner, implicitly viewing them as expressions of the Spirit's intrinsic union with the Son. This interpretation supplies the logic behind various arguments that include such titles. For example, in *Orations* 1.43,

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<sup>31</sup> On participation in the Word and the Holy Spirit being synonymous with receiving the presence of the Word and the Spirit, see above, pp. 292–295. This synonymity also occurs in Origen; see above, p. 89.

Athanasius quotes 1 John 3:24 (“And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us”) to help explain how creatures can be adopted through the grace of the Spirit and the Son. If, as I would suggest, Athanasius takes the genitival construction that occurs in 1 John 3:24, “his Spirit,” as an expression of the Spirit’s union with the Son, then this quotation does more than simply express the vague point that adoption is possible through the Son dwelling in creatures by “his Spirit.” By interpreting “his Spirit” to mean the Holy Spirit who intrinsically belongs to (and has union with) the Son, when Athanasius quotes 1 John 3:24, he repeats his more detailed understanding of adoption. In this understanding of adoption, adoption occurs through the Holy Spirit giving humans a share in the Spirit’s intrinsic union with the Son, which the Spirit possesses because the Spirit belongs to the Son, being “his Spirit.”

The same seems to be true of how Athanasius views the title “Spirit of the Son” (Gal. 4:6) in *Orations* 2.51. This title occurs as Athanasius develops an argument about Prov. 8:22. Athanasius claims that in Prov. 8:22 the incarnate Word called the Father “Lord” because of the incarnation. Having assumed a human body and taken on the form of a servant, it was appropriate for the Word to address the Father as “Lord,” just as other creatures are to address God. Yet, Athanasius insists, this does not diminish the Word’s own divinity. To make this point, Athanasius uses adoption as an analogy of how one’s relationship to God can change while one’s nature remains the same. Athanasius writes:

Reasonably then, we being servants, when he [the Word] became as we, he too calls the Father Lord, as we do; and this he has so done from love to man, that we too, being servants by nature, and receiving the Spirit of the Son (Gal. 4:6), might have confidence to call him by grace Father, who is by nature our Lord. But as we, in calling the Lord Father, do not deny our

servitude by nature... so when the Son, on taking the servant's form, says, "The Lord created me a beginning of his ways" (Prov. 8:22), let them not deny the eternity of his Godhead.

(*Orations* 2.51)

Here, as with most of his references to adoption, Athanasius contrasts the Son's natural sonship with creatures' adoptive sonship. Whereas the Son is the genuine Son of the Father, and thus it is natural and appropriate for him to refer to God as "Father," creatures, being servants by nature, can only know God as Father through the grace of adoption.

In this text, Athanasius attributes adoption to creatures "receiving the Spirit of the Son" (Gal. 4:6). Once again, Athanasius initially appears to have made a vague statement that links adoption to the Spirit, who is somehow related to the Son. Yet if, as I suggest, Athanasius understands genitival titles that relate the Spirit to the Son, such as "Spirit of the Son," to be indications of the Spirit's intrinsic union with the Son, then Athanasius's use of Gal. 4:6 carries more depth, for it also repeats Athanasius's more nuanced understanding of adoption. According to this view, the Spirit contributes to the process of adoption by giving creatures a share in the Spirit's own union with the Son. The Spirit has this union with the Son because the Spirit is "the Spirit of the Son"—that is, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit that intrinsically belongs to the Son, just as the Son is the Son (and Word and Wisdom) that belongs to the Father. When creatures receive this participation in the Spirit's union with the Son, they are united to the Son by grace. As we have seen elsewhere in the *Orations*, union with the Son leads to adoption because the Son gives creatures a share in his filial relationship with the Father.

In sum, in this section I have attempted to show that Athanasius's accounts of adoption and deification in *Orations* 1–2 reflect the same assumption about the Spirit's relationship to the Son that we observed in *Orations* 3. In *Orations* 1–2, the Holy Spirit can give creatures union with

the Son, which results in their deification and adoption, because the Holy Spirit, being the “Spirit of the Son,” has an intrinsic and inseparable union with the Son.

### 5. The United Activity of the Trinity

In *Orations* 2.41, Athanasius uses the Trinitarian baptismal formula to provide further evidence of the unity of the Trinity. Athanasius develops an argument about the inseparable activity of the Trinity in order to demonstrate that the Son must be of the same nature as the Father, but the Holy Spirit becomes implicated in the argument. The argument consequently highlights the economic and eternal union shared by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Therefore, we will proceed by first tracing Athanasius’s argument about the Son and then looking at the subject of the Spirit within the context of this argument.

#### *Athanasius’s Argument in Orations 2.41*

Athanasius’s argument comes as a response to an extract from Asterius that contrasts the oneness of the Word of God with the plurality of rational beings.<sup>32</sup> Athanasius interprets the extract as a sign that Asterius has contradicted himself. As we saw in Chapter 6, Asterius held a doctrine

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<sup>32</sup> Athanasius misinterprets Asterius’s point in the extract. Asterius is saying that the one hypostatic Word (i.e. the Son) is “Word” and “Wisdom” in a manner that is completely different from the experience of rationality and wisdom that is available to creatures. (Of course, as we have seen, Athanasius and Asterius have very different opinions on how and why the Word possesses his titles.) The extract reads: “God the Word is one, but many are the things rational; and one is the essence and nature of Wisdom, but many are the things wise and beautiful.... Who are they whom they honour with the title of God’s children? For they will not say that they too are words, nor maintain that there are many wisdoms. For it is not possible, whereas the Word is one, and Wisdom has been set forth as one, to dispense to the multitude of children the Essence of the Word, and to bestow on them the appellation of Wisdom” (*Orations* 2.40).

of “two Words,” and thus Asterius’s emphasis on the oneness of the Word seems, to Athanasius, to be self-contradictory. In Athanasius’s assessment, this extract shows that Asterius and the other “Arians” are so “dizzied” and ignorant concerning the Word that they even contradict themselves. In response to this confusion, Athanasius reaffirms his own position on the matter—there is only one Word of God, who is God’s “proper Son,” who shares “an inseparable unity in terms of divinity” with the Father,<sup>33</sup> and who is the agent through whom the Father makes all things.

Athanasius appeals to the baptismal formula to support this position. If the Word is understood to be anything other than this, Athanasius argues, then his inclusion in the baptismal formula is illogical or even blasphemous. Athanasius writes:

Why too in the baptismal consecration is the Son named together with the Father? For if they say that the Father is not all-sufficient, then their answer is irreligious, but if he be, for this it is right to say, what is the need of the Son for framing the worlds or for the holy laver? ... For if it was that we might be joined to the Godhead, what need of the creature? But if that we might be united to the Son a creature, superfluous, according to you, is this naming of the Son in baptism, for God who made him a Son is able to make us sons also. Besides, if the Son be a creature, the nature of rational creatures being one, no help will come to creatures from a creature, since all need grace from God.  
(*Orations* 2.41)

Here, Athanasius claims that Asterius and the “Arians” cannot provide a convincing reason for the Son’s inclusion in the baptismal formula. The “Arians” might say that the Father needs the Word in order to complete the initiation, but this would imply that the Father is weak, which is of course blasphemous to say about God. Alternatively, the “Arians” might suppose that creatures cannot withstand the direct “touch”

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<sup>33</sup> *Orations* 2.41. ET adapted from Morales, *La théologie trinitaire d’Athanasie d’Alexandrie*, 433.

of God, which would mean that creatures require a third being to act as an ontological mediator between themselves and God.<sup>34</sup> In Athanasius's polarized cosmology, however, there is no room for an ontological mediator; the only categories of being are God and creation. Hence, to Athanasius, this means that any mediator or "third being" would also ultimately be a creature. The problem here, however, is that if this intermediary being can withstand God's grace, then all creatures can, which makes the inclusion of this creature in the baptismal formula unnecessary. Further, if the Word is a creature, then he is also in need of grace.

With these refutations to possible "Arian" explanations established, Athanasius gives his explanation for why the Son is included in the baptismal rite:

I think and believe that the Son is named with the Father, not as if the Father were not all-sufficient, not without meaning, and by accident; but, since he is God's Word and own Wisdom, and being his Radiance, is ever with the Father, therefore it is impossible, if the Father bestows grace, that he should not give it in the Son, for the Son is in the Father as the radiance in the light.

(*Orations* 2.41)

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<sup>34</sup>In our text above, Athanasius is most likely targeting this view when he writes "For if it was that we might be joined to the Godhead, what need of the creature." This perspective explicitly occurs in *Orations* 2.24, where Athanasius quotes the "Eusebians": "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." Athanasius also criticizes this view in *Orations* 2.26. We find this view, for example in Eusebius of Caesarea, who says that a mediator is required. If God's unmediated presence directly touched creation like the sun's light touches the earth, then everything on earth would be destroyed (Eus., *d.e.* 4.6). See Robertson, *Christ as Mediator*, 43–53.

In Athanasius's opinion, it is right to include the Son in the baptismal initiation because the Son, being the Father's "framing Word," is the agent through whom the Father works in the world. The Son is therefore a mediator between the Father and creation. However, whereas theologians such as Asterius and Eusebius of Caesarea, who taught what might be called "exclusive monotheism,"<sup>35</sup> understood the Word to be an ontological mediator between God and creation, Athanasius sees the Word as a different kind of mediator. Jon M. Robertson describes the Word's role in Athanasius's thought as "revelatory mediation" because the Word reveals who God is and manifests God's will,<sup>36</sup> but this description is easily misunderstood because of the narrow sense that "revelatory" often connotes. An alternative description of the Word as God's "immediate mediator" is also imperfect,<sup>37</sup> but it emphasizes the reality that the Father is present in the Word, which is the most critical point in Athanasius's conception of the Word's mediation, making it a more useful description. In the text above, the Word is the one through whom the Father reveals himself and accomplishes his will. Athanasius, perhaps inspired by Eusebius, explains this mediation with an analogy about light, which Eusebius used to illustrate creation's inability to receive the unmediated touch of God.<sup>38</sup> Contrary to Eusebius, Athanasius employs the analogy to illustrate the essential unity between the Father and Son. Athanasius insists that this essential unity is the reason why the Father gives all grace through the Son. In order to appreciate Athanasius's

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<sup>35</sup> On the categories of "exclusive monotheism" and "inclusive monotheism," see above, 147n1.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>37</sup> This paradoxical description, introduced by Lewis Ayres, is also open to misinterpretation, but its emphasis on the Father's immediacy in the Son makes it my preferred description of the Word's mediation. See Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 114.

<sup>38</sup> Eus., *d.e.*, 4.6. Robertson, *Christ as Mediator*, 178.

use of this analogy here, which will come to bear on the subject of the Holy Spirit, it will be helpful to briefly outline Athanasius's uses of light imagery in preceding sections of *Orations* 1–2.

*Light and Inseparability*

Athanasius first introduces the analogy of a light and its radiance in the context of an argument for the Son's eternal inseparable relationship to the Father. Athanasius uses the analogy to provide additional support for this relationship. He develops the analogy by using Heb. 1:3, the Son is "the radiance of God's glory," to interpret Ps. 36:9, "in your light we shall see light." Athanasius concludes that "in your light" refers to the Son, meaning that in the incarnate Son, human beings will see God. This interpretation provides the basis for Athanasius's light and radiance analogy, which he presents as proof of the Son's eternal existence with the Father. Athanasius writes:

Who has so little sense as to doubt the eternity of the Son? For when did a human being see light without the brightness of its radiance, so that this person could say of the Son, "There was once, when he was not," or "Before his generation he was not." ...It is plain then from the above that the Scriptures declare the Son's eternity... The Son did not come out of nothing, nor is in the number of originated things at all, but is the Father's Image and Word eternal, never having not been, but being eternal, as the eternal Radiance of a Light which is eternal."

(*Orations* 1.12–13 TM)

Athanasius considers the light and radiance imagery to be a Biblical analogy for the eternal, inseparable relation between the Father and Son. The analogy depends on two principles about the relationship between light and its radiance. First, light cannot be spatially separated from its radiance;<sup>39</sup> light and radiance are each "in" the other. Second, there is no

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<sup>39</sup> Athanasius makes this point again in *Orations* 2.41, 2.42. For later

interval of time between the existence of light and the emanation of its radiance;<sup>40</sup> when light exists, the radiance from it also exists (*Orations* 1.20; cf. *Orations* 1.14). Based on these principles, Athanasius concludes a few sections later, since “the Father is eternal, his Radiance is eternal” (*Orations* 1.25). Just as the radiance, being emitted by the light, is of the same nature as the light, so the Son, being derived from (or “begotten of”) the Father, is the same nature as the Father (*Orations* 1.37; cf. *Decrees* 23, 24).

In *Orations* 2, Athanasius uses the light and radiance imagery to also illustrate how the Father works through the Son. Athanasius recognizes that the Word’s involvement in creation and salvation could be interpreted as a sign that either the Father is too weak to create the universe by himself or the Word exists for the sake of human beings. We have seen Athanasius reject the first viewpoint outright on the basis of blasphemy, and Athanasius does the same here. The second viewpoint, on the other hand, prompts Athanasius to make an important point about the relation between the Trinity and creation.

Athanasius claims that if God the Father had decided “not to make originate things, nonetheless the Word would have still been ‘with God,’ and the Father ‘in him’” (*Orations* 2.31 TM).<sup>41</sup> Athanasius’s point is that

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reiterations, see *Orations* 3.1., 3.9; *Syn.* 45. The best short summary of the use of the light analogy in later patristic and medieval writers is found in Kathryn E. Tanner, “The Use of Perceived Properties of Light as a Theological Analogy,” in *Light from Light: Scientists and Theologians in Dialogue*, ed. Gerald O’Collins and Mary Ann Meyers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 122–30.

<sup>40</sup> In *Orations* 1.27 Athanasius uses the radiance and light analogy to make this point, contrasting this kind of generation, which is analogous to that of the Father and Son, from the generation of creatures, in which the child is born later than the parent.

<sup>41</sup> On the significance of this point about the existence of the Word, see Georges Florovsky, “The Concept of Creation in Saint Athanasius,” *SP* 6 (1962): 47–48.

although the creation of the world is entirely predicated on the will of the Father and the Word, the Father-Word relationship is eternal and absolutely independent of creation. Had the world never been created, the Word would still exist and have union with the Father because this relationship is intrinsic to the very essence or being of God.<sup>42</sup>

Athanasius believes that this eternal relationship is therefore also maintained in God's activities in the world, including creation. Athanasius writes:

For since the Word is the Son of God by nature proper to his [the Father's] essence, and is from him, and in him, as he [the Word] said himself, the creatures could not have come to be, except through him [the Word]. For as the light enlightens all things by its radiance, and without its radiance nothing would be illuminated, so also, the Father, as by a hand, in the Word made all things, and without him [the Word] makes nothing.

(*Orations* 2.31)

Here, Athanasius compares the Word's activities in the world to the illuminating radiance emitted by a light and also to the skilled hand of a human being. In both analogies, the image representing the Word naturally belongs with—or, is “proper to”—the image representing the Father. The radiance is intrinsic to and emitted from the light; the hand is attached to and an appendage from an embodied person. Likewise, in both analogies the representation of the Word performs the activity initiated by representation of the Father. The radiance completes the illumination begun by the light; the hand moves and manipulates according to the will of the embodied person.

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<sup>42</sup> On the Father-Son relationship, see above, pp. 278–282.

*Economic Pattern, Eternal Reality*

In the next part of *Orations* 2.31, Athanasius nuances and further supports his perspective that God always works through the Word. Athanasius does this by discussing the creation account of Gen. 1:3–26, which depicts God creating all things by means of speaking his will. Athanasius considers this text to be an obvious example that God creates through the Word, but Athanasius recognizes that it could be misinterpreted to mean that the Word is merely God’s servant and not his equal in terms of glory. Athanasius clarifies that this is not the case, writing:

He [God] spoke, not that, as in the case of men, some lowly assistant might hear, and learning the will of him who spoke might go away and do it; for this is what is proper to creatures, but it is unseemly so to think or speak of the Word. For the Word of God is Framer and Maker, and he is the Father’s Will. Hence it is that divine Scripture says not that one heard and answered, as to the manner or nature of the things which he [God] wished made; but God only said, “Let it become,” and he adds, “And it became;” for what he [God] thought good and counselled, that immediately the Word began to do and to finish.... Each [creature] has the Mediator Word, and the Wisdom of God which makes known the will of the Father. But when that Word himself works and creates, then there is no questioning and answer, for the Father is in him and the Word in the Father; but it suffices [for God] to will, and the work is done; so that the word... “It was so,” denotes the work which is done through the Word and the Wisdom, in which Wisdom also is the Will of the Father.

(*Orations* 2.31 TM)

In this theologically rich text, Athanasius contrasts how the will of God is carried out by creatures compared to by the Word. Creatures are intended to follow God’s will as good servants; however, they cannot discover God’s will on their own. Even the likes of Moses, Abraham, and Zechariah depended on the mediation of the Word in order to learn God’s will. The Word, however, is neither an “assistant” (ὑπουργός) of

God nor one who must learn God's will through a "mediator" (μεσίτης).<sup>43</sup> Rather, "he is the Father's will" (αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ τοῦ Πατρὸς βουλή).<sup>44</sup> By this statement, Athanasius does not mean that either the Father or Son lacks an individual will; nor does Athanasius wish to imply that the Word is an impersonal power or instrument that merely executes the will of the Father. Instead, Athanasius intends for his statement to convey that the Word's will is in perfect agreement with the Father's will because of the essential union between the two persons. Because of this unity, the Father and Son are "in" each other, and the two wills effectively appear to be one. Therefore, the actions of the Son perfectly express the identical wills of the Father and the Son. This explains why the Word always does "the will of the Father."

Athanasius's text also provides the answer to why "what the Father works, he works through the Son" (*Orations* 2.41). We have already seen Athanasius insist multiple times that this arrangement is not due to the Father being weak and requiring the assistance of the Word to fulfill his will. Now, Athanasius gives us an analogy that explains this practice. The manner in which the Father acts in the world is analogous to how an emperor acts. The emperor speaks his will to his assistants, who immediately proceed to complete the task on the ruler's behalf. It is critical to note that this analogy only applies with respect to the Father's side of this collaboration, and even here the analogy is imperfect because it does not account for the Father being active in the Son.

Despite these shortcomings, the analogy is useful for understanding why the Father works through the Son. As we saw in our previous paragraph, Athanasius recognizes that this description could be

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<sup>43</sup> On the church's rejection of the Son as a ὑπουργός ("assistant"), cf. *Decrees* 7.

<sup>44</sup> *Orations* 2.31. Cf. *Orations* 3.63, 3.67. In *Orations* 3.59 Athanasius also preserves *Ast. Soph. fr.* 18, in which Asterius teaches that the Word's existence is due to a deliberate act of the Father's will.

interpreted to mean that the Word is merely a lowly assistant to the Father, and thus Athanasius explains that this is not how things are with respect to the Word's side of the collaboration. Additionally, Athanasius emphasizes the Father and Son's co-inherence, making the Father "in" the Son and involved with activities of the Son. If we keep these two principles in mind, then we can grasp how Athanasius conceives of both roles in the united activity. Like an emperor founding a city, the Father works by speaking his will so that it might be carried out.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the Scriptures testify that "God said... and it was so" (*Orations* 2.31; cf. Gen. 1.3–26). The Son, on the other hand, being co-inherent with the Father and being the true Son, Word, and Wisdom of the Father, possesses the same desires as the Father. Therefore, when the Son acts according to his own will, he is also acting according to the Father's will. Consequently, because of this co-inherence and unity of will, we can say that the work done by the Son is also done by the Father. The inverse of this is also true. As Athanasius says, "what the Father works, he works through the Son" (*Orations* 2.41).

#### *The Pattern Applied to Baptism*

With this background in place, we will now return to Athanasius's statement about the united activity of the Father and the Son in the baptismal initiation, which Athanasius extends to include the Holy Spirit. As we observed near the beginning of this section, Athanasius appeals to

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<sup>45</sup> Although modern readers may find the Father's role of speaking his will somewhat unremarkable compared to the "hands on" actions of the Son, the union between the two persons must be remembered. The Father is "in" the Son and involved with the actions of the Son. It should be noted, however, that the idea that leaders should "get their hands dirty" is an innovation of modernity. Constantine is praised by Sozomen for his vision and leadership in the founding of Constantinople—not for being directly involved in its construction. See Soz., *h.e.* 2.3.

the inclusion of the Son in the baptismal rite as proof that the Son is the genuine Son of the Father. While developing his argument, Athanasius momentarily segues to the question of how grace is given in baptism. We can now see that Athanasius's understanding of the relationship between the Father and Son in the activity of making the world is paradigmatic for their work in baptism. For this reason, it is worth quoting part of Athanasius's explanation regarding baptism again. Athanasius writes:

But since the course of the discussion has led us also to mention holy baptism, it is necessary to state, as I think and believe, that the Son is named with the Father, not as if the Father were not all-sufficient, not without meaning, and by accident; but, since he is God's Word and own Wisdom, and being his Radiance, is ever with the Father, therefore it is impossible, if the Father bestows grace, that he should not give it in the Son, for the Son is in the Father as the radiance in the light. ... So also when baptism is given, the one whom the Father baptizes, the Son baptizes; and the one whom the Son baptizes is consecrated (τελειοῦται) in the Holy Spirit. And again as when the sun shines, one might say that the radiance illuminates, for the light is one and indivisible, nor can be detached, so where the Father is or is named, there plainly is the Son also; and is the Father named in baptism? Then must the Son be named with him.

(*Orations* 2.41)

As with his account above of the work of the Father and Son in the creation of the world, Athanasius argues that the Son's involvement in baptism is not due to any weakness on the Father's part. Instead, the Son is named with the Father because, as we have seen, the Father does all things through his Word. This pattern is intrinsic to who God is, and to attempt to separate the Father's presence and activity in the Word from that of the Word alone is no wiser than attempting to separate light from its radiance. Therefore, Athanasius contends, baptism is only effective if the Son is named with the Father.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> One section later, Athanasius further delimits the efficacy of baptism, noting

Athanasius's reasoning naturally extends to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, following the church's baptismal formula, is always named with the Father and Son. Yet, to Athanasius, the Spirit's inclusion in the baptismal formula is not merely ritualistic. As we will see, just as the inclusion of the Son reflects the Son's theological relationship to the Father and role in the economy of grace, so, the inclusion of the Spirit seems to reflect the Spirit's relationship to the Son and role in the economy of salvation.

To begin, it is significant that Athanasius assigns a specific role to the Spirit in the text above. According to Athanasius, the Father and Son both "baptize," but the Holy Spirit "consecrates" (τελειώω). Athanasius's association of the Father and Son with "baptizing" makes sense, given what we have observed about Athanasius's understanding of the Father working through the Son. Because the will of the Son perfectly matches the will of the Father, what the Son works, the Father can also be said to work. Thus, whom the Son "baptizes," the Father also "baptizes."

Athanasius's association of the Holy Spirit with consecration is also meaningful. In this context it seems that Athanasius intends for his statement that the person who is baptized by the Father and Son "is consecrated (τελειοῦται) in the Holy Spirit" to have the sense of not only initiating but also completing. Athanasius uses this form of τελειώω two other times in his works, and in each of these instances, the word conveys the sense of seeing things executed, fulfilled, or completed.<sup>47</sup> In our

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that the baptismal formula must be accompanied by the appropriate faith. Following Scripture, the "Arians" "pretend to name the name of the Father and the Son," but according to their faith, they are baptizing "into Creator and creature, and into Maker and work," and, therefore, their baptism is devoid of grace (*Orations* 2.42).

<sup>47</sup> In *History*, Athanasius claims that his Eastern opponents refused to attend a council at Rome, where their charges against Athanasius would be reviewed, because "the proceedings would not be carried out (τελειοῦται) by royal order" (*History* 11 TM). Likewise, in *Orations* 3.67, while explaining that the Son is (and fulfills) the Father's will, Athanasius writes: "and through him [the Word] the

present text, the Holy Spirit appears to complete the baptismal process by coming to dwell in the Christian. This role parallels the Holy Spirit's larger role in the economy of salvation, which is to "complete" the work of the Father and Son by perfecting Christians in holiness so they might attain to the eternal life offered in Christ.<sup>48</sup>

Further, the Spirit's inclusion in the economy of salvation, like that of the Son, has theological implications. As we have seen, Athanasius insists that the Son's role in salvation reflects the Son's eternal relationship with the Father. The Son does the will of the Father in the economy of creation and salvation because this is what the Son does in eternity. Even if the world was never created, the Father-Son relationship would still exist, and the Son would still be the one who does the will of the Father. Likewise, Athanasius seems to believe that the Holy Spirit completes the work of the Father and Son because this role reflects the Spirit's eternal relationship with the Father and Son. The Holy Spirit, being the "Holy Spirit of God," sanctifies and completes the work of God. This role seems to be intrinsic to who the Holy Spirit is, just as doing the will of the Father is intrinsic to who the Son is. Therefore, everything that the Father does is done through the Son and completed in the Holy Spirit, and this united activity of the Trinity reflects the eternal reality of the Trinity.

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objects of will are carried into effect" (καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ τὰ τοῦ βουλήματος εἰς ἔργον τελειοῦται).

<sup>48</sup> As we have seen in the course of this thesis, in Athanasius's Trinitarian understanding of the economy of salvation, this economy is initiated by the Father, who gives the Son for the salvation of the world. This initiative would be incomplete, however, without the Holy Spirit, who works to make human beings holy and thereby worthy of union with the Father and Son on earth and in heaven.

### Conclusion

In Chapter 4, based on analysis of Athanasius's depiction of "Arianism's" Trinitarian "blasphemies" and Athanasius's polemical Trinitarian arguments, I noted that these texts seem to imply that the Holy Spirit has an eternal union with both the Father and Son. In this chapter, we have seen that although Athanasius says little that directly relates to the Spirit-Father relationship, there are four contexts in the *Orations* that point to the Holy Spirit having union with the Son. Through studying these contexts, we have seen that Athanasius appears to understand the Holy Spirit's relationship to the Son in a manner that mirrors the Son's relationship to the Father. The Son, being "Word," "Wisdom," and "Son," of the Father, is "proper" (ἴδιος) or intrinsic to the Father, meaning he eternally exists in union with the Father. The Holy Spirit, being the "Spirit of the Son," seems to have a similar relationship of eternal union with the Son. Therefore, although Athanasius does not use the term "ἴδιος" to speak of the Holy Spirit's relationship to the Son until *Serapion*, in the *Orations* the pneumatological relationship that this term points to is already a tenet of Athanasius's theology.

## Conclusion

This thesis began with the story of Athanasius faking his death in the Church of Theonas to escape capture. I suggested that, just as the motionlessness of Athanasius's body was incorrectly interpreted as proof that he was dead, so also Athanasius's lack of discussions about the Holy Spirit's nature in works written before *Serapion* has sometimes been misperceived as a sign that Athanasius must have previously possessed a very limited theology of the Holy Spirit.

The imperial guards' error is blameworthy. Rather than examining Athanasius's body, the guards simply assumed he was dead. In contrast to the guards' error, what I claim to be a mistake regarding Athanasius's theology is understandable and exculpatory. Athanasius's writings are vast and relevant to numerous subjects; most readers approach these writings with an interest in matters other than pneumatology. Further, the initial studies of Athanasius's pneumatology, written in the 1960s, were pioneers in their field. These studies had to concentrate on the pneumatology in *Serapion* because it was one of the earliest major Christian works to take up the question of the Spirit's divinity. Subsequent studies have begun the important work of considering how the pneumatology in *Serapion* relates to that of other theologians, such as the Cappadocians. However, because there are so many areas to explore in the pneumatologies of Athanasius and other fourth-century theologians, little attention has been given to the pneumatology of Athanasius's earlier works. Therefore, I have focused on examining Athanasius's early writings to determine if they, like Athanasius's motionless body in the Church of Theonas, contain life after all.

This project has reached three major conclusions about Athanasius's early pneumatology. First, Athanasius's pastoral works written in the 330s are better witnesses to his early pneumatology than his famous early work, *Pagans-Incarnation*. In *Pagans-Incarnation*, Athanasius's relative silence about the Holy Spirit gives little evidence concerning the state of his pneumatology. Rather than interpreting this silence as proof that Athanasius lacked a pneumatology at the time he wrote the double apology, it is better to base our assessment of Athanasius's initial pneumatology on all of the early Athanasian works available to us, including the pastoral works. This point is reinforced by the second conclusion.

The second conclusion is that, by the end of the 330s, the Holy Spirit was integral to Athanasius's soteriology. As we saw, at the beginning of the decade, Athanasius appears unsure of his pneumatology. In *Festal 1* (329), Athanasius connects the Spirit with the inauguration of the New Covenant and with the spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures—two themes that he largely abandons in subsequent works. During the course of the decade, Athanasius instead came to focus on the Spirit's roles in sanctification and preparation for Easter, which are themes that fit with his pastoral aims. From the middle of the 330s onwards, Athanasius treats the Spirit as an agent who is essential for salvation. The Holy Spirit empowers Christians to attain holiness and other virtues necessary for participation in the paschal feast and the subsequent life in heaven.

The third conclusion is that, while writing the *Orations*, Athanasius established the core of the mature pneumatology that he would articulate in *Serapion*. In the *Orations*, while attempting to demonstrate that the theology of Asterius and the two Eusebii is a continuation of "Arianism," Athanasius produced Trinitarian and soteriological arguments that not only promoted his understanding of the Son but also developed key perspectives on the Holy Spirit. As a result of these developments, by the

completion of the *Orations* Athanasius consciously held five major pneumatological tenets: the Holy Spirit is uncreated, eternal, inseparably united to the Son, essential for salvation, and worthy of worship. These tenets laid the groundwork for the pneumatological arguments that he would bring against the “Tropikoi.” Indeed, Athanasius was only a small logical step away from the significant conclusions expressed in *Serapion*: “[The one Holy Spirit] is proper to the one Word and proper to and the same as the one God in substance” (*Serapion* 1.27), and “the Spirit is not a creature but is involved in the act of creating. The Father creates all things through the Word in the Spirit.” (*Serapion* 2.13 [3.47 BE]).<sup>1</sup>

It is important to note, however, that Athanasius does not seem to have worked through the implications of these tenets when he wrote the *Orations*. Although Athanasius was a step away from the major conclusions expressed in *Serapion* about both the Spirit’s role in creation and the Spirit’s divine nature, Athanasius was focused on questions concerning the Son and on promoting his “Arian” conspiracy narrative. As a result, Athanasius did not take the next logical steps forward in terms of pneumatology until he responded to the “Tropikoi” in *Serapion*.

Despite the considerable period of time between the *Orations* and *Serapion*, Athanasius’s pneumatology before *Serapion* should not be regarded as insignificant. As I hope this thesis has partially shown, pneumatology encompasses much more than the study of dogmatic statements about the Holy Spirit’s nature. Further, as the incident in the Church of Theonas reminds us, quietness does not prove lifelessness. From a pneumatological perspective, Athanasius’s first works may initially appear insignificant since they contain no confessions about the Spirit’s divinity and no lengthy theological expositions on the Spirit’s relationship to the Father and Son. However, as this thesis has argued, when

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<sup>1</sup> For a table summarizing the development of these views, see Appendix B.

Athanasius's early pneumatology is carefully examined, it proves to possess vitality and complexity akin to that of Athanasius himself.

APPENDIX A

The Holy Spirit in the *Athanasiana*

Text	Reference to the Holy Spirit	Text	Reference to the Holy Spirit
<i>Ammoun</i> (ca. 345–356)	✓	<i>Festal</i> 13 (341)	
<i>Antony</i>	✓	<i>Festal</i> 3 (342)	✓
<i>apol. Const.</i>		<i>Festal</i> 19 (347)	✓
<i>Apology</i>	✓	<i>Festal</i> 20 (348)	✓
<i>Decrees</i> (ca. 356–362)	✓	<i>Festal</i> 22 (350)	
<i>Dion.</i>	✓	<i>Festal</i> 2 (352)	✓
<i>Egypt and Libya</i> (ca. 356–357)	✓	<i>Festal</i> 25 (353)	✓
<i>Encyclical</i>	✓	<i>Festal</i> 26 (354)	
<i>ep. Adelpb.</i>	✓	<i>Festal</i> 27 (355)	
<i>ep. Afr.</i>	✓	<i>Festal</i> 28 (356)	
<i>ep. Diod.</i>		<i>Festal</i> 29 (357)	
<i>ep. Drac.</i>	✓	<i>Festal</i> 36 / 37 (?)	
<i>ep. Epict.</i>		<i>Festal</i> 38 (366)	✓
<i>ep. fest. Serap.</i>		<i>Festal</i> 39 (367)	✓
<i>ep. Jo. et Ant.</i>		<i>Festal</i> 40 (368)	
<i>ep. Jov.</i> (363)	✓	<i>Festal</i> 41 (369)	
<i>ep. Lucif.</i> 1		<i>Festal</i> 42 (370)	
<i>ep. Lucif.</i> 2	✓	<i>Festal</i> 43 (371)	
<i>ep. Max.</i>	✓	<i>Festal</i> 44 (372)	✓
<i>ep. mon.</i> 1	✓	<i>Festal</i> 45 (373)	
<i>ep. mon.</i> 2		<i>Flight</i> (ca. 357)	✓
<i>ep. mort. Ar.</i>		<i>History</i> (ca. 357)	✓
<i>ep. Ors.</i> 1		<i>Incarnation</i> (ca. 328–335)	✓
<i>ep. Ors.</i> 2		<i>Letter to the Mareotis</i> 1	
<i>ep. Pall.</i>		<i>Letter to the Mareotis</i> 2	
<i>ep. Rufin.</i>		<i>Marcellinus</i> (?)	✓
<i>ep. virg.</i> 1 (?)	✓	<i>On the Moral Life</i> (?)	✓
<i>ep. virg.</i> 2 (?)	✓	<i>On Sickness and Health</i>	✓
<i>Festal</i> 1 (329)	✓	<i>Orations</i> 1 (ca. 340–343)	✓
<i>Festal</i> 24 (330)	✓	<i>Orations</i> 2 (ca. 340–343)	✓
<i>Festal</i> 14 (331)	✓	<i>Orations</i> 3 (ca. 345)	✓
<i>Festal</i> 4 (332)		<i>Pagans</i> (ca. 328–335)	✓
<i>Festal</i> 5 (333)		<i>Serapion</i> 1 (ca. 359–361)	✓
<i>Festal</i> 6 (334)	✓	<i>Serapion</i> 2 (ca. 359–361)	✓
<i>Festal</i> 7 (335)	✓	<i>Serapion</i> 3 (ca. 359–361)	✓
<i>Festal</i> 10 (338)	✓	<i>Synods</i>	✓
<i>Festal</i> 11 (339)	✓	<i>Tome</i>	✓
( <i>Festals</i> numbering follows Camplani)		<i>Virginity</i> (?)	✓

Total: 47 / 75

APPENDIX B

## The Development of Six Themes in Athanasius's Pneumatology

Theme	Presence in early pastoral works (ca. 329–340)	Presence in <i>Orations</i> 1–3 (ca. 340–345)	Presence in <i>Scraption</i> (ca. 359–361)	Presence in later pastoral works (ca. 341–373)	Period when consciously recognized by Athanasius
The Holy Spirit is...	Implicit	Implicit	Explicit	Implicit	Early pastoral works
Essential for salvation	–	Implicit	Explicit	–	<i>Orations</i> 1–3
Eternal	–	Implicit	Explicit	Implicit	<i>Orations</i> 1–3
United to the Son	–	Implicit	Explicit	Implicit	<i>Orations</i> 1–3
Worthy of worship	–	Implicit	Explicit	Implicit	<i>Orations</i> 1–3
Divine	–	Implicit	Explicit	Implicit	<i>Scraption</i>
Creator	–	–	Explicit	–	<i>Scraption</i>

## The Son's Participation in the Father

A detailed explanation of Athanasius's argument in *Orations* 1.15–16 about the Son's participation in the Father is not essential for our study of the Holy Spirit. However, Athanasius's argument does shed further light on his notion of the Son receiving all that he possesses from the Father because he has what we might describe as a “whole” participation in the Father. Therefore, a supplementary explanation of Athanasius's argument is provided here.

In *Orations* 1.15, following the conclusion that the Son must participate in the Father, Athanasius immediately highlights the various problems that this raises, and he develops an argument claiming the only way these problems can be solved is if the Son is in fact the proper and eternal offspring of the Father. Athanasius's argument is complicated, and thus it is best treated in steps.<sup>1</sup> The opening of Athanasius's argument begins as follows:

Therefore it is the Father that he partakes of... But this, which is participated, what or where is it, exactly? If it is something external (ἔξωθέν) provided by the Father, then he [the Son] will be a partaker not of the Father but of what is external (ἔξωθεν) to the Father; and no longer will he be even second after the Father, since this [external participated entity] is before him; nor can he be called Son of the Father—but [Son] of that [external participated entity].  
(*Orations* 1.15 TM)

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<sup>1</sup> As Bernard observes in Bernard, *L'Image de Dieu*, 119, “This dense, complex text is difficult to translate and comprehend with precision” (my translation).

This first two steps of Athanasius's argument are straightforward. First, if the Son receives his sonship through participation in the Father, then this participation must not be in some attribute or entity "external" (ἐξωθεν) to the Father, otherwise the Son is actually the son of this external object of participation. The second step highlights the consequences of this. If the Son participates in something external to the Father, then the traditional order of the Son as the second member of the Godhead is disrupted because this external participated entity is before him. Further, this contradicts the Father and Son's testimony in the Scriptures about their relationship as Father and Son.

In the third step of his argument, Athanasius uses these consequences to reject the possibility of the Son participating in something outside of God. Athanasius concludes, instead, that what the Son participates in must be from the essence of the Father. "If this be unseemly and irreligious, when the Father says, 'This is My Beloved Son' (Matt. 3:17), and when the Son says that God is his own (ἴδιον) Father, it follows that what is partaken is not external, but from the essence of the Father (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς)" (*Orations* 1.15).

Next, Athanasius considers what part of the Son participates in the Father. "And as to this (τοῦτο) [which participates], if it be other than the essence of the Son, an equal extravagance will meet us; there being in that case something between what is from the Father and the essence of the Son—whatever that be" (*Orations* 1.15 TM). Athanasius determines that it must be the Son's essence that participates in what is from the essence of the Father, otherwise there is again something between the Son and the Father.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Here, my interpretation and translation follows that of Anatolios and Blaising, who see τοῦτο as a reference to the second "pole" in the participatory relationship, namely, that which participates. While it is possible that τοῦτο refers

In the final step of his argument, Athanasius concludes that because the Son's essence participates in what is from the essence of the Father, then "we are driven to say that what is from the essence of the Father (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς), and proper to him (ἴδιον), is entirely the Son" (*Orations* 1.16). Athanasius's conclusion depends on an implicit assumption about what participation in the essence of the Father would entail. Athanasius assumes that because God is simple and cannot be divided, then the Son's participation in the Father would involve all of the Son participating in all of the Father, without any "remainder" of either the Son or Father excluded from this relation.<sup>3</sup> As a result of this "whole" participation, the Son has everything that the Father has. Additionally, everything that the Son is and has comes from the Father. All of this leads to three major conclusions. First, the Son's very existence (and essence or being) is "from" this participation in the Father. Second, the Son can be described as "what is from the essence of the Father and proper to him," because the Son's whole, undivided being derives from and shares in the whole, undivided being of the Father. Correlatively, "what is from the essence of the Father and proper to him" can also be said to be "entirely the Son," meaning the Son represents and shares in the being of the Father. Third, because the Son's being is the result of this "whole" participation in the Father, the participation described in this instance is virtually synonymous with "begetting."

Athanasius's prompt translation of the language of the Son's whole participation in the Father into the language of begetting and propriety reflects his strong preference for this latter terminology. Athanasius recognizes that even his own account of the Son's participation in the

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to "that which is partaken," this would make Athanasius's argument much more convoluted. See Anatolios, *Coherence*, 109; Blaising, "Contents and Structure," 95–98.

<sup>3</sup> Anatolios, *Coherence*, 107–108.

Father could easily be misinterpreted as an affirmation of the Son's ontological distinction from the Father. Therefore, Athanasius returns to his standard practice of affirming the Son's divinity and co-existence with the Father through statements that the Son is begotten of the Father and "proper" (ἴδιος) to the Father.

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