ATHANASIUS

The coherence of his thought

KHALED ANATOLIOS

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FOR MY CHILDREN, ELIAS AND MARIA

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INTRODUCTION

The fact that Athanasius is one of the great pivotal figures in the development of Christian doctrine has had ambivalent consequences for the study of his work. Attention tends to be too narrowly centered on the Arian controversy and Athanasius is considered, largely in function of that complex and crucially significant process, as the great defender of the Nicene *homoousios*. The result is that there exist surprisingly few attempts at a truly comprehensive treatment of Athanasius's theology considered as a coherent and tightly interrelated account of the Christian faith. Instead, Athanasian scholarship may be divided into two general categories. Firstly, there are the histories of doctrine, in which Athanasius is usually considered in light of the development of Trinitarian and Christological doctrine. Understandably, the hermeneutical framework that governs such works is provided by the classic formulations in which the respective doctrines are considered to have received a certain consummation; earlier theologians are thus studied by way of comparison with these formulations. What is missing from such studies, from the standpoint of Athanasian scholarship, is a systematic account of the overall inner logic of the Athanasian vision that shows how the various aspects of his doctrine are mutually related.

In J. N. D. Kelly's now classic *Early Christian Doctrines*, for example, Athanasius's Trinitarian theology, Christology, and anthropology are treated separately, while the strong connection between them, by which they are mutually illumined, is not made so readily apparent. The result is that Athanasius's theology does not appear as a whole but is evaluated piecemeal. The deficiency in this procedure is evidenced by the fact that whereas Kelly and others are convinced that Athanasius's Trinitarian theology is bound up with his theology of redemption,[1] Athanasius himself emphasizes as well

the link between the doctrines of redemption and creation in his apologetic treatise, *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*,[2] in which his treatment of creation also includes a theological anthropology. Thus Athanasius's Trinitarian theology, which is the aspect of his teaching that probably receives the most attention, achieves its full resonance only in the context of these other teachings.

After Trinitarian theology, Athanasian scholarship has lately been preoccupied with his Christology. Here especially the study of Athanasius from the perspective of later developments, rather than with a view to the inner logic of his teaching, has had unfortunate consequences. The result has been a tendency to debunk Athanasius's Christology for not taking seriously the humanity of Christ, a judgement based largely on the failure of Athanasius to give significant place to the human soul of Christ and his active human agency.[3] Such a judgement leaves out of account the crucial fact that in Athanasius's anthropology the human relation to the divine is characterized by receptivity rather than active agency, and so the way that Athanasius takes Christ's humanity seriously is precisely to attribute such receptivity to him as central to his full humanity (cf. *CA* 1:45, 1:48). This example underscores the necessity for grasping the whole of Athanasius's doctrine in order properly to understand and evaluate any of the parts.

Of course, there have also been studies devoted to Athanasius in his own right. These have generally tended to focus on one or another aspect of Athanasius's doctrine. As indicative of a tendency toward a more comprehensive interpretation that probes the connection between doctrines in Athanasius, there stand out Louis Bouyer's *L'Incarnation et l'Église-corps du Christ dans la théologie de saint Athanase*[4] and J.Roldanus's *Le Christ et l'homme dans la théologie d'Athanase d'Alexandrie. Étude de la conjonction de sa conception de l'homme avec sa christologie*.[5] There is still a notable need, however, for a book-length study devoted to the overall coherence of Athanasius's theological vision, in terms of the interrelation of central aspects of his doctrine.[6] This need arises particularly from the fact that while Athanasius is not materially or methodologically a systematic thinker, his theology may be considered as formally systematic insofar as he is consistently concerned to articulate the various "parts" of Christian faith as intrinsically related.[7] In the context of the Arian crisis, for example, much of the force of Athanasius's polemic relies precisely on his systematic demonstration that the issue of the ontological equality

of the Son to the Father bears directly on the whole nexus of Christian doctrine.[8] Understanding the implied systematic framework that underlies all of Athanasius's work is therefore essential to a proper understanding of anything he says. Otherwise, fragments of Athanasian doctrine can be misunderstood[9] or, at least, not thoroughly understood when they are divorced from the native horizon of interpretation provided by the whole body of his writings viewed together.

To illuminate this horizon and articulate its fundamental dimensions by reference to Athanasius's own terminology is the proposed task of this study. Its fulfillment would constitute a contribution to theological scholarship in three ways: firstly, it would provide a comprehensive and original interpretation of the theological vision of Athanasius as a whole, the validity of this interpretation being demonstrated by its ability to show the internal consistency of Athanasius's vision. Secondly, from the standpoint of such a comprehensive interpretation, it would be able to extend and critique more partial interpretations of isolated doctrines of Athanasius. Thirdly, by focusing precisely on the integrity and coherence of Athanasius's vision, it would gain a credible dialogue partner with which contemporary theological discussion may contend.

In going about this task, a primary concern will be that, in the attempt to expound and analyze the coherence of Athanasius's vision, a systematic framework should not be imposed on him from outside. It will not do, in other words, simply to go through a list of the traditional "tracts" of Christian theology and see how each is conceived by Athanasius. Rather, our task will be to make explicit the central structural themes already present in the writings of Athanasius, and to treat them in their native context. Thus the focus of my interpretation will be what I see as an intrinsic center of coherence in Athanasius's theology: the distinction, and simultaneous relation, between God and the world.

To this end, the first chapter will consist of an examination, in admittedly rather broad strokes, of the theme of the relation between God and the world before Athanasius. More specifically, I will focus on the relation between divine transcendence and immanence, in both the Hellenistic and Judeo-Christian traditions. It will be seen that in the Hellenistic tradition there was a progressive tendency to conceive of a transcendent first principle who was described in increasingly apophatic terms, and to posit a distinct divine principle who acted as a mediator between the mundane and intelligible realms. In this way,

divine transcendence and immanence were distinguished and in some way separated. I argue that the biblical witness presents a markedly different perspective, in which divine involvement in the world is in no way seen as detracting from divine transcendence, but rather as the very manifestation of the divine greatness and majesty. After remarking on the signs of strain in the apologists' efforts to integrate Hellenistic and biblical perspectives, I will focus on Irenaeus who, in his struggle against the Gnostics, emphasizes the convergence of divine transcendence and immanence in the Christian message of salvation. Throughout this study, my position is that Athanasius's theological vision is markedly Irenaean in this regard.

The second chapter will show how this conception of the convergence of divine transcendence and immanence is central to Athanasius's early doctrinal treatise, the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*. After showing how this emphasis on the simultaneous otherness and nearness of God is played out in the structure and argument of the work, I will then try to demonstrate its structural and systematic importance by analyzing its rôle in Athanasius's exposition of the doctrine of God, cosmology, theological anthropology, soteriology, and Christology.

The third chapter will focus on the theme of the relation between God and creation in the context of the Arian crisis. Here it will be seen that the themes of mediation and immediacy in the relation between God and creation were a significant part of the logic of the debate between Athanasius and his Arian opponents. Focusing on his anti-Arian writings, this chapter will explore how Athanasius's particular conception of the relation between God and the world determines his theological method and language, his views of mediation and immediacy in the relation between God and the world, his notion of the relation between theology and economy, his understanding of the significance of the incarnation of the *Logos*, and his insistence that our definitive salvation must be grounded in the confession of the full divinity of the Son.

The fourth chapter will focus on some of Athanasius's more pastoral and devotional works: the *Festal Letters*, the *Letter to Marcellinus*, and the *Life of Antony*. Our theme there will be Athanasius's presentation of the redeemed relation between God and creation in the life of grace. Particularly with reference to the *Life of Antony*, we will have an opportunity to see how Athanasius's vision of the Christian message achieves concrete existential application in his presentation of the great

holy man of the Egyptian desert. We shall see that the bishop's presentation of the hermit as Christ's "co-worker" achieves its fullest resonance in the context of Athanasius's global conception of the relation between God and the world and of his understanding of the incarnation of the *Logos* as effecting a new version of this relation. Finally, our conclusion will recommend that we view Athanasius as a significant partner in modern theological discussion, and that we value his systematic insistence on the simultaneity of divine transcendence and nearness to the world as central to the integrity of the Christian gospel.

1
THE THEME OF THE RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND CREATION BEFORE ATHANASIUS

There can hardly be a more comprehensive subject than that of the relation between God and creation. Our particular focus in this chapter will be to investigate this theme with specific reference to the relation between divine transcendence and divine immanence, which is to say, the relation between God's otherness to the world and God's positive involvement and engagement with the world. To justify this focus, we need to anticipate our interpretation of Athanasius by saying that we find in the Alexandrian bishop a quite conscious emphasis on the convergence of divine transcendence and immanence. This emphasis on the simultaneity of divine otherness and divine nearness to the world is central to Athanasius's conception of the relation between God and the world. Before we proceed in the succeeding chapters toward a detailed interpretation of this emphasis through an analysis of his own works, our aim in this chapter is to contextualize the Athanasian vision in light of its Hellenistic and Judeo-Christian background. In general, we want to show very briefly that the problem of relating divine transcendence and immanence was a lively one in Hellenistic philosophy which, especially in the development of "Middle Platonism," was resolved through differentiating absolute transcendence and divine immanence by assigning these qualifications to distinct entities. In contrast, we find in the scriptural witness the conception that divine involvement in the world does not detract from transcendence but is in fact a function of and a demonstration of God's transcendence. Thus in the biblical perspective divine transcendence and immanence are convergent, both movements being united in the conception of a God who paradoxically reveals his majestic greatness through his liberating and beneficent involvement in the world. The tension between Hellenistic and Judeo-Christian conceptions of the relation between divine immanence and transcendence is apparent in the

theology of the Apologists but finds a certain resolution in Irenaeus, who uses philosophical terms and categories while vigorously reinstating the biblical emphasis on divine greatness as conceived in terms of God's involvement in the world. Within such a context, then, the purpose of this chapter is to present Athanasius as continuing this Irenaean tradition.

The Hellenistic background

The relation between the "world" and the realm of the divine is a theme that is integral to Plato's vision. As is evident from the earliest dialogues (e.g. the *Euthyphro*), Plato's fundamental concern is ethical. While seeking to move beyond the traditional religion based on the mythical gods, he also wants to undercut the moral relativism of the Sophists, in which ethical values are reduced to mere conventions. This project involves him in the attempt to show that there is an eternal and immutable, that is to say divine, realm of "Ideas" or "Forms" that constitute the absolute and unchanging archetypes of human virtue. Correlative to this ethical postulate is Plato's more global conception that, indeed, the whole visible universe is, in varying degrees, an image of the Forms according to which it is patterned. Thus the most radical ontological distinction in Plato is between the realms of Becoming and Being. The former is the domain of the visible, material, constantly changing world; the latter is the *topos hyperouranios*[1] of the unchanging and immaterial Forms. Notwithstanding the obvious difference between these realms, two motifs represent Plato's attempt to indicate the positive connection between them. There is first of all the theme of participation, by which is indicated Plato's conviction that the material and changeable world of Becoming is not utterly devoid of Being, but shares to various degrees in the intelligible Ideas. Secondly, there is the notion that the human soul has for its native habitat not the material world of flux, but the divine realm of the Ideas, with which it enjoys a radical kinship, *syngeneia*. Through dialectic and moral purification, therefore, the soul can pass over from the realm of Becoming to that of Being.

Even such a rudimentary and highly simplified overview is enough to indicate the significance of the themes of divine immanence and transcendence in Plato. While the positing of transcendent Forms gives ultimate ground to human morality, the efficacy and existential relevance of such grounding is dependent on the accessibility of these

Forms to human striving. Thus, especially in the earlier dialogues, there is an emphasis on the immanence of the Forms in human thought. The whole methodology of philosophical "dialectic" is an attempt to awaken the mind to a remembrance of the intelligible realm which is its proper milieu,[2] an awakening that extends into an active participation in this realm through true knowledge and true virtue.

At the same time, the attempt to ground all phenomenal reality in the transcendent realm of the intelligible involves the projection of multiplicity into that realm, insofar as multiple Ideas are posited to account for the multiplicity of phenomena. Such multiplicity is problematic in light of the properly transcendent attribute of unity, and so a "supra-transcendent" principle is posited as a single ground for all the Ideas, themselves understood to be transcendent with respect to the particulars which participate in them. This supra-transcendent principle is identified in the *Republic* as the Form of the Good, "sovereign in the intelligible world."[3] And yet, even this supra-transcendent principle, while described as "beyond being," is somehow positively related to the sensible world and is accessible, albeit all too fleetingly, to the rapturous gaze of ecstatic contemplation. The description of the Form of the Good can thus be seen to represent Plato's double concern to affirm divine transcendence and immanence. It is both beyond being and the source of all true being. At the same time, the Ideas are posited as mediating between the Good and phenomenal reality. But the precise nature of the relation between the Form of the Good and the Ideas is not clarified by Plato.

The same kinds of concern, the same attempt to reconcile divine immanence and transcendence, and the same lack of precision characterize Plato's philosophical "myth" of creation in the *Timaeus*, probably the most widely read Platonic dialogue among the early Christian Fathers. While Plato here speaks of the Demiurge "making" the world, it is clear that we are not dealing with a doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. Rather, it is presumed that a radical datum of reality is the somewhat recalcitrant but receptive matter, which is endowed with intelligible structure through the work of the "Craftsman" or *Demiourgos*. In this work, the Craftsman models his activity on the patterns provided by the Forms. Within this model a further mediating agent is added between the Forms and the phenomenal world, namely the *Demiourgos*. This addition does not of course imply that Plato changed his cosmology, a conclusion which presumes these accounts to be more straightforwardly propositional than they are.

However, it does indicate again the kind of tension that is pervasive throughout Plato's whole project, understood as an attempt to affirm a positive connection between the divine and the phenomenal, while safeguarding the proper transcendence of the former. It would seem that, in the later dialogues, there is an increasing emphasis on the transcendence of the noetic sphere and the supra-transcendence of the One or the Good, coupled with strategies to link the phenomenal sphere with the highest principle by mediatorial means.

With Aristotle, we leave behind the framework of participation as a way of relating the immanent and transcendent orders. In his world-view, the intelligibility of phenomenal realities is explained not in terms of their relation to transcendent Forms, but rather in terms of the immanent dynamic of nature, *physis*. Nevertheless, Aristotle's analysis of motion in *Metaphysics, Lambda* leads him to posit a prime mover, whose being is described in terms of absolute actuality and "thinking thought" *(noesis noeseos)*. The transcendence of this being is emphasized by way of stressing its self-containment and non-involvement with the world. The divine *nous* is simply unaware of any lesser reality, since it befits the highest being to concern itself only with the highest, which, of course, is itself. As the first mover, then, the *nous* exercises its primal function without any *ad extra* intentionality on its own part. Rather, in a kind of reversal of the conception of the good as naturally self-communicating, the *nous* "moves all things, inasmuch as it is loved by them."[4] Thus, in Aristotle, the transcendence of the first principle is strongly secured, although it is not quite spelled out precisely how the "desire" of all things, which is ultimately directed toward the prime mover, is related to the immanent teleological dynamism of *physis*. An unmistakable tendency, however, is the reduction of divine immanence to a non-intentional influence which is also indirect, mediated by the heavenly bodies whose movements cause terrestrial motion.

The pendulum swings in the other direction with the doctrine of the Stoics, where the tension between immanence and transcendence is resolved by a simple denial of all transcendence. To be sure, the Stoics did not abandon all talk of the divine, and, indeed, it is at least arguable that their world-view may be aptly characterized as pantheistic.[5] It cannot be denied, however, that it was an immanentist conception of reality, in which the ultimate principles of existence are held to be not external nor in any way beyond but completely inherent in the cosmos. The divine principle is generally characterized as *pneuma* or *logos;* this

is the reason immanent in all things, itself being a highly subtle ethereal substance. This universal *logos* is distributed without division in the seminal reasons, the *logoi spermatikoi*, which pervade all things. It is by virtue of these that the rational principle governs all things according to a universal, rational, and necessary providence. Thus in the Stoics we have a kind of collapse into identity of the Aristotelian duality of a transcendent moving principle *(nous)* and an immanent teleological principle (*physis*).[6] While abandoning the duality of transcendent and immanent realms, however, the Stoics constructed a strictly immanent duality which was in some way continuous with the Platonic framework of participation, and which was to be influential in later characterizations of the relation between God and world.[7] This immanent duality was that between the active principle, *to poioun*, which was the *logos* actualizing itself, and the passive principle, *to paschon*, akin to Aristotle's "matter" and the "receptacle" of the *Timaeus*, which was a completely indeterminate susceptibility to being acted upon.

Both Stoicism and Aristotle's metaphysics were formative elements in the retrieval and development of Platonic thought in the movement now identified as Middle Platonism. With reference to our own concerns, what is especially striking about the philosophers of this school is an increasing emphasis on a transcendent first principle. Moreover, this transcendence was characteristically safeguarded by relegating contact with the world to distinct and subordinate entities.[8] In effect, therefore, we have the separation of transcendence and immanence as higher and lower, quite distinct, levels of divinity. While there arises, in this manner, a separation between transcendence and immanence within the realm of the divine, a typical strategy is also to link the mundane with the divine by locating the eternal archetypes (the Platonic "Ideas") of natural realities in the mind of God. However, even this link is by no means an immediate connection between the first God and the world. Strictly speaking, the supreme first principle tends to be characterized in Aristotelian terms, as utterly absorbed in its own self-contemplation. The Aristotelian influence is evident, for example, in the characteristic description of Albinus:

> But since the first Mind is the noblest of things, the object of its thoughts must also be noblest, and nothing is nobler than it is itself, so therefore it would have to contemplate eternally itself and its own thoughts, and this activity it has is Idea.[9]

It is only in the Demiurgic mind, therefore, that the intelligible Ideas are conceived specifically in relation to the world. This same distinction between the intelligible eternal Ideas in themselves and in relation to the world is sometimes played out, as in the doctrine of Plutarch, in differentiating the transcendent and immanent aspects of the *logos,* itself understood as mediating between the divine and the world.[10] In Middle Platonism, therefore, we see a general tendency to link the divine to the world by way of intermediaries, and thus divine transcendence and divine immanence seem to be differentiated by being assigned to distinct entities.

In Plotinus, and Neoplatonism generally, we see an even stronger emphasis on the transcendence of the supreme first principle. Whereas the Middle Platonic view tended to identify this principle with being or mind, Plotinus is emphatic about the inappropriateness of even the most sublime predication when referred to the One. Thus the One cannot even be conceived as Mind, for that implies a duality of knower and known, and all duality is at variance with the true nature of the One. What can be said about the One can thus only be said by way of negation: "Generative of all, the Unity is none of all; neither thing nor quality nor quantity nor intellect nor soul; not in motion, not at rest, not in place, not in time; it is the self-defined, unique in form, or better formless."[11] Such a position does not arise *ex nihilo,* as it were, but represents the radicalization of a certain trajectory that is indicated as early as Speusippus,[12] and acquires definite momentum in the negative theology of Albinus and Numenius. In Plotinus, therefore, we have not just a novel idea but the climax of a progressive tendency to affirm the supreme transcendence of the first principle.

Transcendence, for Plotinus, is not exactly the same as inaccessibility. Precisely by virtue of its transcendently generative nature, the One is omnipresent,[13] and a certain identification with the One is possible to mystical contemplation, albeit all too fleetingly. But what is categorically ruled out, in Plotinus's conception, is an intentional immanence of the divine, a "looking down" of the higher principle itself toward lower realms. Instead, the causality and accessibility of a higher principle is effected by the overflow of emanation *(proodos)*. The ineffable unity of the One thus overflows into the united duality of Intelligence, which in turn, overflows into the discursive multiplicity of the Soul. The link between the sensible world and the intelligible realm is located on the level of Soul. The hypostatic Soul receives the *logoi* which are present in a unified way in Nous, and

sends these forth to the world Soul, which effects actual sensible differentiation. Thus an all-encompassing providence pervades the universe through "a chain of causality" which ultimately derives from the One, and links the intelligibility of Nous, via the hypostatic Soul and world Soul, to successively lower realms.[14] Corresponding to this dynamic of downward emanation is that of "return *(epistrophe)*", the orientation of lower levels to higher, and ultimately to the One, by virtue of a kind of radical ontological magnetism. In its own way, such a scheme presents a certain conception of divine immanence, in the sense that the divine exercises a pervasive efficacy that permeates lower realms. Moreover, from the point of view of the relation between the human and the divine, the latter is seen to be accessible by virtue of a kind of natural kinship. However, as we have already observed, the one thing that cannot be accommodated within this scheme is the conception of the divine as intentionally concerned with the world, of the world as being an intentional object of divine activity.

Thus the main point to be gathered from our all too rapid survey is that the progress of Hellenistic philosophical speculation on the divine, from Plato onwards, seems to be largely characterized by an increasing emphasis on divine transcendence. While Epicureanism and Stoicism represent certain exceptions to this tendency, the general momentum toward a conception of a supreme deity that can only be described apophatically largely prevails and achieves a climactic expression in Plotinus's rhapsodic characterizations of the One. In the meantime, however, and again since Plato, some effort to link the sensible to the intelligible and divine realms has also been an enduring concern. And yet a tension seems to be presumed between transcendence and involvement in the world. In Plato, this tension is played out in the double strategy of positing, on the one hand, divine exemplars for mundane realities, the latter conceived as "participating" in the former, and, on the other hand, by positing the actual "work" of involvement and governance of the world as the proper function of a *Demiourgos*, who is subordinate to Mind, and who mediates between the latter and the world. Thus the transcendence of the highest principle is secured while maintaining the link between the mundane with the divine by means of a subordinate but still divine and beneficent intermediary. However, the tension already implicit in such a strategy is given further impetus by Aristotle's conception of the perfectly transcendent as utterly noninvolved with what is lower than itself. In Middle Platonism, the Platonic Ideas are conceived as the thoughts of this Primal

Mind, and thus there is a way in which the world, through its intelligible archetypes, is linked to the highest principle. There is also, though, an accompanying effort to qualify even this link by differentiating between the Ideas in themselves, in their transcendent aspect, and the Ideas in relation to the world, in their immanent aspect. Moreover, the function of linking the divine exemplars to matter is also relegated to a subordinate Demiurge. Finally, in Plotinus, the principle of the incompatibility of transcendence and condescending intentionality is absolutized into a scheme of emanation whereby intentionality is categorically denied of divine causality. Also in Plotinus, the movement toward a fitting conception of divine transcendence finds a certain culmination in his highly apophatic description of the One. With regard to the issue of the relation between God and the world, therefore, the legacy bequeathed to the Judeo-Christian tradition by Hellenistic philosophy included two fundamental and significant emphases: firstly, an insistence on divine ineffability and transcendence, conceived as self-sufficiency and even self-absorption, and, secondly, a tendency to see direct and intentional involvement with the world as something not quite in keeping with the highest level of transcendence. These thus gave rise to the strategy of linking this level of relative transcendence to that of absolute transcendence by way of subordinate intermediaries.

The Judeo-Christian background

When we turn to the scriptural witness, we find that the Hellenistic tension between absolute transcendence and involvement with the world is treated in a quite distinct manner. It is no longer presumed that involvement in the world in any way mitigates against absolute transcendence. Rather, the greatness of the Most High God is conceived in direct relation to his saving and liberating involvement in mundane affairs.[15] There is no conception in the Hebrew scriptures of any god higher than the Creator God, the God who is positively related to creation as its source and sustenance. Moreover, this God enters into a covenantal relation with his creation, and is identified in terms of his relation to his people—he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but he is also clearly a transcendent God, a God whose ways are infinitely beyond human ways.[16] The tension between divine transcendence and immanence does not appear in the Hebrew scriptures in terms of reconciling two antithetical or competing movements and no attempt is

made to resolve it from the divine side. Rather, it becomes manifest insofar as events of human-divine encounter are presented as moments of extreme crisis, from the human point of view. We see dramatic expression of this tension in the theophanies generally, in the motif that no one may see the face of God and live,[17] as well as in the prophetic calls,[18] to name but a few examples. While the encounter with the transcendent God is thus presented, from the human standpoint, as a "limit experience" that stretches the boundaries of human consciousness in an almost perilous way, the convergence of immanence and transcendence is taken for granted from the divine point of view. Not only is divine majesty conceived in relation to his condescending care for his creation but it is conceived in terms of his stooping down to the lowest and most destitute. Compassion for the lowly, rather than self-absorbed contemplation, is the proper characteristic of divine majesty in the Hebrew scriptures: "Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high, who looks down on the heavens and the earth? He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap…"[19] When transcendence is thus conceived in terms of condescension, there arises no need to set up a kind of buffer zone of mediation to protect divine transcendence. Even when it is angels, powers, or human messengers who are doing his bidding, it is still the Most High God who is acting to guide, save, and instruct his people.

The great Jewish exegete, theologian, and Middle Platonist philosopher Philo tried in his own way to integrate this biblical convergence of transcendence and immanence with the categories and terminology of current Hellenistic philosophy.[20] A primary strategy is to say that God is unknowable in himself, in his *ousia*, but reveals himself through his works, a statement which we also find in Athanasius. God's unknowability has to do not with his withholding something but with humanity's incapacity to receive the whole fullness of God, which no creature can contain.[21] Another strategy, which is characteristically Hellenistic, is the positing of intermediaries as a bridge between the transcendent one God, and the multiplicity of the world. In Philo's description, this function is exercised by the Powers *(dynameis)* and the *Logos* of God, the relation between these two being unclear. Whether or not the Logos is one of the Powers, it seems at least clear that he occupies a primary place in relation to the (other?) Powers; as the "image" of God, he is the "charioteer of the powers".[22] The Powers are generally identified with Plato's Ideas, but two are

especially singled out by Philo: the kingly and the beneficent. It is through these Powers that God manifests his governance and his goodness toward the world. In this conception, we see a typically biblical conception of the transcendence of God in terms of his sovereignty and beneficence toward the world, with the important distinction that, in Philo, these "Powers" are subordinate aspects of the one God, and thus do not represent fully God's transcendence. They themselves, according to Philo, have a transcendent and an immanent aspect. In essence, they are unattainable of apprehension but are revealed in their effects.

Another way of bridging the gulf between the transcendent God and creation is articulated in Philo's Logos doctrine. As mediator between God and the world, the Logos also has both a transcendent and immanent aspect. The Logos is the "locus" of the Ideas, and through his agency, the Ideas assume their immanent status as seminal reason—principles *(logoi spermatikoi)* indwelling created beings as "models and creative principles".[23] Philo's Logos thus combines "the immanence of the Stoic *Pneuma—Logos* with the ideality, if not the strict transcendence of Platonic Ideas".[24] As the "instrument" *(organon)* of God in the creation of the world, the Logos thus mediates between the intelligible cosmos of the Ideas and the sensible world. Thus in his conception both of the Logos and of the Powers of God, Philo is concerned to mediate between divine transcendence and immanence. Although the biblical witness exerts some pressure toward describing God's activity primarily in terms of his governance and beneficence toward the world, the Hellenistic influence is evident in Philo's ultimately locating divine transcendence in a sphere that is distinct from and "higher" than that of relation to the world.

In the New Testament witness, roughly contemporary with Philo, the problem of the relation between divine transcendence and immanence achieves a focus in the very person of Jesus of Nazareth, although it does not become a thematic issue in the New Testament itself. In Paul's formulation of the dual status of Jesus as Son of God according to the spirit and son of David according to the flesh, we have an articulation of the early Church's witness to the person of Jesus as somehow partaking of both the transcendent and worldly realms.[25] The problem of the relation between these two realms in general and with respect to the person of Jesus of Nazareth is thus strictly implied in the canon of the New Testament. Moreover, we have in the New Testament writings clear indications of certain principles that have to be taken into

account in any explicit consideration of this problem. It is clear, first of all, that the God of the New Testament, understood as the Father of Jesus Christ, is a transcendent figure, in the basic sense that he is not simply a part of the natural order but stands above it. At the same time, it is also clear that this God is not in any way aloof from or disinterested in the created order. In the "Father" who has counted every hair of every head,[26] we are very far from the conception of a prime mover which eternally contemplates itself. Moreover, Jesus of Nazareth is presented as both sharing the transcendent power of God and as mediating his loving concern for creation. The New Testament miracle stories, for example, seem to serve the same function of presenting the greatness of God in terms of his liberating intervention in the lives of people that we saw as characteristic of the Old Testament witness. Finally, it is also clear that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth constitute some fairly drastic reordering of the relation between the transcendent and created orders. In one expression, the net result of our participation in this event is that we become "partakers of the divine nature."[27] However, the question of how Jesus himself is related to the transcendent and immanent orders respectively is one that will need much effort to properly articulate and answer. It may be appreciated from the outset that, while this is obviously a Christological question, it is more generally a question of the relation between God and the world, as will be brought out, as early as the second century, in the debates with Marcionites and Gnostics. Moreover, it is also a question that is closely tied to the development of Trinitarian doctrine for, if, as was the case from very early on, the Son was particularly associated with the created order and the Father with divine transcendence, the question of the relation between the Son and the Father is, by implication, a question of the relation between divine transcendence and immanence. In this context, it will also be appreciated that the tendency of Hellenistic philosophy, which we have cursorily charted, to assign divine transcendence and immanence to distinct graded levels of divinity will exercise a certain attraction.

This attraction is certainly one influential factor in the efforts of early Christian theologians to deal with the whole problem of the interrelation between divine transcendence and immanence. But in their efforts to proclaim the Christian message in a milieu permeated by the categories of Hellenistic philosophy, these early theologians found areas not only of tension but of agreement as well. At least

superficially, one area of agreement seemed to be a certain recourse to negative theology in order to express divine transcendence by way of contrast with mundane reality. Thus, in a characteristic vein, Athenagoras can describe the one God as "uncreated, eternal, invisible, impassible, incomprehensible, illimitable."[28] He goes on to emphasize that the creation of the world in no way mitigates against the perfect self-sufficiency of God, because "God did not make the world as if he were in need of it. For he is complete in himself, unapproachable light, perfect beauty, spirit, power, reason."[29]

As against Stoic immanentism, the early Christian theologians thus employed the motif of contrasting God and the world, in a manner that often recalled the Platonic contrast between the realms of Being and of Becoming. Such a strategy, while safeguarding divine transcendence and appealing to common ground between Christian and contemporary philosophical conceptions of God, was not however completely unproblematic. This aspect is well-described by R. A. Norris with specific reference to Justin Martyr's employment of it:

> Justin does not, however, perceive that his appropriation of the negative language of Middle Platonist theology conceals an ambiguity and a problem. "Being" and "Becoming"—or "ingenerate" and "generate"—denote, in a Platonist system, logical contraries. That is, speaking loosely, they stand for opposed qualities within a single "spectrum." Consequently, the realities which they name *exclude each other;* and God's transcendence over the world, when figured in terms of the contrast between Being and Becoming, turns out to be a form of necessary separation from the world. He is, ontologically speaking, outside the world and can enter into relation with it only through a mediating agency—that of the cosmic Reason, or Logos.[30]

As Norris goes on to point out, assigning to the Logos this mediatorial function does not totally solve the problem; indeed, in a certain sense, "it seems merely to emphasize the exclusion of God from the world."[31] Although Norris perhaps exaggerates the strictly antithetical relation between the realms of Being and Becoming (does not the Platonic model of participation provide a positive connection within this antithesis?) his point still has considerable force. Especially when the Logos is considered to be somehow subordinate to the Father, as he

seems to be in Justin, the implication is that the Father is "higher" than direct dealing with the world. This problem in Justin's approach is symptomatic of an unresolved tension present in the apologists in general. It is articulated in L. W. Barnard's study of Justin Martyr in the following terms:

> Our conclusion is that two conceptions of the Deity existed in Justin's mind. On the one hand was his acceptance of the biblical and Christian idea of God as a living Creator, a compassionate Father who in Christ had drawn near to men and who was concerned with the welfare of each soul. On the other hand Justin retained the Middle Platonist emphasis on God as the unknowable and transcendent Cause far removed from the world and disconnected with it…. Justin had no real theory of divine immanence to complement his emphasis on divine transcendence. His doctrine of the logos…in fact kept the supreme Deity at a safe distance from intercourse with men and left the Platonic transcendence in all its bareness. God for Justin operated through the logos whose existence alone bridged the gulf which would have otherwise proved impassable. Justin worshipped the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; he prayed to the living God who had brought salvation in Christ; but it was not given to him, as a pioneer second-century Apologist, to unite transcendence and immanence in a system at once rational and biblical.[32]

Of course, as Barnard himself concedes, Justin as well as the other apologists did exert considerable effort to emphasize God's active involvement in and care for creation. So it was not the case that they actually put forth a doctrine that God is excluded from the world. Rather, they strenuously attempted to proclaim that God is both transcendent and immanent, even if this immanence was not well integrated into their doctrine of God. The question, however, is to what degree this double affirmation was a mere juxtaposition.[33] Certainly, a prevailing tendency was, on the one hand, to affirm divine transcendence in terms of strictly contrasting God with the world, and, on the other hand, to affirm divine immanence by emphasizing God's providential care for the world. The problem is only highlighted to the extent this juxtaposition tends to be personified in the subordination of the Son, as a Mediator-God, to the transcendent first God, the Father.

The impetus toward a more coherent and perhaps more authentically biblical account of the complete simultaneity of divine transcendence and immanence was provided not from any philosophy but in reaction to the theologies generally grouped together under the rubric of "Gnosticism." Here, in a much more drastic way than anything found in the Platonic tradition, was a framework in which God and the sensible world were construed as antithetical.

The great opponent of the Gnostic heresies, Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons (*c.* 115–202), fashioned a comprehensive response to the Gnostic world-view which included an insistence on the positive relation between God and the world, as implied in an authentic interpretation of the Christian doctrine of God. In doing so, he certainly did not reject contemporary philosophical categories expressive of divine transcendence, but employed them readily. The sheer contrast between God and world was a theme to which he had ready access:

> But the things created are other than the One who created them, and the things that have been made from the One who has made them. For He is himself uncreated, with neither beginning nor end, and does not need anything; He is self-sufficient. Moreover, He grants to all others existence itself; but the things which have been made by Him have received a beginning. It is therefore necessary that the things that have had a beginning, and are susceptible to dissolution, and are subject to and stand in need of Him who made them, have a different name, as must be acknowledged even by those who have a minimal capacity for distinguishing such things. So the One who made all things can alone together with His Word properly be named God and Lord; but the things which have been made cannot have this name applied to them, neither can they legitimately assume that name which belongs to the Creator.[34]

Here we see Irenaeus making use of the standard opposition of *agen(n)etos—gen(n)eta,* in a fairly typical manner, but it is important to note that Irenaeus frames this opposition within the context of the positive relation of creation, of God's granting creation its existence as a gift. Ultimately, for Irenaeus, the relation and distinction between God and world is not one of sheer opposition or unlikeness but of the asymmetrical correlation brought about by the act of creation. We say "correlation" because Irenaeus conceives of God's creative activity in

terms of a free decision to make his own immutable and perfect being the source of creation's continual growth:

> God is different from humanity in this respect: that God makes while humanity is made. The One who makes is always the same, while that which is made necessarily receives beginning and middle and addition and growth. God indeed makes things well, while humanity is well made. God also is truly perfect in every way, Himself equal and similar to Himself. He is all light, all mind, all substance, and the source of all good things. But humanity receives growth and progress towards God. For as God is always the same, humanity, rooted in God, always progresses toward God. God will never cease to grant benefits and riches to humanity; nor will humanity ever cease from being benefited and enriched by God. For the receptacle of God's benevolence, and the instrument of His glorification, is the human being who is grateful to the One that made him.
>
> (*Adv. Haer*. IV, 11, 2; SC 211, 96)

In this passage, we see a remarkable blending of standard Hellenistic categories with Irenaeus's own unmistakably biblical perspective. God's transcendent perfections, articulated in quite Platonic terms, are nevertheless not seen as merely antithetical to creaturely being but as the source for the existence and continual enrichment of human being. Even divine immutability is conceived as somehow correlative with human progress toward the divine. In short, God is conceived here as "towards creation," and creation is conceived as "towards God."

This kind of correlation of God and creation is by no means construed by Irenaeus in terms of necessity.[35] God remains free in the act of granting creation the gift of existence and in his continual presence to his creation. This freedom of God in making himself accessible to finite creation is expressed in terms of divine love. Thus if God's greatness renders him unknowable to creatures, his love effectively connects those creatures with his incomprehensible greatness:

> It is not possible to know God, as far as his grandeur is concerned. For it is impossible to measure the Father. But as to His love (for it is this which leads us to God by his Word), those who obey God always learn that there does exist so great a God, and

> that it is He who by Himself has established and made and adorned and contains all things, including ourselves and our world.
>
> (*Adv. Haer.* IV, 20, 1; SC 100/2, 624)[36]

Once divine transcendence is conceived not only in terms of the "greatness" by which God is other than and inaccessible to creation, but also equally in terms of the love by which God freely makes himself accessible to creation, then the positing of intermediaries between God and creation is no longer seen as safeguarding divine transcendence but even as threatening it. It follows, therefore, that in the context of his struggle against the Gnostics, with their elaborate system of mediations, Irenaeus emphasizes that the very notion of a God who is distant and uninvolved with creation compromises a fitting conception of the divine. As such, it does not redound to the majesty of God, but amounts to an insult and a "dishonoring" of God:

> They blaspheme the Creator, who is truly God, and who empowers us to find the truth. And they imagine that they have discovered another god beyond God, or another Pleroma, or another dispensation. Therefore, the light which is from God does not enlighten them, because they have dishonoured and despised God, considering Him of little worth because, through His love and great beneficence, He has come within reach of human knowledge (knowledge, however, not with regard to His grandeur or according to His essence—for no one has measured or handled that—but such that we may know that the One who made and fashioned humanity, and breathed into it the breath of life, and nourishes us through the creation, confirming all things by His Word, and binding them together by His Wisdom—He it is who is the only true God). But they dream of a non-existent being above the true God, believing that they have discovered the great God, whom no one can know, who does not communicate with human beings, and who exercises no direction over earthly affairs. So it turns out that they have discovered the god of Epicurus, who takes care neither of himself nor others; a god without providence.
>
> (*Adv. Haer.* III, 24, 2; SC 34, 402)

In opposition to the Gnostics, Irenaeus thus posits the immediacy of God's presence to creation as integral to a fitting conception of divine transcendence.[37] This convergence between divine transcendence and immediate presence to creation becomes in fact the vital center of his whole theology.[38] Within such a conception, the mediation of the Son and Spirit becomes itself a function of the immediacy of the divine presence to creation, by virtue of the emphasis that Son and Spirit are themselves immediately present to the Father, as his "two hands":

> It was not angels, therefore, who made us and formed us. For angels could not make an image of God, nor anyone else, except the true God, nor any Power *remotely distant* from the Father of all things. For God did not need such beings in order to make what He Himself had previously determined within Himself to make. As if He did not possess His own hands! *For with Him were always present* the Word and Wisdom, the Son and Spirit, by whom and in whom, freely and spontaneously, He made all things, and it is to them that He speaks, saying, "Let us make humanity after our image and likeness." He Himself takes from Himself the substance of the creatures, and the pattern of the things that are made, and the form of the things that are adorned.
>
> (*Adv. Haer.* IV, 20, 1; SC 34, 402; my emphasis)

At this point, we can note several trajectories along which the theme of the immediate presence of God to creation is played out in Irenaeus. We noted, first of all, that such an emphasis implies a conception of divine transcendence which includes a stress on God's positive relation to the world. It also leads to an emphasis on the immediacy of Son and Spirit to the Father, such that their mediation does not amount to any "distance" between creation and the Father. We can now add two further points. First, the theme of the immediate presence of God to creation implies an anthropology that conceives human being in terms of receptivity to this presence of God. With regard to divine transcendence, it is the glory of God to make himself available and present to creation; and with regard to anthropology, it is the glory of humanity to be present to this divine presence. Divine love thus brings about a correlation of divine and human glory, as is expressed in the celebrated dictum, "The glory of God is living humanity, and the life of the human being is the vision of God" (*Adv. Haer.* IV, 20, 7). The second point is that this immediacy of relation between God and

creation is the hermeneutical key to Irenaeus's conception of redemption in Christ. The divine—human communion, broken by sin, is recapitulated in Christ through his incarnation:

> There is therefore one God, who by the Word and Wisdom created and arranged all things. This is the one who is the Creator (Demiurge), who has granted this world to the human race. With respect to His grandeur, He is indeed unknown to all who have been made by Him (for no one has searched out His height, either among the ancients or those who are now living). But as to His love, He is always known through the One by whom He established all things. This is His Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, who in the last times was made human among human beings in order that He may unite the end to the beginning, that is, humanity to God. Therefore the prophets, receiving the charism of prophecy from the same Word, announced His coming according to the flesh, by which the blending and communion of God and humanity took place according to the good pleasure of the Father. From the beginning, the Word of God announced beforehand that God would be seen by human beings, and would converse with them upon the earth, and would be present with His own work, saving it, and becoming capable of being perceived by it, and freeing us from the hands of all that hate us, that is, from every spirit of wickedness; and enabling us to serve Him in holiness and righteousness all our days, in order that humanity, having embraced the Spirit of God, might attain to the glory of the Father.
>
> (*Adv. Haer.* IV, 20, 4; SC 100/2, 634, 636)

We can see, therefore, that the theme of the immediacy of relation between God and creation may serve as a unifying center for Irenaeus's theology, tying together his doctrine of God, anthropology, and theology of redemption. We hope to show that the same can be said of Athanasius. We shall see that Athanasius also adopts Irenaeus's emphasis on the convergence between God's transcendent majesty and his benevolent involvement with the world, the stress on the immediacy of divine presence to the world, the conception of humanity as fundamentally receptive to the divine, and the understanding of redemption in terms of repairing human receptivity and re-instituting the union of divine and human. There are thus strong grounds for

considering Athanasius as continuing a distinctly Irenaean tradition.[39] Our survey has shown that Irenaeus played a significant rôle in the development of the Christian conception of the relation between God and the world, by breaking away from the tendency to dissociate divine transcendence and divine immanence. The work of Athanasius underscores the significance of this Irenaean breakthrough and gives it a fuller systematic expression with reference to the whole nexus of Christian doctrine.

Turning to Athanasius's great Alexandrian predecessor, Origen (*c.* 185–*c.* 251), we observe that the most significant heritage bequeathed by Origen to Athanasius in relation to our topic is his conception of the Father—Son relation as both prior to and ground for the God—world relation.[40] Underlying this conception of Origen's is the notion that divine transcendence implies a "containing" of the world by God: God's glory "is in the very fact that He possesses all things."[41] And yet, as so often, Origen proves ultimately ambivalent on this point insofar as the Word and Wisdom by which God contains all things are finally considered to be somehow less transcendent than the Father himself.[42] Thus Origen's legacy includes, on the one hand, the conception of divine transcendence in terms of "inclusion" of the world and the concomitant notion of the Father-Son relation as "containing" the God-world relation and, on the other hand, the enduring predilection to assign divine involvement with the world, in the person of the Son, to a lower degree of transcendence than that accorded to the Father. Both these trajectories continued to develop in the Alexandrian tradition, the former represented by such figures as Theognostus (head of the catechetical school of Alexandria, *c.* 265–82),[43] Alexander of Alexandria (Athanasius's immediate episcopal predecessor, *c.* 312–28)[44] and, of course, Athanasius himself, the latter most notably by the figure of Arius.

Aside from the central datum of the priority of the Father—Son relation and its containment of the God—world relation, Athanasius relies heavily on Origen in his pervasive use of the category of participation. That was the fundamental category by which Origen distinguished and related God and world. While Origen could also speak of participation within the Trinity, he distinguishes the participation of creatures in God as accidental and not essential.[45] Moreover, Origen also uses the terminology of "externality" to contrast the creation—Creator type of participation from that within the Trinity,[46] a strategy that Athanasius would fully exploit. Also characteristic of

Origen's conception is an emphasis on the fragility of human participation in the divine, both because this participation is accidental and not essential and because humanity's orientation is alterable.[47] Alterability is thus conceived as a quintessentially creaturely problem in Origen and perhaps even more so in Athanasius. On the other hand, Athanasius respectfully corrected his illustrious predecessor on such issues as the conception of a graded hierarchy within the Trinity and the notion that the world is an eternally necessary correlative to God's almightiness.[48] But what most distinguishes Origen and Athanasius with reference to the relation between God and creation is precisely Athanasius's continuing of the Irenaean emphasis on the immediacy between God and creation. Origen would not deny such immediacy, but his conception of the universe is much more one of graded hierarchy; it is a universe constituted by mediations.[49] While stressing divine providence and re-echoing Irenaeus's insistence that there is no God beyond the Creator,[50] Origen is just not as emphatic about the immediacy of the relation between God and creation as Irenaeus was or as Athanasius would be. The convergence between divine transcendence and immanence—or, to put it another way, the conception of divine transcendence in terms of immanence and immediate presence—is simply not as much of a consciously employed theological *topos* in Origen. Athanasius's logic, however, following Irenaeus, is uniformly focused on the immediate relation between God and creation, to the point of consistently de-emphasizing created mediations. Having thus put this logic in the context of the development of thought on the theme of the relation between God and creation, we will now proceed to analyze Athanasius's vision in his own terms.

2
THE RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND CREATION IN THE *CONTRA GENTES–DE INCARNATIONE*

Introduction

We begin our investigation of the theme of the relation between God and creation in Athanasius by analyzing its significance in his earliest doctrinal treatise, the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*. In dealing with this double work, the first issue to present itself is the controversy regarding its dating, with suggestions varying from as early as *c.* AD 318[1] or as late as the 350s.[2] Traditionally, it has been presumed that the apparent lack of reference to the Arian heresy is sufficient proof for a date prior to the condemnation of Arius, *c.* 318. However, as early as the late nineteenth century, this argument was undermined by Loofs's observation that neither do the *Festal Letters* show any reference to the Arians before 335.[3] This omission was explained by Charles Kannengiesser, who dates the work during Athanasius's first exile, as an intentional silence motivated by political expediency.[4] Kannengiesser takes Athanasius's comment about not having "our teachers' works to hand" in *Contra Gentes* 1 (hereafter cited as *CG*) as an allusion to the bishop's exile, and further specifies the date by linking a reference in *De Incarnatione* 24 (hereafter *DI*) to those who wish to divide the Church with a similar phrase in the *Festal Letter* of 337, both taken as alluding to the Arians. Besides accounting for the relative maturity of the work, this suggestion also has the advantage of helping to explain Athanasius's apparent dependence on Eusebius's *Praeparatio Evangelica* and *Theophany*.

Kannengiesser's suggestion, however, has not been universally accepted and is not without serious problems. A strong argument has been made for the reference in the *Festal Letters* to "those who rend Christ's tunic" being not to the Arians but to the Meletians.[5] Moreover,

E. P. Meijering has pointed out that Kannengiesser's proposal raises the question of why Athanasius did not dramatize his exile by referring to it in the treatise, considering that "being in exile was a *topos* in ancient literature".[6] Indeed, it has also been stated that the reference to not having books to hand is misconstrued when it is interpreted as referring to the author rather than the audience of a work. It is not quite logical to say that Athanasius, being in exile, did not have books to hand and therefore wrote a treatise to be read by people who presumably were not in exile and thus did have books to hand![7]

Probably the most vocal supporters of the traditional dating among contemporary scholars have been E.P.Meijering and his colleague, J. C. M. van Winden. Aside from reiterating the tradicional argument *e silentio*, van Winden has contended that a concrete support for an earlier dating can be found in *CG 6* and *DI 2*, where it is said that the heretics ("οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ αἱρέσεων") believe that there is an evil creator-god alongside the good God. Van Winden and Meijering contend that this reference to *the* heretics (their emphasis) indicates that Athanasius was not aware at the time of any other heresies that did not represent a dualistic doctrine of creation.[8] Since the Arians did not hold such a view, Arianism was not a formal heresy at the time of writing. However, van Winden's argument seems to make far too much out of this phrase, especially considering that it could just as well be rendered, "those of the heretics…"as "*the* heretics."[9]

Taking account of these conflicting arguments, we cannot claim any positive proof for the dating of this treatise. By way of conjecture, however, we can make some further observations with the aim of establishing a fairly credible combination of *terminus post quem* and *terminus ante quem.*[10] As to the latter, it has already been pointed out that Athanasius's lack of certainty on the Roman policy of the deification of the emperor indicates a date previous to 339, when he was exiled to Rome.[11] While this reasoning is acceptable, there are other considerations which indicate a *terminus ante quem* that is even earlier, disqualifying Kannengiesser's suggestion that the work was written in exile. These considerations have to do with a factor that has not been remarked upon previously in relation to the issue of dating: the significance of the refutation of idolatry. In our attempt to analyze this, we find ourselves dealing not only with the question of dating, but with that of the structure and purpose of the work as well.

The purpose of this double work is stated clearly in the opening chapters of both *CG* and *DI* respectively: to show that faith in Christ is

not irrational.[12] As an apologetic work, therefore, the *CG–DI* is first and foremost an *apologia crucis*. A difficulty that immediately presents itself, however, is that whereas it is relatively easy to see the *DI* as an *apologia crucis*, it is less obvious precisely how that label applies to the *CG*. The question is precisely how the refutation of idolatry is part of the apology for the cross. Indeed, the question of the significance of Athanasius's refutation of idolatry has been raised before. On the one side, it has been argued that he is here simply indulging in a "bookish" exercise and exploiting a traditional theme.[13] P.Camelot and J.Roldanus have responded by insisting that idolatry was coming into vogue again at the time and its refutation must have seemed urgent to Athanasius.[14] In attempting to grant his treatise an immediate existential and historical relevance, however, Camelot and Roldanus are found to be somewhat in contradiction to Athanasius's own view of this issue. For time and again, Athanasius makes precisely the point that idolatry is "dead" for the most part, and fading fast wherever it weakly lives on.[15] But this does not mean that Athanasius is simply toying with a non-issue. In fact, the decline and "death" of idolatry is used by him as a direct argument in favor of the cross. In essence, his argument is that the decline of idolatry coincides with the advent of the Word in the flesh; therefore, it was Jesus Christ who destroyed and continues to triumph over idolatry, thus revealing himself to be the true and living God.

Conversely, the other side of Athanasius's argument is that idolatry thrived before the advent of Christ. Insofar as it represents an obscuring and perversion of humanity's knowledge of God, its past prevalence demonstrates the need for a dramatic solution to the problem of the loss of this salvific knowledge. Thus, from the standpoint of its prevalence prior to the incarnation of the Word, idolatry is an integral part of Athanasius's argument *cur Deus homo*. On the other hand, viewed from the standpoint of its decline since the coming of the Word, idolatry now represents a demonstration that the power of the cross has filled the whole world and overcome whatever comes between us and the true God. The history of idolatry is thus used to symbolize the event of the incarnation precisely as the redemption of human history, with an earlier decline in knowledge of God giving way to a new decline in idolatry, through the Word's advent in the flesh.

With regard to dating, the decisive consideration is that Athanasius is here presenting a triumphalistic Christ-centered interpretation of history. This triumphalism has an obvious, if not explicit, historical

referrent. If the whole world is now filled with the knowledge of God,[16] this triumph that properly belongs to Christ nevertheless came about, in a decisive manner, only through the victory of Constantine. Indeed, it is quite arguable that, in the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*, Athanasius is consciously revising the imperialist triumphalism of Eusebius of Caesarea by making sure that the triumph of Constantine is strictly attributed to Christ, to the point of not even mentioning the emperor. The triumphalism of the treatise certainly does not help us in further specifying a *terminus post quem* since no one has yet suggested that he wrote the double work before the triumph of Constantine, as a mere teenager. But it does help us to set a limit in the other direction. An essential point of the treatise is that the resurrection of Christ has become palpably manifest in the life of the Church. Objectively, however, it is impossible to see how any contemporary reader would have failed to see an absurd irony in an exiled bishop, attacked from within the Church itself, proclaiming the Church to be the manifestation of the victorious glory of Christ, and contending that "those brought up in Christ do not war against themselves." (*DI* 52). It is of the very nature of such triumphalistic reasoning to overlook much evidence to the contrary, but there is a critical point beyond which such willful oversight becomes untenable and counter-productive. Subjectively, it is also difficult to see how such triumphalism and boasting on behalf of the Church is reconcilable with the psychological situation of an exiled bishop who is being punished by a Church council. In view of these considerations, then, we would have to say that it is quite probable that the writing of this treatise took place before Athanasius's first exile. Indeed, insofar as both the maturity of thought and the subtly magisterial tone[17] mitigate against a too-early dating, we would venture to suggest a date after Athanasius's ascendancy to the episcopacy and before his exile to Trier (between 328 and 335).[18] Within this period, Athanasius could pretend, as far as the purposes of this treatise went, that the Arians did not exist. They had tried to subvert the true knowledge of Christ as God but they had been condemned by the Church, which continued to proclaim and actively manifest the authentic divinity of Christ. Such an oversimplification may not have been consistent with the actual historical situation, but it would have been consistent with the philosophy of history propounded by the treatise, wherein the victory of the Word is rapidly gaining ground and overtaking every adversary. Thus in the same way that idolatry was all but dead—a fact that testifies to the victory and

divinity of the Word—Arianism too does not exist as an active presence within the logic propounded here. The difference, however, could well be that whereas the "death" of idolatry could fairly safely be presented as the "trophy" of the Word's victory, the author might have considered Arianism to be not quite dead enough to bear mentioning.

It is possible, then, to see the willful oversight of the Arians as part of the apologetic strategy of the book, which underlines the consistency between the order of creation, the Christian message of redemption, and the course of history itself as all testifying that the one who died on the cross is really the Lord and God of creation and history, the Word who is one with the Father. This apologetic strategy accounts for the systematic nature of this treatise, its character as a fairly comprehensive little catechesis.[19] For our immediate purposes, this systematic nature of the work—its drive toward consistency—affords us an opportunity to study our theme as it is played out within an organic and interconnected whole. It allows us to pose the question of what rôle the relation between God and creation plays in Athanasius's construction of a systematic catechesis in defense of the Christian faith. To respond to this question, we will begin by locating our theme within the conceptual framework of the work as a whole. Then, in order to bring out its reverberations in the different *foci* of this systematic treatise, we will speak of the relation between God and creation as it relates to Athanasius's doctrine of God, cosmology, anthropology, and redemption in Christ. In this way, we will be able to gain an appreciation for the theme of the relation between God and creation as a central structural element in the theology of Athanasius at this particular stage of his career.

Conceptual framework

Ever since the work of E. P. Meijering,[20] it has been generally acknowledged that Athanasius had recourse to the categories and terminology of a (Middle) Platonic ontology in his own articulation of Christian faith. Such a conclusion represented a certain departure from, or at least a qualification of, Harnack's portrait of Athanasius as a theologian who based himself not on a philosophy and ontology but on soteriology, and who thus liberated Christianity from philosophical categories.[21] With reference to the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*, however, what is striking is that, far from a mutually exclusive opposition of ontological to soteriological and historical categories, it

is precisely the interlocking of the two perspectives that provides the key to the coherence of the work, and to its central project of presenting a consistent account of the Christian faith. This observation leads us back to our central focus, which is Athanasius's conception of the relation between God and creation as determinative for his whole theology. For, as we shall see, it is the relation between God and creation, precisely in the radical opposition of created to uncreated, that constitutes the foundational elements of Athanasius's ontology. And it is again precisely insofar as this basic ontology is consciously related to the historical or narrative dimension of Christian faith (i.e. the story of sin and redemption) that we can speak of the relation between God and creation as a central and centralizing element in Athanasius's theology.

In view of all this, our first task will be to signal the recurrent and characteristic accounts of the ontological relation between God and creation, as they occur at significant points throughout the double treatise. In the course of this perusal, we shall have opportunity also to note how the recurrence of this theme in varying contexts indicates the connections that exist in Athanasius's thought between it and other elements of Christian doctrine. We shall then focus on the historical and narrative dimensions of Athanasius's account, his *Heilsgeschichte*, in an effort to note once again the connections between those elements and the basic ontological structure of the relation between God and creation. Having arrived, within this convergence of ontological and historical perspectives, at what we believe to be the unifying center of the contents of *CG–DI*, we will then be in a position to take up successively the accounts provided in this treatise of the doctrine of God, cosmology, anthropology, Christology, and redemption. Each will be treated with a view to clarifying its dependence on, or at least consistency with, Athanasius's central thesis on the relation between God and creation.

The structure of the original relation between God and creation

In order to substantiate the position that the centrality of Athanasius's conception of the relation between God and creation is a feature intrinsic to the text, we must first show how this conception is elaborated within the flow of his argument. Our first text comes immediately following the introduction to the first half of the treatise,

Contra Gentes. In beginning his refutation of idolatry, Athanasius means to take things back to the very beginning. Whereas the beginning of idolatry is evil, evil itself did not "exist from the beginning." The origin of evil is thus placed in the context of what is more primary, the original relation between God and humanity, which is here described in the following manner:

> For God, the creator and king of all, who is beyond all being and human conception, since he is good and exceedingly noble, has made humanity according to his own image through his proper Word, our Saviour Jesus Christ. He has also made humanity perceptive and knowledgeable of reality through its likeness to him, giving it also a conception and knowledge of its own eternity, so that as long as it kept this likeness, it might never depart from the conception of God or abandon the company of the holy ones, but holding on to the grace of the Giver, and also the proper Power of the Father's Word, it might rejoice and converse with God, living a life truly heavenly, blessed and immortal.[22]

Perhaps the first thing to note here is the simple fact that Athanasius's starting point is the relation between God and humanity. If we have been speaking repeatedly of the "relation between God and creation," this has been in order to put the matter in the most global and radical terms, in terms of the fundamental distinction between created and uncreated. Yet if it is the distinction between created and uncreated that is the most radical, it is the relation between God and specifically humanity that is most important for Athanasius, and which he believes is of primary significance in the objective order of things. This is also to say that, on the whole, Athanasius's cosmology seems to be conceived in function of his anthropology, rather than vice versa.

Our second observation with regard to this passage takes us to the very heart of Athanasius's conception of the relation between God and creation. Most crucial here is the convergence of divine transcendence and immanence. This is articulated here, first of all, by way of the double description of God as "beyond all being (ὁ ὑπερέκεινα πάσης οὐσίας)"[23] and "good and exceedingly noble (ἀγαθὸς καὶ ὑπέρκαλος)." Immediately, Athanasius derives the implication of a kind of duality in the relation between humanity and God: while God is beyond human thought, humanity nevertheless

enjoys not only a knowledge but even a similarity to God, owing to his goodness. Certain issues that are raised here will be taken up later within the context of our discussions on doctrine of God and anthropology. For now, we simply note the converging double aspects of divine otherness and nearness as central to Athanasius's conception of the relation between God and creation.

After his refutation of idolatry (*CG* 2–29), Athanasius turns to the exposition of how we come to know God. This is elaborated in terms of the inward gaze of the soul (*CG* 30–4), and the outward apprehension of creation (*CG* 35ff.). We are struck by the fact that each section begins with a statement of how God's transcendence does not mitigate against his beneficent accessibility. Thus the section on knowledge of God through the soul begins with this statement:

> These notions have been shown to be nothing other than an erroneous approach to life. But the way of truth has for its goal the God who truly exists (τὸν ὄντως ὄντα θεὸν). We do not need anything except ourselves for the knowledge and faultless understanding of this way. For the path to God is not as far from us or as external to (ἔξωθεν) us as God himself is high above all, but it is in us and we are capable of finding its beginning by ourselves, as Moses taught: "The word of faith is within your heart." The Saviour also declared and confirmed this, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is within you." For insofar as we have faith and the kingdom of God within us, we are capable of arriving quickly to the vision and perception of the king of all, the saving Word of the Father…. And if someone were to ask what this road might be, I say it is each one's soul and the mind within it.
>
> (*CG* 30; Thomson, p. 82)

The central statement that concerns us here is that "the path to God is not as far from us or as external to us as God himself is high above all." Studied closely, it is in fact a highly paradoxical statement. Perhaps this is most apparent if we simply focus on the physical imagery. Athanasius is saying that the distance by which God is "high above" does not equal a distance by which God is "far." In other words, God's transcendence is not to be conceived in such a way as to mitigate against his nearness or immanence. This principle is here applied in the context of knowledge of God. The fact of God's transcendence does not

detract from the possibility of humanity's knowing God, and this by merely searching within oneself.

Passing from the possibility of knowledge of God through the soul to that afforded by the contemplation of creation, Athanasius again begins his account by pointing to the double aspects of transcendence and nearness with respect to God, and drawing from the convergence of this duality consequences for creation:

> God, who is good and the lover of humanity and who cares for the souls he has made, is by nature (τὴν φύσιν) invisible and incomprehensible, being above all created being (ἐπέκεινα πάσης γενητῆς). Thus, because the human race would fail to attain knowledge of Him in that they were made from nothing while He was uncreated, God so ordered creation through his own Word that while he is invisible by nature (τὴν φύσιν) he might nevertheless be known to people from his works.
>
> (*CG* 35; Thomson, p. 94)

We remarked earlier that, while the relation between created and uncreated is the governing paradigm in Athanasius's ontology, it is the relation between God and humanity that is of most central significance. This passage substantiates that statement. Here the relation between God and humanity, in the context of the possibility of human knowledge of God, is conceived to be radically determined by the global distinction between created and uncreated. It is the fact that humanity was made from nothing, a fact which it shares with all the rest of creation, that renders it incapable of attaining to knowledge of God, who, in turn, is "above all created being" precisely in virtue of being uncreated. However, God has a special love for humanity, and to this end he orders creation through his Word in such a way that he might render himself knowable through his works. It is such a conception that undergirds our earlier statement that cosmology is conceived by Athanasius in function of anthropology.

We should not lose sight of the fact, however, that, as this passage makes clear, what undergirds both Athanasius's cosmology and his anthropology, and thus makes them consistent with each other, is the fundamental distinction between what has its "origin from nothing" (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων) and what is uncreated (ἀγένητον). Moreover, we should also note the characteristic attempt to articulate the convergence of transcendence and immanence in terms of God mitigating or qualifying

the consequences of his own "nature" (φύσις). In this passage, God's nature is "defined" as invisible and incomprehensible, but then we are given to understand that God acts to qualify this definition, or rather its consequences for human beings. His motives for doing so are articulated in terms of goodness and care (God is ἀγαθός and κηδόμενος); and the means for doing so is his ordering of creation through the Word. Thus it is within the attempt to speak of the convergence of God's transcendence and nearness that we find the dialectic between God's nature and God's "works," and within this dialectic, a particular conception of the person and work of the Word.

The history of the relation between God and creation

In pursuing our inquiry into the second half of this double treatise, the *De Incarnatione*, our aim is to bring to light Athanasius's account of how the original structure of the relation between God and humanity was modified in the course of a history of this relation. In attending to the task before us, we will find it useful to focus on the significance of a certain motif in Athanasius's account, that of "remaining (μένειν)." Immediately after outlining, in *CG* 2, the main features of the original relation between God and humanity, Athanasius concludes with the statement: "In this the Creator has fashioned the human race, and he wished it to so remain (καὶ μένειν ἠθέλησεν)" (*CG* 3; Thomson, p. 8). God's will for humanity to remain within the original structure of its relation with himself was addressed to the human creature's own free will.[24] But humanity turned away from the contem-plation of the divine to pursue its own self-indulgent pleasures and thus, "it did not remain as it had been created (καὶ οὐχ ὁποία γέγονε, τοιαύτη καὶ ἔμεινεν), but appeared as it had defiled itself" (*CG* 7; Thomson, p. 18). The whole of the *Contra Gentes* is an exposition of the extent to which humanity had failed to "remain" within the original structure of the relationship with God and had turned to the non-being of evil.[25] The story of idolatry is thus meant as a symbolic recapitulation of that larger schema.

In the *De Incarnatione*, the significance of the terminology of "remaining" becomes more apparent, as signaling the connection between ontology and history, the original structure of the relationship between God and humanity and its subsequent modification by sin. We may describe this connection in a preliminary fashion by saying that the original structure, or ontology, acts as a kind of double magnet, polarizing the historical intercourse between God and humanity

towards either a secure permanence in communion with God or a confirmed drift to corruption and non-being.[26] The point is that, by the terms of the ontological relationship between God and humanity, there is a radical pressure exerted upon humanity to "remain" in either of these alternatives. This is brought out forcefully in *DI* 3–4. God granted humanity a participation in the power of the Word so that they might "remain (διαμένειν) in blessedness" (*DI* 3; Thomson, p. 140). He established them in paradise and imposed a law "so that if they guarded the grace and remained good (μένοιεν καλοί) they would retain the life of paradise" (ibid.). However, "if they transgressed and turned away and became wicked, they would know that they would suffer (ὑπομένειν) natural corruption in the form of death,[27] and would no longer live in paradise, but in future would die outside it and remain (μένειν) in death" (ibid.). Referring to the divine threat related in Gen. 2:17, Athanasius interprets it thus: "And this 'you shall die by death,' what else is it except not only to die, but to remain in the corruption of death (καὶ ἐν τῇ θανάτου φθορᾷ διαμένειν)" (ibid.).

This double orientation which ontology gives to history is consistent and continuous with the paradigmatic distinction between creation and the uncreated. Since humanity, like all of creation, came to be from nothing, it belongs to its very nature (φύσις) to be predisposed to nothingness and corruption (*DI* 4). If it is saved from this fate by divine mercy, then perseverance in its access to this mercy is the condition without which it must again lapse into a confirmation of its own predisposition to non-being. The essential principle is that there is no neutral mid-point in which humanity can "remain." The two fundamental ontological polarities are either God-ward or toward non-being; salvation-history is preconfigured by these ontological polarities.

The configuration of salvation-history according to these polarities is given dramatic scope throughout the *De Incarnatione*. By falling into sin and turning away from God, humanity was heading straight for non-being, toward utter corruption. Thus, in the context of sin, the ontological gulf between the humanity created from nothing and the uncreated God acquires an ominous dimension; it becomes a radical separation which subverts the very purpose of human creation, which is communion with God. Simple repentance from the human side, or a mere nod from the divine side, is not enough to reverse humanity's orientation toward corruption, precisely because this orientation constitutes a confirmation of the ontological pull of its own nature.[28] It

was needful, therefore, that God should take dramatic action to re-orient humanity from one side of the polarity toward the other: "Therefore the Saviour fittingly put on a body, so that the body would be joined to life and would no longer remain (ἀπομείνῃ) mortal in death, but having put on immortality, it would then rise up and remain (διαμείνῃ) immortal" (*DI* 44; Thomson, p. 246).

In re-orienting humanity toward remaining in God, the incarnation thus repairs the convergence between God's transcendence and nearness. God, who is invisible and unknowable by nature, becomes visible and knowable and pre-eminently accessible through the humanity of Christ. At this point, in fact, God's nearness to humanity reaches the point of humanity's deification:

> So just as if someone wishes to see God, who is invisible by nature and not seen at all (ἀόρατον ὄντα τῇ φύσει τὸν Θεὸν καὶ μηδόλως ὁρώμενον) he understands and knows him from his works, so let the one who does not see Christ with his mind, learn and distinguish from the works of his body, whether they are human or of God. If they are human, let him mock; but if they are recognized to be not human but of God, let him not laugh at things that are not to be mocked, but rather marvel that through such simple means divine things have been manifested to us, and that through death immortality has come to all, and through the hominization of the Word the universal providence has been made known, and its leader and creator the very Word of God. For he became human that we might become divine; and he manifested himself through a body that we might receive the conception of the invisible Father; and he endured the insolence of human beings that we might inherit incorruption.
>
> (*DI* 54; Thomson, p. 268)

Having begun with a passage near the beginning of the *Contra Gentes*, we now end this section with a passage near the end of *De Incarnatione*. Our endeavor has been to show how a certain characteristic account of the original structure of the relation between God and creation recurs in varying contexts and at significant junctures throughout this double treatise and intertwines itself with an account of the history of this relation. We have noted that the paradigmatic distinction within that relation is that between the uncreated God and all else that comes to be from nothing. Within this

paradigmatic distinction, however, it is the relation between God and humanity that holds center stage for Athanasius. With regard to that relation, what is crucial is the convergence of divine transcendence and nearness. That is to say, that God acts to overcome the separation of natures, which would render knowledge of him and communication with him impossible. From the human side, the primary effect of this divine compensation is that humanity's access to the transcendent God is placed within itself.[29] Moreover, another divine initiative to overcome this radical difference is the "works" of creation, by which knowledge of the invisible God becomes available to humanity.[30] However, the sin of humanity represented a subversion of these divine compensations, and the radical difference between uncreated and created threatened to become reinforced as an unbridgeable separation. A definitive bridge was only provided through the incarnation of the Word, and henceforth the transcendent God manifests himself in a powerful way in human life and history.[31]

Having thus described in broad strokes the pervasiveness of the theme of the relation between God and creation, and having touched on some of its connections with other doctrines by following the general outline of this double treatise, we are now in a position to treat some of these fundamental doctrines individually.

Doctrine of God in the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*

The genre in which Athanasius's doctrine of God is cast in the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione* is apologetic. We have already further specified the apologetic intent of this work as an *apologia crucis*. We need to assimilate this significant point, therefore: that the doctrine of God is here articulated in relation to the incarnation and the cross. In the introduction to the *Contra Gentes*, for instance, Athanasius sets forth the purpose of his treatise as a defense against the accusation that faith in Christ is irrational, ἄλογον.[32] The accusation of irrationality is centered specifically on the Christian claim that "the one who ascended the cross is the Word of God and the Saviour of the universe" (*CG* 1).[33] In presenting his defense of the rationality of Christian faith, one of Athanasius's primary strategies is precisely to demonstrate the consistency between the historical fact of the incarnation and a certain doctrine of God.[34] Of course, in doing so he becomes involved in the project of articulating a doctrine of God that is designed to lead to the

conclusion that the incarnation was in fact "reasonable for God (τὸ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὔλογον)" (*DI* 7; Thomson, p. 148). The systematic task of demonstrating a rational coherence between the doctrine of God and the doctrine of the incarnation is thus integral to the apologetic design of this treatise, as is that of demonstrating the coherence of those two doctrines to that of creation. In short, Athanasius wants to show that the fact of the incarnation is consistent with who God is, and with God's general way of relating to creation from the beginning. Our task at this juncture is to probe his account of this consistency from the particular viewpoint of his doctrine of God.

In putting forth his doctrine of God, Athanasius has ready recourse to standard descriptions of the transcendence of God that were shared by Christians and Greeks alike.[35] As is consistent with a Middle Platonic, rather than Neoplatonic view, God is considered as the archetypal and uniquely true being: τὸν ὄντως ὄντα Θεὸν (*CG* 30; Thomson, p. 82). His transcendence is described in conventional apophatic terms: ὁ μὲν γὰρ Θεὸς ἀσώματός ἐστι καὶ ἄφθαρτος καὶ ἀθάνατος, οὐδενὸς εἰς ὁτιοῦν δεόμενος (*CG* 22; Thomson, p. 60).[36] Indeed, such a philosophically acceptable description of divine transcendence provides a strong weapon in the denunciation of idolatry. For in worshiping idols, the pagans are supposing the deity to be corporeal (σωματοειδές) (ibid.). Athanasius can make this point without showing the least sign of faltering, but we can appreciate its delicacy in the context of a treatise dedicated to the defense of the belief in precisely a God who appears in corporeal form. This last consideration directs us to the necessity faced by Athanasius of going beyond conventional Platonic descriptions of divine transcendence, and of articulating a doctrine of God who can become human and take to himself a human body. Athanasius does articulate such a trajectory, proceeding from the doctrine of God, to that of God's relation to creation, to the incarnation. We must now trace this trajectory.

Athanasius's key move is to integrate apophatic descriptions of divine transcendence with a strong and persistent emphasis on the positive attribute of divine goodness. It is precisely through a proper conception of God's goodness that the incarnation may be regarded as fitting: "what people deride as unsuitable (ἀπρεπῆ) by his goodness (ἀγαθότητι) he renders suitable (εὐπρεπῆ)" (*DI* 1; Thomson, p. 134). While it is true that God's nature is invisible and incomprehensible and beyond all created being (ἀόρατος καὶ

ἀκατάληπτός ἐστι τὴν φύσιν, ἐπέκεινα πάσης γενητῆς) (*CG* 35; Thomson, p. 94), this apophatic description must not mitigate against the positive and cataphatic characterization of God as "good and the lover of humanity (ἀγαθὸς γὰρ ὢν καὶ φιλάνθρωπος)" (ibid.). Thus, in Athanasius, God's goodness and love constitute as much of an ontological statement about God and a description of God's nature (**φύσις**) as the apophatic statements that appear to indicate divine inaccessibility to the created realm: God is "good and exceedingly noble by nature. Therefore he is the lover of humanity (ὁ δὲ τῶν ὅλων Θεὸς ἀγαθὸς καὶ ὑπέρκαλος τὴν φύσιν ἐστί. διὸ καὶ φιλάνθρωπός ἐστιν) (ibid.). The fact that God is **φιλάνθρωπός** by nature means that his actions are always characterized by that quality, since it is one of Athanasius's principal maxims that actions must correspond to natures.[37] Thus the fundamental structure of the relation between God and creation is, from the very beginning, determined by divine condescension, in the form of a universal presence to and providence over all creation that has its source in God's very nature, as **ἀγαθός** and **φιλάνθρωπός**:

> And the reason why the Word of God really came (**ἐπιβέβηκεν**) to created beings is truly amazing, and teaches us that it would not have been fitting (**οὐκ ἄλλως ἔπρεπεν**) for things to be otherwise than as they are. For the nature of created things (**τῶν μὲν γὰρ γενητῶν . . . ἡ φύσις**), since it comes into being from nothing, is unstable, weak, and mortal when considered by itself. But the God of all is good and supremely noble by nature. Therefore he is the lover of humanity. For a good being would be envious of no one, and so he envies nobody existence but rather wishes existence for everyone, in order to exercise his love for humanity. So seeing that all created nature according to its inherent structures is in flux and subject to dissolution, and in order to prevent this happening and the universe dissolving back into nothing, he made everything by his own eternal Word and brought creation into existence. He did not abandon it to be tempest-tossed through its own nature (**οὐκ ἀφῆκεν αὐτὴν τῇ ἑαυτῆς φύσει φέρεσθαι καὶ χειμάζεσθαι**), lest it run the risk of again apsing into nothingness. But being good, he governs and establishes the whole world through his own Word who is himself God, so that creation, enlightened by the governance, providence, and ordering of the Word, may be able to remain

> secure, since it participates in the Word who is truly from the Father and is helped by him so as to exist. This was done so that what would have happened to creation, apart from the sustenance of the Word, did not happen—namely, a relapse into nothingness: "For he is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, because through him and in him subsist all things, visible and invisible, and he is the head of the church" [Col. 1:15–18], as the ministers of the truth teach in the holy writings.
>
> (*CG* 41; Thomson, pp. 112–14)

This passage provides us with occasion to rejoin our previous characterization of the fundamental structure of the relation between God and creation in terms of a convergence of divine transcendence and nearness. We can now recognize that this convergence has its source in Athanasius's doctrine of God. God is beyond all created being, as uncreated, but his nearness to creation has its basis also in his very nature, as supremely good and loving. In the self-same movement of creation, God asserts his transcendence over that which he brings into existence from nothing, as well as demonstrating his love which leads him to generously grant existence to what was not. The fact that God is the uniquely primordial being means that whatever he brings into existence cannot have an intrinsic support for its own existence, since its existence is wholly derived. However, Athanasius's characterization further indicates that it equally belongs to God's nature, as good and loving, to bridge the difference between uncreated and created natures in such a way that God becomes present to and active in creation. In short, both the difference between God and creation and the bridging of that distance have their basis in the nature of God.

It is within this perspective that Athanasius can also justify the incarnation in terms of the doctrine of God. He does this, first of all, by reconciling it with the doctrine of creation. For this reason he is concerned to show, in the *Contra Gentes*, that the fact of creation has its basis in the nature of God who is loving.[38] God creates in order to manifest this love, "ἵνα καὶ φιλανθρω- πεύεσθαι δύνηται" (*CG* 41; Thomson, p. 114). In the *De Incarnatione*, Athanasius wants to reiterate that the original purpose of creation included the overcoming, from the divine side, of the ontological chasm that separates God and creatures:

> God, who rules over all things, when he made the human race through his proper Word, seeing the weakness of their nature, and that it was not capable by itself of knowing the Creator nor of at all attaining to the conception of God, in that while he was uncreated, they had been made from nothing (τὸν μὲν εἶναι ἀγέννητον, τὰ δὲ ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων γεγενῆσθαι), and while he was incorporeal, humanity had been fashioned in an inferior way with a body, and seeing that in every way the things made were lacking in knowledge and comprehension of their Maker—having mercy, then, on the human race, since he is good, he did not leave them destitute of knowledge of himself, lest even their very existence should be profitless to them. For what profit would there be for those who had been made, if they did not know their own Maker?…And why would God have made them if he did not wish to be known by them?
>
> (*DI* 11; Thomson, p. 158)

However, if it belongs to God's goodness to overcome this ontological distance between himself and creation, the fact of sin threatens to nullify this divine compensation, leaving the distance between God and creation irremediably unbridged. In that case, the whole "point" of creation would have been lost. Athanasius dares to intimate, moreover, that the loss would not be merely on the human side, for God's glory is also at stake.

> But then what use would there have been for humanity to have been created according to God's image from the beginning?… And what benefit would there be to God who made it, or what glory would he have, if the humanity which had been created by him did not worship him, but thought that others were their Makers? For God would then turn out to have created them for others and not for himself.
>
> (*DI* 13)[39]

Such a perspective, which makes possible the dramatic presentation of a "divine dilemma," is simply a further indication of the intimate connection in Athanasius between the doctrines of creation, of incarnation, and of God. For if creation is understood in strict correlation to the doctrine of God, as a divine act manifesting the divine nature, then the divine manifestation (i.e., God's glory) is itself

somehow implicated in the created realm. In the context of sin, this principle is given much dramatic play by Athanasius. Completely reversing the charge that a human incarnation is "unfitting" to God and unworthy of a proper conception of God, Athanasius sets about to show that *anything but* the Incarnation of the Word would have been unworthy of God:

> Therefore, since rational creatures were being corrupted and such works were being destroyed, what should God, who is good (ἀγαθὸν ὄντα) have done: Allow corruption to overcome them and death to overpower them? Then what was the use of their having been created to begin with? For they should rather not have been created than to be created and subsequently neglected and destroyed. In that case, weakness rather than God's goodness would be made known (ἀσθένεια γὰρ μᾶλλον καὶ οὐκ ἀγαθότης ἐκ τῆς ἀμελείας γινώσκεται τοῦ Θεοῦ), if after creating he had abandoned his own work to corruption—more so than if he had not created humanity in the beginning…So it was not appropriate (οὐκοῦν ἔδει) that he should abandon humanity to the current of corruption. That would have been unfitting and unworthy of God's goodness (διὰ τὸ ἀπρεπὲς καὶ ἀνάξιον εἶναι τοῦτο τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀγαθότητος).
>
> (*DI* 6; Thomson, p. 148)

This passage shows how the apologetic intent of Athanasius, to defend the "rationality" of Christian faith, is fulfilled by way of the systematic task of showing the consistency between the doctrines of God, creation, and the incarnation. I think it justifiable to assert that, in fact, it is the doctrine of God which is primary. For it is a certain conception of God, in which his goodness, mercy, and providential care are emphasized, that constitutes the starting point of that trajectory which leads through creation to the incarnation. Within this conception, a lack of concern and care (ἀμέλεια) for creatures connotes rather weakness (ἀσθένεια) than majestic transcendence. The latter quality, for Athanasius, is inseparable from the care and solicitude of God for creation. Athanasius's doctrine of God is thus one in which God's transcendence is conceived not only in juxtaposition to his nearness, but also often enough precisely in terms of his nearness. God's glory and honor are manifested in his care for creation which achieves a climax in the incarnation. It is because of such a doctrine of

God that Athanasius can arrive quite naturally at the conception of the cross exactly as the sign of divine glory and power (*CG* 1). Thus he can enjoin the reader to meditate on the incarnation of the Word, "so that from the seeming degradation of the Word your piety towards him may be greater and stronger" (*DI* 1).

At this point, then, we have traced the double aspect in the relation between God and creation to the doctrine of God. God as primordial being is inaccessible to creation, while his involvement with and solicitude for creation derives from his natural goodness. We cannot, however, speak of Athanasius's doctrine of God while abstracting from his Trinitarian doctrine. If Trinitarian doctrine does not seem to be at the forefront of his explicit concerns in the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione,* it is nevertheless integral to his presentation, and the very casualness by which it is repeatedly enjoined makes it in some way all the more striking. Moreover, there is a logical consistency between Athanasius's Trinitarian doctrine and his emphasis on the inseparability of divine otherness and nearness. If we are correct in our granting this latter emphasis a central rôle in Athanasius's theological framework, then analyzing this consistency would lead us to a recognition of how his Trinitarian doctrine is integral to this framework, and thus determinative for his whole theology.

We must acknowledge, to begin with, that it is only by a kind of anachronistic shorthand, and by way of giving Athanasius the benefit of the doubt, that we speak of a Trinitarian, rather than binarian, teaching in the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*. The fact of the matter is that, while Athanasius was able to integrate the Holy Spirit into his doctrines of God and redemption at a later point, such an integration is not evident in this apologetic double treatise. What we do find, however, is a pervasive emphasis on the co-inherence of the Word and the Father. But the presentation of this co-inherence is not executed here in primarily metaphysical terms, as an articulation of an intra-divine reality, but rather from the perspective of the "economic" Trinity. At center stage of this presentation is the relation between humanity and God and its enfolding context of the relation between creation generally and God. In both cases, Athanasius's key move is to articulate this relation as one between creation and humanity on the one hand, and on the other hand, not simply God, but precisely the Word of the Father (the Word who communicates and reveals the Father) and the Father of the Word (the Father who is revealed and communicated in the Word).[40] Thus while the text of John 14:10 ("…I am in the Father

and the Father in me") is not ostensibly a central text in this treatise, as it would be in later diatribes against the Arians, it nevertheless shapes his whole presentation of the relation between creation and God, consistently conceived as a relation between creation, on the one hand, and the Word in the Father and the Father in the Word, on the other.

On the whole, then, Athanasius's doctrine in the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione* is one that clearly distinguishes between the relation of the Word and the Father and that between both the Word and the Father, taken together, and creation. The Word is other than creation and belongs in a unique fashion to the Father: ὃς ἄλλος μὲν ἔστι τῶν γενητῶν καὶ πάσης τῆς κτίσεως, ἴδιος δὲ καὶ μόνος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ Πατρός ὑπαρχει (*CG* 40; Thomson, p. 110). Moreover, as we have noted, creation is described as related precisely to the relation of Word—Father. These aspects of Athanasius's Trinitarian doctrine have a definite and significant bearing, it seems to me, on his particularly emphatic presentation of the inseparability, or even convergence, of the aspects of divine otherness and nearness. It is well to note, at this juncture, the way in which previous Christian apologists had articulated a conception of the Logos as mediator between God and creation. Within a framework that was more or less subordinationist, such a conception tended toward the implication that transcendence conceived as otherness was more properly divine than a transcendence involved with creation.[41] If the Word, who represents direct divine involvement in the world, was not true God, then such direct involvement was also not truly divine. On the other hand, in Athanasius too, the Word is represented as Mediator. But here there is no trace of subordinationism, and the Word who is active in the world is himself clearly other than the world and belongs wholly to the Father. With reference to divine transcendence and nearness, such a perspective naturally implies that divine transcendence is in no way mitigated by nearness. In being most intimately involved in the world, God does not cease to be wholly other, as the Word is other than creation. Conversely, divine otherness does not entail distance from creation, as the Word is powerfully and intimately present to creation, yet belongs essentially to the transcendence of the Father: "Who could analyze the Father in order to discover the powers of his Word? For he is the Word and wisdom of the Father, and at the same time condescends to creatures (τοῖς γενητοῖς συγκαταβαίνων) to give them the knowledge and conception of his begetter" (*CG* 47; Thomson, p. 130).

However, if Athanasius rejects the attempt to delineate the distinction between divine otherness and nearness along the lines of an ontological prioritizing of the Father over the Son, he does not relinquish the project of actually making this distinction. But he does not locate the distinction within the Godhead itself. Rather, it is articulated in terms of God being "outside" creation by his essence and yet present within it by his power.[42] This essence—power distinction in Athanasius seems to be a distinction between the divine realm *in se*, encompassing both Father and Son (not to mention the Spirit), and *ad extra*.[43] Its point is simply that God's active agency within creation does not mitigate against his otherness as an agent; God does not become consubstantial with creation through his activity within it. However, in being outside creation by his essence, God does not cease to be effective within it, and to effect creation's participation in his own activity. The essence-power distinction is thus parallel with the more pervasive nature-works distinction, whereby it is articulated that God is invisible, incomprehensible, etc., according to his nature, and yet manifests himself in his works.[44] In both cases, it is a matter of speaking in one breath of the otherness and nearness of God.

Having characterized Athanasius's conception of the relation between God and the world in terms of this simultaneity of otherness and nearness, we now conclude our admittedly cursory analysis of the doctrine of God in the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione* with the assertion that this simultaneity has its conscious basis in Athanasius's doctrine of God. He moves beyond a merely philosophical apophatic emphasis on the inaccessible transcendence of God by emphasizing the attribute of goodness as properly descriptive of the divine nature. This "goodness" is understood not as a mere impersonal principle of immanence, but as a ground for God's decisive interventions in history, to the point of the incarnation. It is a personal solicitude and love for creation (especially humanity), which grounds genuine historical initiatives for the sake of human salvation. In this way, Athanasius is able to integrate into the conventional Platonic distinction between the realm of Being and that of Becoming, the statement—conceived as both an ontological description of God and an interpretation of (salvation-)history— that God is love. God's love and goodness thus constitute the basis within God of all the divine initiatives, from the structure of creation to the event of the incarnation, that are designed to bridge the natural gap between God and creation.

With this statement, we may now move to a consideration of the relation between God and creation, from the point of view of creation.

Cosmology

Athanasius's cosmology is in some ways a continuation of his doctrine of God, insofar as the harmonious and intelligible structure of the cosmos is considered as the manifestation of divine providence and power. As we have already noted, it also logically forms the background to his anthropology, since the created universe as a whole, including humanity, is fundamentally characterized as having the same origin from nothing, rendering it intrinsically incapable of retaining its hold on being without continuous divine assistance. Within the flow of his argument in the double treatise, Athanasius presents his cosmology by way of showing how the order and beauty of the external creation represents a secondary way for humanity to come to knowledge of and thus communion with God, the primary way being inward contemplation.[45] Athanasius's cosmology also functions in this treatise as an apology for the incarnation, since God's presence within creation is then claimed as a preamble and analogue for the divine manifestation in a human body.[46] We can see, therefore, that in specifying our immediate focus to be the treatment of cosmology in the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*, we actually have to deal again with a whole nexus of themes. In this section, however, we will orient this constellation of themes around the center of Athanasius's cosmology, understood as his exposition of the immanent structure of the universe, and we will treat this latter theme particularly in light of our own general theme of the relation between God and creation.

We have already had occasion to refer to the passage which introduces the "cosmological section" of the *Contra Gentes*.[47] There, Athanasius begins by recalling God's goodness and love as the divine motive for God's acting to remedy human ignorance of him, which is the necessary consequence of the radical difference in natures between created and uncreated. It was for this reason that "God ordered creation through his Word so that, while he is invisible by nature, he might nevertheless be known to people from his works" (*CG* 35). Thus the primary rationale for the cosmos, according to Athanasius, is to communicate knowledge of God to humanity, rendering the invisible God knowable, at least in some measure. The universe is most deeply understood as the "work" which reveals God's nature.

The way that the external creation communicates knowledge of God to humanity is principally through its order (τάξις) and harmony (ἁρμονία) (*CG* 35), which indicate a sovereign "unifying agent.[48] Athanasius is particularly struck by the observation that the phenomenal universe does not present a mere homogeneity, but rather a general unity and concord constituted by multiple elements. It is particularly this unity-within-distinction that indicates a superior power which reconciles the differences and harmonizes the opposing tendencies of individual elements into a coherent and intelligible whole.[49] It is important to note that Athanasius's presentation of how the intelligible and harmonious structure of the universe leads to a certain ἔννοια of its Maker is itself unintelligible if we do not attribute to him some notion of a kind of analogy between creation and its Maker.[50] This is so, especially considering the fact that Athanasius is not just concerned with arguing for a general theism but aims to move beyond the inference merely of a creator, into a characterization of this Creator along the lines of Christian faith:

> Who might this creator be? That, too, is most necessary to clarify and articulate, so that no one, deceived by ignorance about him, may suppose him to be another and fall back into the same godlessness as before…. Who then is he, if not the Father of Christ, most holy and beyond all created being, who like a supreme craftsman (δημιουργόν), by his proper wisdom and proper Word, our Lord and Saviour Christ, steers and orders all things for our salvation, and acts as seems best to him?
>
> (*CG* 40; Thomson, p. 108)

Athanasius's identification of this Creator with the specifically Christian God contains as an essential element a conception of the Word which includes analogically the human notions of reason, meaning, order, intelligibility, etc. It is this conception that enables him to make the rhetorical argument that the intelligibility and order of the cosmos is evidence that its Maker is precisely the Logos of the Father: "For if the movement of creation was without reason (ἄλογος) and everything went on haphazardly, one could well disbelieve our statements. But if the universe subsists according to reason (λόγῳ), wisdom, and knowledge and has been arranged with all order, then the one who governs and ordered it must be none other than the *Logos* of God" (ibid.). This argument is clearly based on a conception of a

certain analogy (ἀναλογία) between the reason and order (logos) of the cosmos and the Logos, who is Son of the Father.

In showing how the invisible and transcendent God communicates knowledge of himself through the works of creation, Athanasius makes much use of Stoic categories and motifs. In particular, sections 35–9 of the *Contra Gentes* are inundated with Stoic influence. Beginning with *CG* 40, however, Athanasius seems to consciously embark on a criticism of and a corrective to Stoic doctrine. This shift is significant for our general theme of the relation between God and creation. The Stoics are useful for Athanasius, as they were for other early Christian writers, insofar as they provided a vocabulary and certain conceptual tools for articulating notions of divine providence, omnipresence, and intimate involvement in the world—in a word, immanence. But the Stoics provided such resources for the very apt reason that their cosmology was decidedly immanentist, if not materialist. Over against the onesidedness of such an emphasis, Christian writers had to reaffirm the transcendence and independence of God with respect to creation. Thus Athanasius follows his use of Stoic terminology to indicate the Word as the guarantor of the harmony and order of the cosmos by carefully distinguishing the Word of the Father from a purely immanent and impersonal λόγος σπερματικός

> By Word I do not mean the word involved and innate in every creature (Λόγον δέ φημι οὐ τὸν ἐν ἑκάστῳ τῶν γενομένων συμπεπλεγμένον καὶ συμπεφυκότα), which is called seminal (σπερματικόν) by some, which is soulless and can neither reason or think but acts merely by an extrinsic art according to the skill of the one who applies it. Nor do I mean the word uttered by rational beings which is composed of syllables and expressed in the air. But I speak of the very Word itself which is the living and acting God, the Word of the good God of the universe, who is other than the things that are made and all creation. He is rather the one proper (ἴδιος δὲ καὶ μόνος) Word of the good Father, who has ordered all the universe and enlightens it by his providence. As the good Word of the good Father, he has ordered the arrangement of all things, combining together contrary things and composing from them a single harmony.
>
> (*CG* 40; Thomson, p. 110)

In his efforts to retain the emphasis on divine involvement in the world while providing a corrective to Stoic immanentism, Athanasius has recourse to the Platonic categories of participation, which presume a radical ontological gulf between that which participates and that which is participated. So, immediately following the Stoic influence manifested in the section dealing with God's pervasive and harmonizing action within the universe,[51] we encounter a strong Platonic influence in Athanasius's effort to contextualize divine involvement in the world within the framework of creaturely participation in divine power.[52] The Platonic notion of participation is ideal for Athanasius's task precisely because it signifies simultaneously relations of both opposition and similitude. For that which is participated and that which participates formally constitute a relation of strict mutual opposition. However, the very nature of this relation of opposition is the grounds for a likeness between that which participates and that which is participated. The similitude is thus consequent upon the opposition, and the opposition perseveres within the likeness itself, insofar as the likeness is grounded in and through it. In short, that which is participated transcends that which participates it, in the very act of granting it a "share" or likeness of itself. In its native Platonic milieu, the framework of participation provides an articulation of the relation between the realm of being and that of becoming. It seeks to articulate a conception of the latter's total derivation from and strict dependence upon the former, and yet within that contrast, it affirms a kind of link through a radical relationship of ontological communication. While this communication grounds some kind of similitude, however distant, the very structure of the communication is maximally asymmetrical, as is expressed by distinguishing the two poles of the relation in terms of activity and passivity.

It can readily be appreciated that such a framework, despite its philosophical provenance, is highly serviceable in a religious setting. Its particular affinity with a Christian theocentrism can be seen in the biblical texts that Athanasius tends to cite when he uses the terminology of participation. To take only two significant examples, we will consider Colossians 1:15–18 and the opening verses from the prologue to the Gospel of John. As we saw earlier, in *CG* 41, Athanasius says that creation "participates (μεταλαμβάνουσα) in the Word who is truly from the Father and is helped by him so as to exist. This was done so that what would have happened to creation apart from the Word did not happen—namely, relapse into

nothingness, ‘For he is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, because through him and in him subsist all things, visible and invisible, and he is the head of the church,’ as the ministers of the truth teach in the holy writings.” This passage expresses the typically Athanasian move from God’s self-contained transcendence and creation’s radical contingency to a conception of God’s goodness as sustaining creation in being. It is precisely this radical ontological sustenance and “protection” that is expressed here, in the vocabulary of participation, as creation’s participating (μεταλαμβάνουσα) in the Word. At the same time, the terminology of participation is employed by Athanasius as strictly convertible into the scriptural witness that “through him and in him subsist all things.”

This “through him and in him” contains a wealth of meaning for Athanasius,[53] all of which derives from the participation model. In essence, it conjures up a conception of all creation as radically receptive to the radical and persevering activity of the Word. The world is a receptacle for the activity of the Word, and it is only in virtue of this radical receptivity that the cosmos is a harmonious order.[54] Thus, for Athanasius, the participation model is used to evoke the deeply religious truth that the universe has its beginning and ground not only temporally but epistemologically and ontologically in God. The intelligibility and reality of the universe is grounded in the reality of the Word. In this way, the pervasiveness of the Word’s power within the universe is still emphasized, along with a simultaneous reaffirmation of his transcendence.

> It is thus the omnipotent, all-holy, and perfect Word of the Father himself who is present to all things and extends his own power everywhere, enlightening all things visible and invisible, containing and binding them to himself.[55] He leaves nothing deprived of his power but enlivens and protects all things everywhere, both individually and collectively. He combines into one the principles of all sensible substance—the hot and cold, the moist and dry—and causes them not to conflict but to issue in a single concordant harmony. Through him and his power (δι’ αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ δύναμιν) fire does not fight with cold, nor the moist with the dry; but things which of themselves are opposites come together like friends and kin, animating the visible world, and becoming the principles of existence for bodies. By obedience to this Word of God things on earth receive

> life and things in heaven subsist. Through him all the sea and the great ocean limit their movements to their proper boundaries, and all the dry land is covered with all kinds of different plants, as I said above. And so that I do not have to prolong my discourse by naming each visible thing, there is nothing existing or created which did not come into being and subsist in him and through him (ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ δι᾽ αὐτοῦ), as the theologian says: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him, and without him nothing was made [John 1:1–3]."
>
> (*CG* 42; Thomson, pp. 114–16)

At the same time, the participation model is also serviceable for distinguishing between the relations of Son—Father, and creation—Word. The Son does not participate in the Father; rather creation participates in the Son, and in this way has access to the Father:

> His holy disciples teach that everything was created through him and for him, and that the true Son, who is the good offspring of the One who is Good, is the power of the Father and his wisdom and Word; not so by participation (οὐ κατὰ μετοχὴν) nor do these properties come to him from outside (ἔξωθεν) in the way of those who participate (μετέχοντας) in him and are given wisdom in him, and thus become capable and rational in him. But he is wisdom itself, Word itself (αὐτολόγος), light itself, truth itself, justice itself, virtue itself, and the very power, stamp, effulgence, and image of the Father. To sum up, he is the supremely perfect issue of the Father, and is alone Son, the unchanging image of the Father.
>
> (*CG* 46; Thomson, p. 130)

This passage brings out the Trinitarian background of Athanasius's cosmology. It is because the Son is a perfect image and issue (καρπός) of the Father that he contains in himself, and not as something accidental or adventitious, the archetypal qualities which give life and order to creation. Such a conception is quite close to Origen's, where the Son's being Image of the Father and his being archetype of creation are also intimately connected.[56] With Athanasius, however, the complete lack of any hint of subordination serves to reinforce the simultaneity between the Word's transcendent relation with the Father

and his condescension to creation: "For he is the Word and wisdom of the Father, and at the same time condescends (συγκαταβαίνων) to creatures to give them the knowledge and conception of his begetter" (*CG* 47). Thus the rationality and harmony of the creation leads to an acknowledgement of the power of the Word and, simultaneously, to a conception of the Father. The universe manifests not only a vague "generic" divine presence but the relation between the Word and the Father.[57] It bears a certain resemblance to the Word who, in turn, bears an absolute resemblance to the Father, and conveys access to the Father. The resemblance between creation and God is the reflection *ad extra* of the divine condescension, while the divine transcendence is manifested in the act of bringing creation into being from nothing and sustaining it in being. Thus the double aspect of the relation between God and creation is reflected in creation in the duality between its inherent ontological poverty and its gratuitous participation in divine life.

However, this duality achieves its maximal form only in the case of humanity because of its qualitatively superior participation in divine life. It is also in the case of humanity that this ontological duality becomes a dramatic tension, susceptible to fluctuations and imbalance, which plays itself out in the Christian historical narrative of sin and salvation. We now turn to an analysis of the relation between God and creation from the point of view of humanity, as it is presented in the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*.

Theological anthropology

In our analysis up to this point, we have already found opportunities to comment on the place of theological anthropology in relation to other themes in Athanasius. As we begin a more focused inquiry into this important area of Athanasius's theology, we have recourse to a significant text, which may justifiably be quoted at length, since it serves as both a summary of some of our previous points and an entry into a more specialized consideration of our immediate concern. Straight after the rejection of the notion of a creator who is distinct from the true God, Athanasius continues:

> Thus do they mythologize. But the godly teaching of the faith in Christ refutes their foolish talk as godlessness. It teaches that the world did not come into being arbitrarily, because it did not come

> to be without divine forethought. Neither was it made from pre-existent matter, for God is not weak. Rather, God brought the universe, which previously did not exist at all, in any way, from non-being into being through the Word…For God is good—or rather the source of goodness—and the good has no envy. Because he does not begrudge the gift of existence, he made all things from nothing through his proper Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. And among these creatures, of all earthly creatures he was especially merciful toward the human race. Seeing that by the logic of its own generation it would be unable to remain forever, he granted it a further gift, not simply creating humanity like all irrational animals on the earth, but making them in his own image and granting them also a share in the power of his proper Word (μετα- δοὺς αὐτοῖς καὶ τῆς τοῦ ἰδίου Λόγου δυνάμεως), so that having as it were shadows of the Word and being made rational (λογικοὶ), they might be able to remain in blessedness and live the true life in paradise, which is really that of the saints.
>
> (*DI* 3; Thomson, pp. 138–40)

The first point of consideration suggested by this passage is the significance of its immediate context, its particular place in the flow of argument. Athanasius moves directly from the refutation of certain conceptions of creation to the presentation of a theological anthropology. The implication is that a proper understanding of the relation between humanity and God can only be obtained within the context of a proper conception of the relation between God and all of creation. As to the latter, the crucial point is the sovereignty of God ("since God is not weak"), which is to be upheld against any notion of creation's independence from God, even in the guise of unformed matter. The strict and total dependency of creation on God is thus the primary characterization of their relationship, which is symbolized by the act of God's bringing creation from nothing into being (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων . . . εἰς τὸ εἶναι).

The proper context for conceiving the relation between God and humanity is thus this radical dependency of all that comes to be on the God who brings it into being. However, this absolute depen dence is only one side of the equation, the creaturely side. On the other side, Athanasius emphasizes again God's goodness: "For God is good… Thus, because he envies nothing its existence, he made everything from nothing through his own Word, our Lord Jesus Christ." This

doctrine of God's goodness is more intimately related to anthropology than to cosmology, for the human race is the particular and pre-eminent object of God's goodness, at least in the terrestrial sphere.[58] It is significant, moreover, that Athanasius characterizes the goodness of God with respect to humanity in terms of mercy: ἐν οἷς πάντων τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς τὸ ἀνθρώπων γένος ἐλήσας. This has the effect, first of all, of reinforcing his general characterization of the state of creatureliness as one of deficiency—most radically as a lack of being. It also underlines the continuity in God's attitude to humanity. The mercy of God in responding to human sin through the incarnation is read back into the original creation of humanity, with the intention of once again emphasizing the fundamental consistency between creation and incarnation.

The form that this mercy takes in the original act of human creation is described by Athanasius as "an added grace (πλέον τι χαριζόμενος)" and this grace is further articulated as leading to our being made in God's image, κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ εἰκόνα ἐποίησεν αὐτούς. For an appreciation of the fundamental structure of Athanasius's anthropology, it is necessary to probe the implications and resonances of this terminology in relation to the rest of his teaching. With regard to the notion of **χάρις**, first of all, we must note that its significance is fully ascertained only with a view to its correlative, **φύσις**, though we immediately hasten to dissociate this terminology from a nature–grace distinction conceived along a scholastic or post-scholastic model. Rather, it has been rightly pointed out that the **φύσις–χάρις** distinction in Athanasius belongs within the more radical framework of the fundamental distinction between created and uncreated.[59] Within this framework, the **φύσις** of created beings is precisely their creatureliness, the fact of having come to be from nothing as essentially constitutive of an inherent proclivity toward that nothingness. **Φύσις** thus represents the radical dependency of the creature on the One who brought it into being, and apart from whom it is powerless to sustain itself in being. If we understand **φύσις** not as "la somme des éléments qui constituent la nature humaine" but as "la qualité même d'être créature,"[60] we can correctly appreciate Athanasius's characterization that "all created nature (τὴν γενητὴν πᾶσαν φύσιν) is in flux and subject to dissolution" and carries within its being the "risk of returning to nothing" (*CG* 41). On the other hand, **χάρις** represents God's solicitude toward creation, often articulated in terms of protecting creation from its inherent

nothingness by continually supporting it in being, "lest it suffer a relapse into non-existence if it were not protected by the Word" *(ibid.)*.

The terminology of **χάρις**, it needs also be said, is intimately related to the framework of participation. Such a participation, we recall, preserves intact the essential otherness between God and creation; God remains outside creation by his essence, but allows creation to share in his power. This participation affords creation the stability which it inherently lacks; it enlivens and orders all creation. In this passage, the connection between the term **χάρις** and the framework of participation may be observed in the convergence of two sets of terminology. Thus **χάρις** is described in terms of God giving humanity a share in his power, **δύναμις**. The verb employed is **μεταδίδωμι**, the correlative of **μεταλαμβάνω**. And the effect of this sharing is that humanity becomes, as it were, "shadows" of the Word, another reference to the participation model.[61] But, of course, Athanasius elsewhere employs the participation model and vocabulary to speak of the sharing of the whole creation in the beneficent **δύναμις** of the Word, a sharing which makes the whole world a "shadow" and reflection of the Word.[62] In humanity, however, the reflection achieves an altogether different level, and it is this qualitative difference that is articulated in terms of humanity's being **κατ' εἰκόνα**. We must now try to tease out the significance of this qualification.

Athanasius understands humanity's being "in the image," as derivative from the Word's being the Image of the Father. He reserves the term, "image," to the Son alone, as a perfect reflection of the Father.[63] Humanity, therefore, is the "image of the image." Its similarity to God is thus fundamentally articulated as a participation in the Son's archetypal relationship of similitude to the Father. This point alerts us to the Trinitarian background of Athanasius's anthropology. It also provides us with a fundamental insight into the logic whereby Athanasius asserts that only the true Image can renew the impaired or lost image within us. That is because our being in the image of God is derivative from (i.e., a participation in) the natural (i.e., unparticipated, substantial) similitude of the Son to the Father. If we are fully cognizant of the participation model that is implied in Athanasius's understanding of **κατ' εἰκόνα**, and the Trinitarian framework that undergirds it, we are much more likely to feel the force of Athanasius's logic on this point.[64]

While following Origen on the point of humanity's being "image of the Image," Athanasius departs from Origen as well as Irenaeus and

Clement in not making a distinction between "image" and "similitude." In these earlier writers, the distinction is generally made between a preliminary bestowal of divine likeness upon humanity and an eschatological fulfillment of humanity's similitude to the divine.[65] A rationale for this departure may be provided, admittedly by way of sheer speculation, if we attend to Athanasius's pervasive efforts to find correspondences rather than discontinuities between the orders of creation and redemption. While such a project is also integral to the theology of Irenaeus, it seems to be much more systematically and rigorously applied in Athanasius. In the interest of this project, it seems understandable that Athanasius wants to emphasize as much as possible the intimacy of human communion with the divine in the original creation, as an analogue to the intimate union achieved between God and creation in the incarnation. In the same way in which he has transferred the terminology of mercy, which is usually employed to characterize God's motives for the incarnation, to that of creation, he is also reading back into the original creation the closest possible communion between God and humanity. The closeness of this communion then acts as a standard, an expression of God's purpose in creating humanity, which sin undermines and the incarnation repairs. It seems consistent with the logic of Athanasius's project to emphasize, rather than to understate, humanity's communion with God in the original creation.[66]

It is now necessary to dwell somewhat on Athanasius's characterization of this communion, this "added grace." A question that immediately suggests itself is how he distinguishes it from the grace of the participation of creation generally in the Word. To begin with, we can hardly disagree with Roldanus's judgement that "la participation à l'Image de Dieu est, sinon le fruit d'une action tout autre, du moins d'une tout autre intensité et d'une tout autre valeur que la participation du cosmos au Logos: par la connaissance de Dieu, elle est intime et personelle."[67] Athanasius certainly emphasizes the spiritual and, as it were, interpersonal nature of this relation, and he does this by his characterization of the condition of being "in the image" through the Platonic vocabulary of contemplation. While the grace afforded to all creation preserves it from dissolution into disorder and non-being, and brings the distinct parts into a harmonious whole, that afforded to humanity is described primarily in terms of humanity's conscious knowledge and awareness of God and his work. Thus humanity was made "perceptive (θεωρητὴν) and understanding

(ἐπιστήμονα) of reality through its similarity with God," and endowed with an imaginative conception, or a mental image, of God (φαντασία περὶ φεοῦ) (*CG* 2; Thomson, p. 6). This consciousness of God makes the relationship of humanity to God not one of strict passivity, but one that may be described in terms of dialogue or conversation: συνομιλία.[68] While all of creation is subject to the beneficent activity of God, therefore, globally characterized as providence, only humanity is conscious of this activity with regard to both itself and the rest of the world, and "is filled with admiration when it apprehends his providence towards the universe" (*CG* 2). In this way, the relation between humanity and God is consciously apprehended by the latter with an attendant joy, desire, and blessedness (ibid.).

Yet if we want to probe deeper into the shape of Athanasius's anthropology and to appreciate the particular resonances it has within his whole vision, it is necessary to go farther than a general reference to the spiritual character of the human-divine relation, albeit qualified as "d'une tout autre intensité." We need, in fact, to attend to the fundamental paradigm that governs Athanasius's conception of the relation between God and creation and then discern how he conceives the relation between God and humanity in terms of that paradigm. This fundamental paradigm is the framework of participation with its double polarity of activity and passivity. A careful analysis of Athanasius's description of the relation between humanity and God as compared with his treatment of that between God and the rest of creation will reveal that the former contains a far more nuanced and modified version of the passivity—activity paradigm, while still remaining within it.

We have already had occasion to see that, for Athanasius, creation's very creatureliness (its φύσις) is characterized as an onto-logical poverty which renders it intrinsically susceptible to reversion to the nothingness whence it came. However, God's beneficence and generosity are extended to creatures insofar as God allows creation a participation in his own power, through the Word. With a view to creation's inherent ontological lack, the Word's sustaining beneficence is often described in terms of a "protection" that allows creation to "remain" or persevere in being.[69] The participation of the cosmos in the power of God is described in a way that emphasizes God's activity and the passivity of the universe. Indeed, the very unity of the cosmos signifies ultimately not so much any immanent power of cohesion as the

fact that its "ruler and governor (τὸν αὐτῆς ἄρχοντα καὶ ἡγεμόνα) is not many but one" (*CG* 38; Thomson, p. 104). As its ruler, God "guides and arranges (διακυ- βερνᾷ ... καὶ διακοσμεῖ) the universe for our salvation, and acts as seems best to him" (*CG* 40; Thomson, p. 110). Such protection and maintenance come exclusively from the divine sphere; they are described in terms that consistently contrast divine activity with creaturely passivity. The life of the universe is but the effect of "the living and acting God, ζῶντα καὶ ἐνεργῆ Θεὸν" (ibid.).

With regard to the relation between God and humanity, however, the matter is rather more complex. One very striking point, which has not been noted sufficiently by previous interpreters, is that, despite his use of the terminology of governance (ἡγεμονία) to describe God's activity in relation to creation as a whole, Athanasius nowhere, to my knowledge, uses this terminology to describe God's activity in relation to humanity. This fact in itself indicates that the passivity or receptivity of humanity to the beneficent and sustaining power of the Word is of a different order than that of the rest of creation. The crucial difference is that humanity is ordained not only to receive and manifest this power, and not only to receive and manifest it consciously, but, most crucially, it is ordained to receive it actively.[70] That is, humanity is charged with the responsibility and the fundamental vocation of persevering in its receptivity to divine grace by an active striving. Athanasius describes humanity as not only protected and maintained by the Word, but also as charged with the task of consciously assenting and clinging to this protection and maintenance. Thus, the "added grace" bestowed upon humanity comes with the condition that humanity itself maintains its accessibility to this grace. Its "likeness" to God is simultaneous with the vocation to strive to retain that likeness: "so that as long as it preserved (σῴζων) this likeness it would never depart from its conception of God or abandon the company of the holy ones, but holding on to (ἔχων) the grace of the Giver, and also the proper power of the Father's Word, it might rejoice and converse with God, living a life free from harm, truly blessed and immortal" (*CG* 2; Thomson, p. 6).

Another striking observation gleaned from an attentiveness to Athanasius's terminology is that whereas God's active relation to the cosmos in general is characteristically described in terms of the Word's "securing" and maintaining its existence,[71] in the case of humanity, there is a certain transference and "sharing" of this very terminology

between the Word and humanity. While it remains true that the Word is the primary agent in the securing and maintenance of humanity, humanity itself is called to secure and maintain itself in its accessibility to the prior activity of the Word. *De Incarnatione* 3 offers an instance of this transference of terminology. First Athanasius says that God, knowing humanity's natural inability to remain forever **(θεωρήσας ὡς οὐχ ἱκανὸν εἴη κατὰ τὸν τῆς ἰδίας γενέσεως λόγον διαμένειν ἀεί)**, granted it a special participation in the power of the Word, so that it might be able to remain **(διαμένειν)** in felicity. Then he goes on to speak of human free will, and in that context, the active functions of securing and maintaining are seen to be "passed on" from the Word to humanity itself:

> Furthermore, knowing that the human will could turn either way and anticipating this, *he secured* **(ἠσφαλίσατο)** the grace given to them by a law and a set place. For he brought them into his own paradise and gave them a law, so that if *they guarded* the grace and *remained* good **(ἵνα εἰ μὲν φυλάξαιεν τὴν χάριν καὶ μένοιεν καλοί)** they would retain the life of paradise, without sorrow, pain, or worry, besides having the promise of incorruption in heaven. But if they transgressed and turned away and became evil, they would know that they would suffer the corruption consistent with their nature, in death, and would no longer live in paradise, but in future they would die outside it and remain in death and corruption **(μένειν ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ καὶ ἐν τῇ φθορᾷ)**.
>
> (*DI* 3; Thomson, pp. 140–2; my emphasis)

The power of free choice **(ἡ προαίρεσις)** thus conditions the active-passive paradigm that is integral to the participation model, insofar as it is meant to lead humanity into an active clinging to the prior beneficent activity of the Word. We have shown that humanity, in contrast to the rest of creation, is not characterized as merely being maintained and being secured by the grace of the Word, but as itself ordained to secure the grace given to it and thus to remain in the beatitude of divine communion. However, we should not get carried away by this insight into thinking that the fundamental paradigm has been structurally altered. It remains always true, in Athanasius, that God is essentially active while creation, including humanity, is

essentially passive. With humanity, as with all creation, its maintenance and well-being is utterly derivative from the grace of participation in the divine power. In the case of humanity, it is only a question of an attenuation or nuancing, albeit a very crucial one, of the stance of passivity. We may perhaps articulate this attenuation, in seemingly paradoxical terms, by saying that humanity's special position is that of being ordained to actively maintain its own passivity.

Hitherto, we have been analyzing Athanasius's anthropology in terms of the relation between humanity and God. This approach is consistent with Athanasius's own, for he is much less interested in an analysis of the immanent structure of the human being than he is with humanity's relation to God.[72] Or, more correctly, he sees the relation with God as constitutive of the integrity of the human being, since the quintessence of being human is the **κατ' εἰκόνα**, which is a participation in the Logos that qualifies the human being as **λογικός**.[73] An analysis of his description of the structure of the human being only serves to reinforce this point. Since Athanasius does not offer a systematic teaching on the structure of the human being in any one place, we must carry out this analysis by illuminating the key terms used by him and clarifying their associations. The principal terms are **νοῦς**, **ψυχή** and **σῶμα**. We hasten to note that the use of these three terms should not lead us directly to the assumption that Athanasius is speaking of three different "parts" of the human being.[74] Our manner of proceeding, then, must be to discern the particular connotations and resonances attached to each of these terms within the "existential and relational" perspective of Athanasius's anthropology.

To begin with, it is the **νοῦς** which really determines the human being as a whole; it does this by determining the human being's relation to God, by either fixing itself on God or turning away from God.[75] The **νοῦς** is thus always associated by Athanasius with communion with God; that is its principal characterization. Through the **νοῦς**, the relation of participation in the power of the Word becomes a conscious dynamic of self-orientation toward God.[76] This is a dynamic of innate self-transcendence expressed in terms of ecstatic contemplation.[77] The **νοῦς** is thus the human being's self-actualization of its having been created in the image of God. Its significance within the overall structure of the human being may well be summed up by the gospel saying about the "eye" which is the lamp of the body: "If your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness"

(Mt. 6:22–3). As the spiritual eye of the human being, the **νοῦς** is constituted by "le regard extatique"[78] which is the vision of God.

The **ψυχή** is not explicitly differentiated by Athanasius from **νοῦς**. It would appear, however, that the former is a more general term, denoting the spiritual nature of humanity.[79] When he dwells specifically on the soul, however, the term tends to be correlated with the body. Thus the **ψυχή** is spoken of as the "pilot" or governor of the body,[80] and is active with respect to the body's passivity.[81] It seems, in general, that the primary association evoked by **νοῦς** is that of relation to God, while the primary association evoked by **ψυχή** is its relation to the body. The term, **ψυχή**, then, generally functions within a more analytical perspective, one that is concerned with the internal structure of the human being, while **νοῦς** is used to refer to the more global orientation of the human being, as determined by its relation to God.

Finally, with respect to the body (**σῶμα**), it might initially seem that this term carries an essentially negative connotation for Athanasius, insofar as he describes the "fall" of humanity in terms of an orientation toward the body.[82] A closer reading, however, dispels this superficial impression.[83] For Athanasius, the ethical status of the body is not ontologically predetermined—as it would be for the Gnostics, for example. Rather, the body is the crucial existential locus for the exercise of human freedom; the self-determination that is intrinsic to human spiritual freedom is related directly to the use that the soul makes of its own body. If the **νοῦς** is oriented toward God, then the whole person, which includes the body, is taken up in that "regard extatique," and thus the body can fulfill a doxological function. In its own way, it may be taken up into the ascent of contemplation. If the **νοῦς** is oriented toward the body itself, however, then the body becomes an obstruction to communion with God and a prison for the soul:

> Knowing its own power of freedom (**τὸ αὐτεξούσιον**), the soul sees that it can use its bodily members in both directions—in the way of being or of non-being. Now the good is being, whereas evil is non-being. I call being good because it has its exemplar in God who is Being; and I call non-being evil because it has no real being, but is conceived by false human notions. For although the body has eyes in order to view creation and through its harmonious order to recognize the Creator, and ears in order to listen to the divine sayings and the laws of God, and hands in order to do necessary actions and to stretch them out to God in

> prayer, yet the soul abandoned the contemplation of the good and its proper movement within that sphere, and was from then on deceived and moved in the opposite direction. Then, seeing its power, as I said above, and misusing it, it realized that it could also move its bodily members in the opposite direction.
>
> (*CG* 4; Thomson, p. 12)

The body, therefore, possesses its own intrinsic teleology, as ordained to the acknowledgement and worship of God. However, it is dependent on the prior determination of the soul, which either confirms this teleology or perverts it into a movement "in the opposite direction."

Besides being the derivative expression of the soul's orientation toward or away from God, we may further specify the particular significance of the body, with regard to the relation to God, as symbolizing humanity's self-possession. In Athanasius's own terms, the body represents for humanity, "what is closest to itself":

> But human beings, despising better things and drawing back from the apprehension of these, sought rather what was closer to themselves (τὰ ἐγγυτέρω μᾶλλον ἑαυτῶν ἐζήτησαν)—and what was closer to them was the body and its sensations. So they turned their minds away from intelligible realities and began to consider themselves.
>
> (*CG* 3; Thomson, p. 8)[84]

Subtle as it may be and difficult to re-articulate, this assigning of the body the rôle of being "what is closest" to humanity goes to the heart of Athanasius's conception of human bodiliness, and, we shall see, it has significance also for his conception of Christ's bodiliness.[85] In any case, we do not find any other explicit statement of the position of the body within the human structure. The logic of this designation, however, is found in a perspective wherein anthropology is conceived as constituted by the dynamics of relation to God. Within this dynamic, the proper condition of humanity is conceived as a kind of self-transcendence. As such, the proper condition of humanity was originally meant to be that of "transcending" the senses and "all human things (πάντα τὰ ἀνθρώπινα διαβάς), rising high above the world, in order to see the Word and, in him, also the Father of the Word" (*CG* 2; Thomson, p. 6). It would be a mistake to conclude, therefore, that all which is to be transcended—the body, the senses, and, ultimately, the

world—is bad. Rather, all is good and used well so long as it is within that dynamic of self-transcendence. The body, then, seems to represent for Athanasius what most immediately belongs to humanity, as its own, and thus what is primarily to be transcended. The soul is not conceived in the same way—as that which is to be transcended—not because it is naturally superior to the body or more "divine," but simply because the soul is supposed to be the organ which actually effects this self-transcendence. In other words, the soul is conceived more as the subject of self-transcendence and the body as what has to be transcended. Moreover, it bears repeating once more, the body is not the object of this self-transcendence because it is evil, but precisely because it is what is "closest to humanity." Surprisingly then, and in a striking departure from a prevailing Platonic identification of humanness with the soul (which is basically the position of Origen), it seems that for Athanasius the "selfness" of being human resides particularly in the body.[86] Athanasius arrives at this quite original conception not by way of attempting a conscious corrective but, as we have said, because his anthropology is so radically and pervasively determined by the perspective of relation to God. As such, a fundamental paradigm of his anthropology is the interplay between self-regard (we could even say, self-relatedness) and self-transcendence (i.e., relation to God). It is as if Athanasius conceived of the relation between God and humanity as a straight line limited by two poles: on one extreme, God; on the other extreme, the self and specifically the body.[87] Humanity's turn to the body, then, is a matter of choosing not what is intrinsically bad, but what is most immediately its own, rather than orienting itself toward God. It is opting for self-indulgence over the self-transcendence of contemplation of God.[88] Conversely, in turning away from the body and clinging with the νοῦς to divine reality, humanity is orienting itself away from what is closest to itself. It is thus seeking the term of the movement of its desire not in itself, not in what most belongs to it, but in God. The body itself, however, may participate in this upward ascent which is decisively initiated by the νοῦς.

Athanasius's anthropology is thus one in which the whole structure of the human being is conceived as properly ordained toward God. Moreover, since the condition of the human being seems centrally determined by the orientation of the νοῦς, and since the νοῦς itself is characterized as the primary locus of the encounter with God, we can speak of the relation with God as constitutive of the human person in

Athanasius's anthropology. To put the matter thus already goes some way to explain the inappropriateness of such a question as whether the image of God resides within the human structure or only in relation to God, a question to which Roldanus devotes some energy. It must be said that such a question derives both its motivation and its attendant conceptual framework from a post-scholastic Reformation polemic against a certain reading of post-scholastic Catholic conceptions of the capacities of nature as compared to grace. The fallacy of such an approach being imposed on Athanasius is exposed by the recognition that the "either/or" alternatives in which the question is meant to be answered—either the image belongs to the human structure or it belongs to the "grace" of the relation with God—simply do not exist as exclusive alternatives in Athanasius.[89] It seems wisest, therefore, to dismiss the dichotomy represented by such a question as quite foreign to the perspective of Athanasius's anthropology, in which the relation to God is constitutive of the human being as such. There is thus a convergence in Athanasius between "inherent structure" and "relation to God"[90] which renders fallacious any attempt to analyze his anthropology in terms of a preconceived framework based on a mutually exclusive opposition.

Another problem, beset by similar complications, is represented by the question of whether the image of God is lost or simply impaired by sin.[91] Again, it would be naive to fail to see how the energy of such a question in our own time derives its momentum also from Reformation—Roman Catholic polemics. This time, however, we are also faced with internal complications, for the text itself seems to suggest now one alternative and now another.[92] However, it is this very fluidity or seeming evasiveness that should alert us to the fact that the issue did not present itself to Athanasius as "cut and dried" as it seems to be for some of his critical interlocutors. In fact, the possibility has to be reckoned with that the very endeavor to arrive at a "yes" or "no" answer to the question of whether the image is retained after sin—or, even if we put it in slightly more nuanced terms, whether the image is lost or impaired—itself indicates an altogether too reified conception of image. If by "image" we mean the relation with God, as Athanasius himself seems to mean, then Athanasius himself seems to answer that this relation is decisively broken by sin, and yet that it does not altogether disappear after sin. That it is broken by sin is indicated, not merely by an isolated passage, but by the whole argument of the *De Incarnatione*, which is that nothing short of the incarnation of God could renew this

relationship. That it did not altogether disappear after sin is again indicated not only by passages that continue to speak of humanity as λογικός after sin, but also by the whole dramatic movement of the *De Incarnatione*, in which the incarnation takes place at the penultimate moment before humanity's utter demise. We must reconcile ourselves, therefore, with the uncomfortable fact that to our clearly defined question, Athanasius seems to answer a resounding "yes and no."[93] The point that he himself intends unquestionably to make is that sin represented a definite breakdown in the relation between humanity and God, which could not have been repaired from the human side, and required nothing short of God's coming into the flesh to be repaired from the divine side.

To be sure, even on this last point, certain critics have found Athanasius's position ambivalent. Focusing especially on *Contra Gentes* 30–4, they have considered Athanasius to be saying that human beings can return to God by themselves, merely by contemplation, and apart from the grace of the incarnation.[94] Since such a position is obviously at variance with the whole argument of the double treatise, these critics have understood Athanasius to be making a temporary concession to Greek sensibility in the interest of apologetics—a concession, however, which is inconsistent with the rest of his argument. And yet nowhere does Athanasius say that the human being's inward gaze of contemplation, by which the return to God is facilitated, takes place apart from the grace of Christ. To simply assume that Athanasius means this, and then charge him with inconsistency, seems unjust. What accounts for this assumption has in fact probably less to do with the text itself than with a preconceived framework by which the two sections of the work seem to be understood, perhaps even unconsciously, as *De Natura* and *De Gratia;* or at least as "before and after" the incarnation. However, the distinction of the two parts of the treatise is not such that the first part entirely abstracts from the incarnation. Indeed, the incarnation is even read into the account of creation in the *Contra Gentes*, as when the Word through whom the Father creates, "orders the universe and contains and provides for all things," is simply identified as "our Lord Jesus Christ."[95] Similarly, when we read that God can be found by looking into ones own soul, what we have to understand is not that we can return to God apart from the grace of the incarnation, but rather that, precisely through the incarnation of Christ, the knowledge of God has been renewed within us according to the mysterious working of

Him who is "invisibly persuading"[96] even his enemies to acknowledge his Lordship and that of the Father.

Indeed, sinful humanity's incapacity to renew its relation with God by its own powers is but the extension of the principle that the relation between humanity and God, even in the original creation, is wholly initiated and maintained by God. While humanity is enjoined to actively persevere in maintaining its accessibility to this grace, such activity is primarily a perseverance in receptivity. Sin represents a decisive breakdown in this perseverance in receptivity—one that cannot be repaired from the human side precisely because it is this receptivity itself by which humanity has access to the divine activity that is broken by sin. The incarnation thus represents the renewal of the relation between God and humanity in a way that confirms the original structure of the relation, in which there is a correlative emphasis between divine activity and human receptivity to this activity. To pursue our analysis of this renewed relation, we broach the subject of Christology and redemption.

Christology and redemption in the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*

We have already pointed out that, insofar as the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione* is an apologetic work, the apology is focused specifically on the scandal of the cross.[97] The treatise is conceived and designed with a view to defending the Christian faith that the one who was crucified on the cross is really God. From this starting point, Christology and a certain presentation of redemption that is centered around the incarnation of the Logos play the central rôle in the conception and argument of the work. At the same time, the effort to defend the rational "fittingness" of such notions as an incarnate and crucified God involves, for Athanasius, presenting the fundamental consistency between God's way of relating to the world through these salvific events and through the basic structure of creation.[98] In other words, Athanasius presents the fittingness of the Christian view of redemption by proving its coherence with the radical structure of the relation between God and creation. Fundamentally, such a presentation unfolds on two fronts. First, he attempts to present the incarnation as consistent with divine immanence and involvement in the world; second, he insists that the incarnation in no way detracts from the transcendence that properly belongs to God. By following his

arguments on these two fronts, we may arrive at an appreciation of the contextual framework that governs the Christology of the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione.*

Athanasius's presentation of the incarnation as consistent with divine immanence implicitly pervades the whole treatise and determines its entire structure. One of the primary means by which the *Contra Gentes* prepares the way for the *De Incarnatione* is by showing how all of creation is radically and absolutely dependent on God's sustaining involvement in the world, and how humanity has willfully withdrawn from this salutary dependence. This theme becomes fully explicit in the conclusion of the first part of the treatise, which effects the transition to the theme of the incarnation of the Word:

> But although this is so and nothing exists outside him, but heaven and earth and all that is in them depend on him (ἐξηρτημένων αὐτοῦ), human beings foolishly rejected knowledge of him and true piety, and honoured what is not rather than what is; and instead of the truly existent God they have deified what is not, "worshipping creation instead of the creator" [Rom. 1:25], which is foolish and impious.
>
> (*CG* 47; Thomson, p. 132)

In turn, the *De Incarnatione* presents the incarnation as a renewal and re-establishment of God's beneficent and powerful involvement in the world.[99] The consistency between divine involvement in the cosmos and the intervention of the Word in the incarnation is articulated in a key passage, which we may take as indicative of the whole structure and strategy of Athanasius's argument throughout the double treatise. Here, in *De Incarnatione* 41, we see how Athanasius's cosmology, which shares significant common ground with current philosophical conceptions, serves to demonstrate the rational "fittingness" of the incarnation, by appealing to the principle of divine immanence:

> As for the Greeks, one is most amazed that they laugh at things which should not be mocked…But since our exposition is not lacking in proofs (ἐν ἀποδείξεσι), let us shame them with reasonable arguments (ἐκ τῶν εὐλόγων) and especially by what we ourselves see. For what is unsuitable (ἄτοπον) or absurd in our position, except that we claim that the Word was manifested

> in the body? Yet even they would admit that it was not unsuitable (μὴ ἀτόπως) for this to occur, if they were friends of the truth. If they completely deny that there is a Word of God, they are acting foolishly in mocking at what they do not know. But if they confess that there is a Word of God and that he is the governor of all things, and that in him the Father made creation, and that by his providence all things are enlightened, enlivened, and exist, and that he reigns over all, so that by the works of his providence he is known and through him the Father—consider, I beg you, if they are not inadvertently bringing ridicule upon themselves.
>
> (*DI* 41; Thomson, pp. 234, 236)

Athanasius thus characterizes the rationale of the incarnation in terms of divine providence, "πρόνοια," which term is used by him to refer to God's immanent activity in general, extending also to the radical sustenance by which creation is preserved in being. In this context, the incarnation is viewed as a further instance of this immanent enlivening and sustaining activity of God. If God can be "in" the cosmos in general, why can he not come to be "in a man"? To further dramatize this point, Athanasius has recourse to the Stoic conception of the cosmos as a body. In this way, he can all the more neatly make his point that the notion of God's being in a human body is no more ridiculous than that of his being in the cosmos:

> The philosophers of the Greeks say that the universe is a great body; and rightly so. For we perceive it and its parts are apparent to our senses. If then the Word of God is in the universe, which is a body, and is present to it as a whole and to every part, what is incredible or unsuitable (τί ἄτοπον) in our saying that he came in a man? If it is completely unsuitable that he should be in a body, it would be unsuitable for him to come into the whole and enlighten and move the universe by his providence, for the universe also is a body. But if it is suitable (πρέπει) for him to come into the cosmos and be known in the whole of it, it would also be suitable that he should appear in a human body, and that it should be enlightened and moved by him. For the human race is a part of the whole; and if the part is not suitable (ἀπρεπές) to be his instrument in order to make known his divinity, it would

> be most unfitting (ἀτοπώτατον) that he should be known through the whole universe.
>
> (ibid.)

In this passage, we see Athanasius striving to demonstrate the inherent consistency between the structures of creation and redemption to the point of dramatizing this demonstration by a common vocabulary. In both cases, the Word acts and manifests himself in a "body." So it is that we find ourselves squarely before the supposed Logos-sarx Christology of Athanasius. But a word of caution is most appropriate at this point, for what we find ourselves squarely before is, to be sure, a Logos—sarx framework, but perhaps not a Christology at all, in the strict sense. That is, we are not here presented with a direct Christological statement, in the sense of an analytic description of the structure of Christ's being. What is crucial for interpreting this passage is a proper and properly prioritized reading of the issues of Christology and cosmology, as well as a sense for the interests of apologetics. It is actually the apologetic intent that is the key to a correct interpretation of this passage. Athanasius is arguing on behalf of the "fittingness" of the incarnation by appealing to divine immanence in the world, in general. While the Stoic conception of the world as a body further highlights the consistency between divine immanence in the incarnation and in the world in general, we cannot take Athanasius's use of it as a warrant to speak analytically of a strict Logos—sarx framework, with regard either to cosmology or to the incarnation. Rather than a statement about the structure of the cosmos or of the Incarnate Word, this passage is concerned, for apologetic purposes, to underscore the consistency between cosmos and incarnation, in terms of divine immanence. In other words, we find here a statement dramatizing the fact of the positive relation between God and the world and not an analytical exposition of the structure of this relation.[100]

A similar situation occurs with regard to the interpretation of Athanasius's description of Christ's body as the instrument, ὄργανον, of the Word. This key concept in Athanasius is also key to Grillmeier's interpretation of his Logos—sarx Christology: "in the word ὄργανον Athanasius sums up the whole significance of the Logos-sarx relationship."[101] Immediately qualifying his statement by the observation that "the organon-concept is too indeterminate to provide any information about the Logos—sarx relationship by itself,"[102] he nevertheless inserts this concept into the Logos—sarx framework and

concludes that "the flesh becomes an [instrument] moved directly and physically by the Logos."[103] Such an interpretation is problematic in more than one way. Grillmeier has taken Athanasius's description of the body as instrument to refer to the mode by which it is moved by the Word: i.e., "directly and physically." This again is Grillmeier's analytical perspective, concerned with the relation of parts within the whole. But nowhere in the whole treatise, much less in his use of the "organon-concept," is Athanasius concerned with the problem of whether the Logos moves the body directly or indirectly, which is precisely the distinction that is here implicitly invoked by Grillmeier. This is to say that the problem with which Grillmeier is concerned does not arise organically out of the text and can be resolved only by a distinction not present to Athanasius. It seems illegitimate therefore to interpret Athanasius in light of this distinction, one that ultimately reduces to that between "the mediation of natural and supernatural life," which is surely quite foreign to Athanasius.[104]

Secondly, it is very hard to understand, in Athanasian terms, what Grillmeier means by interpreting Athanasius as saying that the Logos moves the body "physically," something Athanasius would never say himself. Since the Logos is not a physical entity, it would be just as correct to say that the Logos moves the body "spiritually." However, once again, the mode by which the Logos moves the body is not specified by Athanasius. Ultimately, it seems, the problem resides precisely in the fact that Grillmeier is forcing the "organon-concept" of Athanasius into a framework in which it does not belong. As we have said, Grillmeier's preconceived framework is that of analytical Christology; he is concerned with the internal composition or structure of the God-man. For Grillmeier, the human soul of Christ is a vital mediating link within that structure—mediating between the supernatural and natural agency of the Word-madeflesh. So he reviews the development of Christological doctrine with a particular view to finding this link or pointing out its absence. Within such an analytical framework, Grillmeier confronts Athanasius's conception of Christ's body as "instrument" with the question of how this instrument is connected to the Logos as agent. He interprets this notion with a view to the composition of Christ, and asks how and by what order it is linked to the other "part," the Logos. He then answers his own question by the statement that Athanasius's use of the "organon-concept" indicates that the body as instrument is connected to the Logos "directly and physically."

This whole approach, however, is foreign to Athanasius. His Christology is simply not analytical in that way, at least not in this treatise we are considering now. His characterization of Christ's body as an "instrument" is not to be interpreted in light of an analysis of the composition of Christ, but rather within the framework of the Creator-creature distinction, with its attendant dialectic of divine transcendence and immanence. The "instrumentality" of the body is concerned precisely with its being a medium for the immanent revelation of the transcendent God. In other words, the focus is not on the relation of the Logos to the body, so much as on the body as mediating between God and world. Athanasius himself speaks of the "instrument" of Christ's body not in order to emphasize that it is "directly and physically" moved by the Logos, but rather to characterize it as a privileged locus wherein the invisible God becomes knowable and visible. Within this characterization, the dialectic between divine transcendence and immanence is quite explicit: "Although he is powerful and the creator of the universe, he fashioned for himself in the virgin a body as a temple, and appropriated it as an instrument in which to be known and dwell (**καὶ ἰδιοποιεῖται τοῦτο ὥσπερ ὄργανον, ἐν αὐτῷ γνωριζόμενος καὶ ἐνοικῶν**)" (*DI* 8; Thomson, pp. 150, 152). The characterization of **ὄργανον** in terms of providing access to the knowledge of God in this passage is quite typical of its general use by Athanasius, both with reference to the body of Christ and indeed to creation in general.[105] In all these cases, **ὄργανον** denotes a medium either of revelation or of immanent activity. As such, it is a concept that is employed above all in a functional, and predominantly epistemological, sense by Athanasius, and that is why it is highly problematic to force it into an analytical structural framework. Speaking of the body as instrument, for Athanasius, means primarily considering the bodiliness of Christ as the privileged medium for the self-disclosure of the invisible God in human form. The overriding framework is thus epistemological; the reference is to knowledge rather than locomotion and animation. If we follow the hint of Grillmeier, therefore, that "in the word **ὄργανον** Athanasius sums up the whole significance of the Logos—sarx relationship," we may conclude that this latter relationship is for Athanasius simply the transposition into a Christological key of his pervasive emphasis on the dialectical relationship between God and the world. Within this dialectical relationship, the content of the notion of Christ's body as instrument has to be interpreted not in terms of the mode by which it is

moved by the Logos, but rather in terms of its function as mediating, both epistemologically and onto-logically, between God and the world insofar as it is a visible immanent manifestation of the invisible God.

At this point, we are perhaps in a position to supplement our negative characterization of Athanasius's Christology as unanalytical by a positive characterization of it as a "dialectical" Christology.[106] Such a characterization would be consistent with the dialectical framework that pervades all of Athanasius's theology, arising out of his particular conception of the relation between God and the world. God and world, while conceived by him as in some way opposite and yet also related, are always related to each other as extremes. His Christology is thus also dialectical and focused on extremes. As such, its focus is not so much on how the divine—human being of Christ is internally constituted, but rather on the fact that Christ unites the extremes of God and world. It is this dialectical emphasis that is the proper context for appreciating the internal rationale of Athanasius's Christology, and of his Logos—sarx framework, in particular; indeed, a significant part of his particular contribution to the development of Christological doctrine may be precisely the way in which he emphasized the extreme poles of Christ's being.[107] Thus Jesus Christ is first of all identified as the Logos, who is clearly understood, even in this relatively early treatise, to be fully divine. At the same time, in the event of the incarnation, the Word has come as a human being, taking to himself a body. The "bodiliness" of the Incarnate Word, in Athanasius's conception of Christ, deserves to be treated with more sensitivity than as merely an embarrassing indication of the lack of emphasis on Christ's human soul. It is precisely in the context of an awareness of his emphasis on the extremes united in Christ that we can apply such sensitivity to his emphasis on Christ's human body.[108]

As we noted earlier, for Athanasius, the "body" is the most extreme anthropological category. This is to say that, if he conceives of his anthropology in terms of the divine—human relation, "body" lies on the extreme human side. "Nous," and to a lesser degree "psyche," are conceived more directly as "mediating" categories, or organs of spiritual "ekstasis." The body, however, is conceived as "what is closer" to ourselves (*CG* 3). So Athanasius's emphasis on Christ's body connotes the extreme condescension of the Word's coming to us, pressing the point that he is united to us in precisely what is "closest to ourselves." He discusses this fairly directly when he speaks of the

incarnation as God's condescension to the human preoccupation with the sensible:

> For since human reason (τῆς διανοίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων) had stooped to sensible things, the Word submitted to appearing through a body (ὑπέβαλεν ἑαυτὸν διὰ σώματος φανῆναι ὁ Λόγος), in order that he might, as a human being, transfer humanity and turn their senses to himself, and that from then on, although they saw him as a man, he might persuade them through the works he did that he was not merely a man but God, and the Word and Wisdom of the true God.
>
> (*DI* 16; Thomson, p. 172)[109]

Note that here "reason" is located in a kind of middle position between the sensible, which is figured as below, and God, who is above. Moreover, the Incarnate Word is characterized precisely with respect to the furthest extremities of above and below. The bodiliness of the Incarnate Word thus symbolizes the extreme terminus of the Word's descent: "For the Word extended himself everywhere, above and below and in the depth and in the breadth: above, in creation; below, in the incarnation; in the depth, in hell; in breadth, in the world" (*DI* 16).

Another clue to the significance of Christ's "bodiliness" in Athanasius is also provided in this passage in the reference to the "works" of the body. Indeed, the motif of the "works" accomplished by Christ in the body is central and pervasive in the *De Incarnatione*. Aside from the sheer ubiquity of this theme, Athanasius himself specifies it as one of the two main motives for the incarnation:

> By his becoming human, the Saviour expressed his love for humanity (ἐφιλανθρωπεύετο) in two ways: he rid us of death and renewed us; and, although he is invisible, yet by his works (διὰ τῶν ἔργων) he manifested and made himself known to be the Son of God and the Word of the Father, ruler and king of the universe.
>
> (*DI* 16; Thomson, p. 172)

This motif of the "works" of the body gives us further reason to characterize Athanasius's Christology as determined by the dialectical framework of the relation between God and the world. As we have already seen in our analysis of certain passages in the *Contra Gentes*,

one of the constitutive elements of this framework is that God is invisible by virtue of his own nature and unknowable to created nature, yet reveals himself through "works." The dialectic between divine nature and works, in Christ, is thus a concrete realization of that between God and the world. This dialectic thus provides Athanasius with one of his fundamental means for reading the significance of the incarnation. It underscores both the freedom and transcendence of God in that he is not naturally accessible to the grasp of created natures, as well as God's free beneficence in that he wills to reveal himself through works. One of the ways that the "nature-works" framework determines Athanasius's conception of the incarnation is thus the epistemological emphasis on the incarnation as revelation. In the context of the narrative of human sin and corruption, the incarnation is conceived as a renewal of the knowledge of God, which implies a restoration of a relationship of full participation by the created **νοῦς** in the divine Logos. It is, however, a renewal based on divine initiative, a renewal of God's self-revelation by way of an intensification of divine condescension. The body of Christ is the locus and symbol of this renewed revelation and intensified condescension. God, who is incorporeal by nature, becomes revealed in a body: **ὁ ἀσώματος ὢν τὴν φύσιν καὶ δι' ἡμᾶς σώματι φανεὶς** (*DI* 38; Thomson, p. 226).

Finally, we may explain the significance of Athanasius's emphasis on the bodiliness of Christ in terms of the importance which he attaches to Jesus's self-offering of his body as a redemptive sacrifice. Despite the tendency of some Athanasian scholarship to downplay this theme,[110] he himself speaks of Christ's offering of his body to death as the "primary reason" **(αἰτία πρώτη)** for the incarnation.[111] Through sin, death entered into the world and all humanity was subject to it, according to the just judgement of God who had previously warned humanity that the consequence of sin is death.[112] This judgement was fulfilled in Christ's body, which was sufficient to atone for the death of all by virtue of its participation in the Word. Thus, on the one hand, the universal efficacy of Christ's sacrifice is expressly linked with its participation in the transcendent Word while, on the other hand, the condition for the possibility of this sacrifice is the mitigation of the Word's transcendence through the instrumentality of the body. Of himself, and by virtue of his own nature, the Word cannot die. But just as the invisible God becomes visible through the instrument of the body, so the immortal God is able to undergo death through the same

instrument. And through this death, the Word's immortality and incorruptibility is communicated to the body:

> For since the Word realized that human corruption would not be abolished in any other way except by everyone dying—and the Word himself was not able to die, being immortal and the Son of the Father—he took to himself a body which could die, in order that, since this participated in the Word who is above all (ἵνα τοῦτο τοῦ ἐπὶ πάντων Λόγου μεταλαβὸν), it would be sufficient to undergo a death for the sake of all, and because of the Word who was dwelling in it, it would remain incorruptible, and so corruption would depart from all humanity by the grace of the resurrection. Therefore as an offering and spotless sacrifice, he offered to death the body which he had taken to himself, and immediately abolished death from all who were like him by the offering of a like. For since the Word is above all, he fulfilled the debt by his death, by offering his temple and the instrument of his body as a substitute for all. And as the incorruptible Son of God was united to all human beings by his body similar to theirs, he granted incorruption to all humanity by the promise of resurrection.
>
> (*DI 9;* Thomson, p. 154)

Here again, we see that the instrumentality of the body has to do with its being an immanent medium for the conveyance of God's transcendent power in the immanent sphere. Athanasius's emphasis on the bodiliness of Christ thus represents his attempts to show that the incarnation of the Word is not only consistent with the general dynamic of divine immanence, but represents a much more intensified and "internalized"[113] manifestation of this dynamic. But just as he was concerned to differentiate his own conception of divine immanence from that of the Stoics by emphasizing divine transcendence,[114] so he wants to complement his presentation of the incarnation as consistent with divine immanence with a counterbalancing attempt to safeguard divine transcendence within the event of the Word's becoming flesh. His commitment to equally upholding divine transcendence and immanence leads him, in the context of the incarnation, to maintain the extreme condescension of the Word as consistent with his unmitigated lordliness, "so that from the seeming degradation of the Word your piety toward him may be greater and stronger" (*DI* 1). And, once

again, as he did in the context of creation, in order to emphasize divine transcendence while simultaneously reaffirming God's involvement in the world, he has recourse to the framework and terminology of participation. The crux of his thinking in this regard is that the Word's presence in the body is active and activating rather than passive. Not only is the Word active and activating with regard to the body which he assumes, but the fact of assuming this body in no way diminishes his unqualified activity over the rest of the cosmos. So, in the human body, as in the rest of the cosmos, the Word's transcendence is safeguarded (even as divine immanence is reaffirmed) by saying that the Word is partaken, but does not partake:

> He was not confined (περικεκλεισμένος) in the body, nor was he in the body but not elsewhere. Nor did he move the latter while the universe was deprived of his activity and providence (οὐδὲ ἐκεῖνο μὲν ἐκίνει, τὰ ὅλα δὲ τῆς τούτου ἐνεργείας καὶ προνοίας κεκένωτο). But the most wonderful thing is that, being the Word, he was not contained by anyone, but rather himself contained everything (οὐ συνείχετο μὲν ὑπό τινος, συνεῖχε δὲ τὰ πάντα μᾶλλον αὐτός). As with creation in general, he is outside the universe in his essence, but in everything by his power—ordering everything and extending his providence over everything, enlivening all things, individually and collectively, containing the universe and not being contained by it (περιέχων τὰ ὅλα καὶ μὴ περιεχόμενος), but dwelling wholly and in every respect in his own Father alone—in the same way, being in a human body and enlivening it himself, he also enlivens the universe, and was both in all and outside all (καὶ ἐν τοῖς πᾶσιν ἐγίνετο, καὶ ἔξω τῶυ ὅλων ἦν). And although he was known by his body through his works, he did not cease to be manifest through his activity in the universe.
>
> (*DI* 17; Thomson, p. 174)

It is precisely in virtue of this unrestrained activity that the presence and action of the Logos in the body is to be differentiated from the normal activity of the soul. For the soul, while active with regard to the body, is "bound" to the body in the sense that its sphere of activity is restricted to the body. Here we have one clue to Athanasius's neglect of Christ's human soul, for the soul is characterized by this limited

activity and so does not spontaneously fit in with a model that dramatically contrasts the unqualified activity of the Logos with the unqualified passivity of the body:[115]

> It is the function of the soul to see by reasoning what is outside its proper body but not to act outside its own body nor to move by its presence what is distant from it. Thus, when a person thinks about things which are distant, he never directly acts upon them or moves them…But it was not so with the Word of God in the man. For he was not bound to the body, but rather controlled it. So he was in it and in everything, and outside creation, and was only at rest in the Father. Now the most amazing thing is this, that he both lived as a man, and as the Word enlivened everything, and as the Son was with the Father. Therefore, neither when the Virgin gave birth did he suffer himself, nor when he was in the body was he defiled, but rather he sanctified the body. Nor when he was in all things did he partake of all (οὐδὲ . . . τῶν πάντων μεταλαμβάνει).
>
> (*DI* 17; Thomson, p. 174)

This contrast between the unqualified activity of the Word and unqualified passivity of the body is the paradigmatic core of Athanasius's Christology in the *De Incarnatione*. While this observation can possibly suggest an entryway into an analytical inquiry into Athanasius's Christology, his account of the "composition" of Christ, it is even more legitimately employed as a caution against moving too quickly into such an inquiry. For, as we have had occasion to point out, it is clear that his primary concern is not to analyze the internal structure of the being of Christ. Rather, he seems to be interested, first and foremost, in seeing Christ as representing a certain relation between God and the world that is consistent with the relation represented by creation. While this leads him inevitably to make statements that do amount to analytical descriptions of Christ's being, it is important to see the point of departure from and the framework in which such statements are made. If we keep in mind that his point of departure and framework is the relation between God and the world, we are in the best position for seeing Athanasius's Christology in its proper context.

The value of these cautionary remarks is borne out if we focus on such statements as are found in the passage just quoted, that "neither

when the Virgin gave birth did he suffer himself, nor when he was in the body was he defiled, but rather he sanctified the body." Such statements are readily vulnerable to charges of docetism.[116] We are tempted to see Christ's lack of suffering and invulnerability as indicating a relation of "externality" between Christ and his body,[117] but that would be again to revert to an analytical model of interpretation. In fact, the statement here about Christ's lack of suffering—to be considered alongside other state ments which speak of the Logos "himself' as suffering[118]—should be understood only in its proper context, through the statement immediately following it: "Nor when he was in all things did he partake of all." The crucial point is that, for Athanasius, the statement that the Word "did not partake" of all is quite compatible with the statement that he was "in all things." What we have here is simply a dramatization of the fundamental principle that, in relation to both the world and the body, the Word is both in all and outside all. To the extent that there is any "explanation" for this paradoxical assertion in Athanasius, it is not to be found in the imputing of any "externality" between the Word and the body. Rather, the answer lies again within the participation model: the Word is outside the cosmos and his human body insofar as his relation to it, while quite intrinsic,[119] is one of activity and not passivity. Thus the Word is outside the body and "not bound" to it precisely insofar as he "controls" it: "For he was not bound to the body, *but rather he controlled it. He was in it and in everything, and yet outside creation,* and was only at rest in the Father." The irreversible configuration of the dynamics of activity and passivity in the Word means not a separation, gap, or external connection between divinity and humanity but rather is summed up in saying that while divine activity does not become reduced, the humanity which is acted upon becomes exalted and sanctified: "Nor when he was in the body was he defiled, but rather he sanctified the body…[and] being incorruptible, vivified and purified the mortal body."

The conjunction of activity and passivity already indicates a certain conception of the unity of Christ by way of a unified dynamic by which the divinity acts upon the humanity. Within this unified dynamic, the contrast is strictly maintained between the impassible and immortal Logos and the passible mortal body. Athanasius is concerned to preserve this distinction and to emphasize, despite any appearances to the contrary, "the inequality of his nature to ours" (τὸ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀνόμοιον τῆς φύσεως) (*DI* 34; Thomson, p. 216). For

this reason, it is important for Athanasius to qualify the human attributes of the Incarnate Word as applicable to him precisely as man (ὡς περὶ ἀνθρώπου) (*DI* 18; Thomson, p. 176), and owing to the natural properties of the body (διὰ τὸ ἴδιον τοῦ σώματος) (*DI* 21; Thomson, p. 188).[120] At the same time, however, it is integral to Athanasius's Christological thinking to move freely from an emphasis on the distinction of divine and human attributes in the Incarnate Word to an emphasis on the unity of the Word and his body. Grillmeier's analysis tends to portray Athanasius's conception of this unity in rather organic terms, as if the Word's union with the human body is precisely a matter of the Logos "moving the body directly and physically." But it is a further indication of the subtly problematic nature of Grillmeier's interpretation that, when it is actually a question of resolving the dichotomy of attributes in Christ into a unity, Athanasius never resorts to explaining this unity in terms of some organic "direct and physical" unity between the Logos and the flesh (as does Apollinarius, for instance). Rather, when the issue of Christ's unity presents itself as a problem, Athanasius tends to look for a solution much more along the lines of a model of predication than of organic unity, emphasizing that the characteristics of both humanity and divinity, in Christ, are predicated of a single grammatical subject.[121]

This model achieves a much fuller presentation in the later *Orationes contra Arianos*, but its implicit beginnings are already present in the treatise which presently concerns us. A central notion within this model is the concept of "appropriation." In the incarnation, the Word "appropriates" (ἰδιοποιεῖσθαι) the flesh or makes it his own. It is precisely this notion that elucidates Athanasius's typical emphasis that the Word did not merely "come into" a body but "took to himself" a body.[122] The distinction being invoked here is that to say the Word merely "came into" the body is to see the body as external to the Word as subject, whereas to insist that the Word "took to himself" a body is to emphasize that the human body has been fully appropriated by this subject. Thus, to say that the Word took to himself a body, in the strongest sense, is to say that the body becomes the Word's "own": ὅλως ἔλαβεν ἑαυτῷ σῶμα, καὶ τοῦτο ἰδιοποιήσατο (*DI* 31; Thomson, p. 210).

This model of ownership or appropriation is Athanasius's fundamental means for dealing with the problem of the conjunction of unity and distinction in Christ. Rather than invoking a model of organic unity, his typical strategy is a good deal more complex. What he

actually does is, first, distinguish between the divine and human attributes and then insist that the appropriation of the body by the Word legitimates the application of human predications to the subject of "God the Word." Because such a reading of Athanasius credits him with far more sophistication than is generally conceded, it is necessary to substantiate it in some detail. We may cite a seemingly simple passage in the *De Incarnatione* which embodies this complex logic:

> When the theologians who speak of him say that he ate and drank and was born, understand that the body was born as a body and was nourished on suitable food. But God the Word himself, who was with the body yet orders the universe, also made known through his works in the body that he himself was not a man but God the Word. But these things are said of him, because the body which ate and was born and suffered was no one else's but the Lord's; and, since he became human, it was right for these things to be said of him as a man, that he might be shown to have a true, not a phantasmal, body.
>
> (*DI* 18)

Since we have characterized Athanasius's conception of the unity-within-distinction in Christ in terms of a model of predication, we will now analyze this passage in those terms. Such a perspective arises organically from the text itself, since Athanasius is discussing here precisely the predications applied to Christ, and how these may be appropriately understood. First, he acknowledges that predications of human attributes (eating, drinking, generation) are applied by the "theologians" to the Incarnate Word (**περὶ τοῦτο**), understood as a single subject. The problem is how to understand these correctly. He begins by identifying these attributes with the body, and then identifying God the Word with the activity that properly belongs to him (**τὰ πάντα διακοσμῶν**). His primary concern is that, notwithstanding the attribution of human predicates, God the Word, who "was with the body," is nevertheless in his inmost subjectivity "not a man but God the Word." The phrase is, in its most basic form, tautological (God the Word…was not a man but God the Word); but this serves only to emphasize the point that human attributions, in the case of the incarnation, do not detract from the integrity of the divine subjectivity of the Word. After having thus firmly distinguished the human predication from the divine subject, Athanasius then goes on to state

that nevertheless these predications are appropriately applied to the divine subject, because the body to which they naturally belong has itself been appropriated by the Word ("was no one else's but the Lord's"). It turns out then that the attribution of human predicates both is and is not applicable to God the Word. Athanasius's pedagogical style enables him to say this in a simple and digestible way. His point amounts to the statement that the human predicates are not applicable to God the Word from the point of view of what naturally belongs to him, but that they do apply to the Word through the mediation of the incarnation—that is, through his own free and willful appropriation of these predicates. In other words, and this is ultimately Athanasius's most essential point, human predications apply to the Word only insofar as he himself has applied them, and he has done exactly this through the event of the incarnation.[123] It is crucial to be aware here that Athanasius is not propounding Christological metaphysics in a systematic manner, but is trying to show the correct way in which to understand Christological statements. And his point is that we can and should apply human attributes to the Word, so long as we understand such attribution as legitimated by, and derivative from, the initiative and condescension of the Word.

That we should apply human attributes to the Word is a significant emphasis in Athanasius that has not been sufficiently appreciated. True enough, he is always careful to note that the human attributes belong properly to the human body; it is this aspect that tends to receive by far the most attention from scholars. But his second and crucial step is to transfer these human attributes to the Word himself, pointing out that such a transfer derives from the ownership of the body by the Word. For example, in this passage, while he does say that "it was right for these things to be said of him as a man," that statement comes after the one explaining that those human attributes are predicated of God the Word "because the body which ate and was born and suffered was no one else's but the Lord's." Similarly, in another passage, Athanasius can speak of the Word himself suffering:

> Therefore, as I said above, the Word himself, since he was immortal and could not die, took to himself a body (ἔλαβεν ἑαυτῷ σῶμα) which could die in order to offer it as his proper body (ὡς ἴδιον) on behalf of all, and in order that, suffering himself (ὡς αὐτὸς) for all, through his coming into it, he would be able "to destroy him who held the power of death,

> that is the devil, and to deliver all those who through fear of death had been subject to bondage all their life [Heb. 2:14–15]."
>
> (*DI* 20; Thomson, p. 184)

Athanasius is clearly attributing suffering to the Word here. But again, this is done after two crucial preliminary steps: first, clarifying that the Word in himself is immortal; second, explaining that he took a body as his own, **ὡς ἴδιον**. This last consideration is conceived by Athanasius in such a way that whatever is said of the body may be properly applied to the Word.

Of course, it is possible to find other passages in the same treatise which state that the Word himself did not suffer and was not affected by the movements of the body. We have in fact already stated that, for Athanasius, human attributes both are and are not properly applied to God the Word. It is easy but superficial to dismiss such thinking as contradictory nonsense, although we may readily acknowledge that Athanasius does not have the philosophical apparatus to say in what sense the Word does suffer and in what sense he does not. However, there is a real logic operative here, based on the distinction of what statements are appropriate when predicated of the Word as a merely divine subject, and what statements are appropriate in light of the Word's appropriation of the body. This distinction, however, is not simply a mere boundary line dividing the time before and the time after the incarnation. Even within the incarnation, one can make either kind of statement, depending on the considerations one brings to bear. If one has in mind the Word, conceived according to his proper nature, then he did not suffer. If one has in mind the Word, conceived as graciously appropriating the body to himself, then he did suffer.

As we have also already pointed out, the proper context for understanding this double perspective is the model of participation and the statement that the Word is "outside the universe in his essence but in everything by his power" (*DI* 17). In the same way, the Word remains essentially distinct from the human body and yet pervades and sanctifies it by his power. However, in speaking of the relation between the Word and the body, Athanasius in fact never speaks of the Word as "outside" the body but rather emphasizes the internality of the relation[124] and the notion that the Word has made the body "his own." As such, we can see the incarnation of the Word as the climax of that movement of God's **χάρις** which acts to mitigate the natural distance between God and the world. The distance remains within the

incarnation in the "unlikeness of his nature to ours," but it is simultaneously transcended in the appropriation of our condition by the Word. Thus the hermeneutical key to understanding Athanasius's Christology is the paradoxical relation between God and the world whereby the total otherness between the two natures is "bridged over" by the initiative of divine grace. Through the incarnation of the Word, and the appropriation of our condition by the divine subject, this "bridge" amounts to our deification through participation in the Logos.

Conclusion

If Athanasius's Christology is "explained" by reference to his general conception of the relation between God and the world, it does not strictly follow that his Christology is thus derivative from this conception. In fact, I would suggest that the opposite is the case. In trying to make an argument for the rational fittingness of the incarnation and the cross, these aspects of the Christian message of redemption determine Athanasius's interpretation of the radical structure of reality (that is, the relation between God and creation) and of human history. They constitute the center to which all other data are made to converge. This attempt to put forward an ontology and a view of human history that is coherent with the incarnation and cross contains an inherent drive toward consistency. In this chapter, we have tried to locate a structural element of this consistency in terms of Athanasius's conception of the relation between God and creation in the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*. To this end, we first explicated this conception within the dramatic structure of the work as a whole. We have analyzed the structure of the original relation between God and creation, as conceived by Athanasius, in terms of a double emphasis on the transcendence of the Creator-God over what comes to be from nothing, and on God's beneficent movement to protect creation from its inherent ontological poverty. We have then sought to show how this radical structure of the original relation between God and creation determines Athanasius's conception and dramatization of the subsequent history of this relation. In order to demonstrate the systematic connections between various foci of his theology as converging in his particular conception of the relation between God and creation, we have then related this conception to his doctrines of God, cosmology, theological anthropology, redemption, and Christology. We have shown that Athanasius's attempt to provide a

rationally consistent defense of the Christian faith contains as a key element various transpositions of the theme of the convergence between divine otherness and nearness. As we turn to his overtly anti-Arian writings, we shall see that this key element also pervades his attempts to prove that the notion of the Son's (and the Spirit's) equality to the Father is essential to a coherent reading of the Christian faith.

3
THE RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND CREATION IN THE ANTI-ARIAN WRITINGS

Historical background and dating

If it could be argued that Athanasius's *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione* is construed as a catechetical work that does not refer to any particular historical context,[1] the same certainly could not be said of Athanasius's subsequent fierce polemic on behalf of the full divinity of the Son and the Spirit. Here, Athanasius found himself in a life and death struggle with the "Ariomaniacs." While we cannot linger too much on the sometimes tortuously complicated details of the Arian crisis, we must give some account, in admittedly broad strokes, of the historical background that enveloped Athanasius throughout his ecclesiastical career.

At some point shortly before 320,[2] Arius, a popular Alexandrian priest, began to teach a doctrine that asserted the lack of co-eternality between Father and Son, possibly in objection to the preaching of his bishop, Alexander of Alexandria. Arius was deposed by Alexander in a council of the Egyptian Church in 323. However, he was able to find support from Eusebius of Nicomedia and Eusebius of Caesarea, with the result that the controversy spilled over beyond Egypt. In 325, the Council of Nicaea, attended by Athanasius as a young deacon accompanying Alexander, condemned Arius and formulated the relationship of Father and Son as "homoousios." It was not long, however, before the supporters of Arius began to recover. Under the auspices of Emperor Constantine, a small gathering of bishops in Nicomedia readmitted Arius to communion, a decision which Alexander rejected.[3] Alexander then sent Athanasius on a mission to the emperor in order to defend his own persistence in the excommunication of Arius, and it was while engaged on this mission

that Athanasius heard of the death of his bishop.[4] Arriving back in Alexandria, Athanasius was appointed bishop, with allegations soon to follow that the election had been irregular and violently enforced.

These allegations were put forward by the followers of Melitius of Lycopolis, who had broken communion with Peter of Alexandria over the latter's lenient policy toward those who had lapsed during the Diocletian persecutions of 303. The condemnation of Melitius by an Egyptian synod, *c.* 306, had resulted in an independent Melitian church in Egypt. The Council of Nicaea attempted to heal the schism by readmitting Melitian clergy into the Church of Alexandria, while assigning them a subordinate rank. However, Athanasius's accession to the throne of Alexandria was not accepted by the Melitians, thus renewing the schism.[5] The new bishop's troubles with the Melitians combined with the still-unresolved difficulties with Arius to make his position precarious. Consistent with his predecessor's policy, Athanasius steadfastly opposed the efforts of Eusebius of Nicomedia and Constantine to have Arius readmitted to communion with the Egyptian church. His rebuffal of Eusebius of Nicomedia paved the way for an association between the Melitian and the pro-Arius parties. The Melitians sent a delegation to Eusebius of Nicomedia, who introduced them into the court of Constantine, in 330, and the two groups formed an alliance.[6] This group began publicizing serious accusations against Athanasius, including extortion, ordering one of his priests to break the chalice of a Melitian priest, arranging the murder of the Melitian bishop Arsenius, and bribing the *magister officiorum* to facilitate his episcopal appointment (which he allegedly accepted below the canonical age).[7] Constantine dismissed all the charges except the murder of Arsenius, which he ordered to be investigated before a council to meet in Caesarea in Palestine.

In the meantime, however, Athanasius found the "murdered" Arsenius who was hiding in Tyre, and Constantine cancelled plans for a council. But under further pressure from Eusebius of Nicomedia and the followers of Arius and Melitius, Constantine ordered the whole matter to be investigated at a council in Tyre. Athanasius, after some hesitation, became convinced that the assembly was hostile to him and refused to attend.[8] The Council of Tyre, in 335, received the Melitians into communion, affirmed the orthodoxy of Arius, and appointed a new bishop for Alexandria. In response, Athanasius turned to Constantine, who was quite aware that the bishops at Tyre were not favorably disposed to the Alexandrian. However, Athanasius's opponents now

produced a new and, from the point of view of the emperor, a more ominous charge—that Athanasius had threatened to initiate a strike in Alexandria which would withhold grain shipments to the capital. Constantine was sufficiently anxious about this prospect to eventually acquiesce in the decision of Tyre. Thus began Athanasius's first exile, to Trier, in 335.[9]

In 337, Constantine died, passing on the governance of the empire to his three sons, Constantinus, Constans, and Constantius. By imperial edict, all exiled bishops were to be allowed back to their sees, and so Athanasius re-entered Alexandria in November 337. However, all was not peaceful. While he was always popular with his own people, external opposition remained intense. Almost from the moment of his return, he had to deal with attempts to unseat him. In the winter of 338–9, a council of bishops at Antioch reasserted the condemnation of Athanasius by the Council of Tyre and appointed as his replacement Gregory, a cleric from Cappadocia. In March 339, Athanasius went into hiding in order to escape arrest. A week later, Gregory of Cappadocia entered Alexandria as bishop and, within a month, Athanasius had fled Egypt to Rome. It must have become irrevocably clear to him at that stage that the Melitians and the supporters of Arius were determined to bring him to ruin and that his fortunes and those of Nicaea were indissolubly mixed.[10] It was probably also at this period, beginning about 339, that he began his dense doctrinal offensive against the Arians, the *Orationes contra Arianos*.[11] Countering Arian scriptural proof-texts, Athanasius sets out to show that Arian doctrine is merely a "pretence of Christianity," which should not be tolerated within the Church.[12] Only the doctrine of the full divinity of the Son and his equality to the Father is consistent with the message of Christian salvation; if the Son is "external" to the Father, he will be a creature and thus neither Creator nor Redeemer. Against the Arian description of the Son as "a creature but not like one of the creatures,"[13] Athanasius insists on the mutually exclusive and radical categories of Creator and creation. If the Son is a creature, he is not Creator; if he is Creator, he is not a creature. Of course, this argument must deal with the creaturehood of the Son in the incarnation, and it is in reference to this perspective that Athanasius interprets scriptural texts that seem to ascribe creaturehood or inferiority to the Son. Thus his argument in the *Orationes* involves him in distinguishing and relating the relations between Father and Son, God and Creation, and incarnate Son and creation. As a sustained refutation of Arian

proof-texts, the *Orationes* bring together Athanasius's doctrinal exegesis and his "systematic" sense for the interrelation of Christian doctrine.[14] Moreover, the development of his Trinitarian thinking is reflected in the attention he gives to the rôle of the Holy Spirit in the argument of the *Orationes*, in contrast to the neglect of this subject in the earlier *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*.

In Rome, Pope Julius welcomed Athanasius and allied himself with the Alexandrian bishop and with Marcellus of Ancyra, whose interpretation of the Nicene homoousios was decidedly modalist.[15] Pope Julius invited the Eastern bishops for a council to reconsider the depositions of Athanasius and Marcellus. Rebuffing Julius's emissaries, the Eastern bishops responded by convening at a council to dedicate the Church of Antioch in 341. This council produced four creeds, the most significant being the second or *"Dedication"* creed. The latter anathematized anyone who speaks of the Son as "a creature like one of the creatures," but also avoided any linkage of the Son to the Father through "ousia" (**οὐσία**) language, and designated the Son as "exact image" of the Father.[16] Far from effecting a reconciliation, Julius's efforts on behalf of Athanasius (and Marcellus) thus resulted in a confirmation of the estrangement between Western pro-Nicene theology and the Eastern bishops who were suspicious of what they perceived to be the Sabellian dangers inherent in Nicene doctrine.

Julius's rather ineffectual patronage of Athanasius came to be supplemented by that of the Western emperor, Constans. With a view to the rehabilitation of Athanasius, Constans demanded that a general council be convened in Sardica, in 343. Once again, however, the extent of estrangement of East and West was dramatized rather than mitigated. Delegates from the two regions never actually met; the Easterners refused to sit at council with Athanasius and other exiles. Withdrawing to Philippopolis under pretext of greeting Constantius and his army, they again condemned Athanasius, along with Marcellus, and now Julius. They also produced a creed, condemning both the Arian phrase, "there was once when he was not," and the idea "that the Father did not beget the Son by choice or will."[17] The Westerners, for their part, defended Athanasius and Marcellus and put forth their own profession of faith, which was meant to be a defense of Nicaea.[18]

Notwithstanding the failure of Sardica, Constans' persevering support of Athanasius finally prevailed upon his brother Constantius and the exiled bishop was allowed to return to Alexandria in 346. Again, his entry was glorious but his stay under almost constant peril.

A decisive blow came in 350, when he was deprived of the imperial patronage of Constans, who was killed by the general Magnentius in an insurrection. Constantius's antiNicene leanings now found a more unobstructed field for action. A new council was held in Sirmium, in 351, with the emperor present. It produced a creed which "marks a definite shift towards a more sharply anti-Nicene doctrine, though it cannot quite yet be said to be explicitly pro-Arian."[19] For several years following the council of Sirmium, Constantius had its decisions circulated among individual bishops, with the demand to subscribe to them or face exile.[20] There followed two other Western councils of Latin-speaking bishops, characterized by imperial pressure and threats, at Arles (353–4) and Milan (355). While the latter was still in session, Constantius began arrangements to have Athanasius expelled again from his see. In January 356, under imperial orders and with the aid of a large body of troops, an attempt was made to capture Athanasius, who once again was able to escape.

For the rest of Constantius's reign, Athanasius availed himself of refuge among the monks of the Egyptian countryside. This, his third exile, was also his most prolific in literary and theological production. From this period we have, first of all, his "Encyclical Letter to the Bishops of Egypt" *(Ad Episcopos Aegypti)*, composed soon after the start of his exile. Here the embattled bishop protests against the injustice of his ejection and warns his fellow bishops not to succumb to imperial pressure by signing the synodical letter of the council of Sirmium. We also notice, at this point in Athanasius's career, a decisive shift toward an explicit and tenacious defense of the Council of Nicaea itself and of the Nicene term "homoousios," a shift that might not be unrelated to another shift toward an explicit denunciation of Constantius. Athanasius's fullest defense of Nicaea is presented in his *De Decretis*, *c.* 356, written in response to someone who, in argument with Arians, had been stymied by the Arian objection that the language of Nicaea is unscriptural. Athanasius responds that the term "homoousios" represents the "sense" of the scriptural witness and was necessary to safeguard that sense against the Arian tendency to interpret all other suggestions in the unscriptural sense of signifying a lack of oneness between Father and Son. Moreover, argued Athanasius, the Arians themselves set up as a standard the unscriptural term, *agen(n)etos*, while the Nicene "homoousios" represents the true exegesis of the biblical understanding of God as Father. Athanasius's defense of

Nicaea in *De Synodis* is continued in his attempt to link Nicaea with prior tradition in the *De Sententia Dionysii*, written shortly after.

While Athanasius's defense of Nicene doctrine had focused on the divinity of the Son, it had also tended to include an affirmation of the divinity of the Spirit, at least since the *Orationes contra Arianos*. He was given an opportunity to thematize this affirmation, when the bishop Serapion of Thumis wrote to him complaining of certain Christians who dissociated themselves from the Arian subordination of the Son and yet maintained that the Spirit is an angelic creature. In response, Athanasius composed his three *Letters to Serapion*, penned between 359 and 361. Essentially, these letters apply to the Holy Spirit Athanasius's previous arguments on behalf of the full divinity of the Son: there is nothing in common between creatures and the Creator; the scriptural witness represents the Holy Spirit as not a creature but Creator and Redeemer and thus not external to the triune Godhead.

Meanwhile, the late 350s saw significant new developments in the landscape of the controversy.[21] Of particular note was the rise of Aetius, Eunomius, and Basil of Ancyra. Aetius, a native of Cilicia and a former goldsmith and dialectician, radicalized Arian doctrine by asserting that the Son was unlike, "anomoios," to the Father in essence. Eunomius, a Cappadocian rhetor, met Aetius while studying in Alexandria and became an ardent supporter and disciple. Together, they propounded a doctrine that represented an extreme form of Arianism, diametrically opposed to the "homoousios." If the term "homoousios" seemed to many to be dangerously close to Sabellianism, the "anomoios" now dramatized the dangers of a strict opposition to "homoousios," an opposition which threatened to strip the Son of a substantial claim to divinity. The opposition to this anomean doctrine was led by Basil of Ancyra, who had succeeded the deposed Marcellus in 336. While still reluctant to embrace the Nicene "homoousios," Basil nevertheless insisted that the Son's likeness to the Father must pertain to essence *(homoiousios)*. To deny a likeness of essence, argued Basil of Ancyra, is to "say in effect that the Son is not a Son, but only a creature, and the Father not a Father but only a Creator."[22] In 358, Basil summoned a council in Ancyra which condemned "anomoian" doctrine and persuaded the emperor to banish both Aetius and Eunomius.

The banishment of radical "Anomeans" and the ascendancy of Basil of Ancyra, with his seemingly middle position between homoousian and anomean theology, seemed to Constantius to represent an

opportunity for a final resolution. The occasion for this *rapprochement* was to be yet another council, with the Eastern bishops meeting at Seleucia in Cilicia and their Western counterparts in Ariminum, Italy. Prior to the opening of this double council, Constantius had a few leading bishops draw up a compromise statement to which both sides were supposed to agree. Bearing the date of its publication—22 May 359—it was to be mocked by Athanasius, and to be known generally as the "*Dated Creed"* This creed spoke of the Son as "like the Father in all respects" **(ὅμοιον κατὰ πάντα)** but counseled against the term *"ousia"* as unscriptural and disturbing to "the masses."[23] The eventual outcome of the double council of Ariminum-Seleucia was a creed ratified in Constantinople in 360, which largely reproduced the "dated" creed, with the significant omission of the designation of the Son as like the Father "in all respects." This omission signaled a decisive defeat for the homoiousian party, led by Basil of Ancyra. In response, Athanasius penned his *De Synodis* (*c.* 359) in which the effort at reconciliation with Basil's homoiousian position is coupled with a firm and vigorous defense of the Nicene "homoousios." After offering his own history of the double council, with the intent of exposing the perfidy of the "Arians," Athanasius uses the outcome of this council as an argument in favor of the Nicene position: while "homoiousios" might be acceptable if understood in a certain sense, only the "homoousios" is capable of finally ruling out the notion of any unlikeness of essence between Father and Son. Thus the argument in *De Decretis,* that only the "homoousios" proved invulnerable to an Arian interpretation in Nicaea, is now given further historical vindication in *De Synodis*.

While the Nicene position was now becoming more attractive to "moderate" Eastern bishops as a decisive antidote to extreme Arianism, Athanasius's position soon improved with regard to external circumstances as well. Constantius became ill in November 361, and died a month later. With the accession of Julian to the throne, an imperial edict allowed for bishops exiled under Constantius to return to their sees. Claiming this as justification, Athanasius entered Alexandria in February 362 and, within a few weeks, was presiding over the council of Alexandria. From this council, we have the *Tomus ad Antiochenos*, an attempt to reconcile the two quarreling pro-Nicene parties in Antioch. Soon, however, Athanasius had to concern himself again with his own troubles, in the typical form of attempts to remove him from his see. The emperor Julian had realized, by this point, that

his policy of recalling exiled bishops, probably intended to encourage intraecclesial strife, had in some cases only strengthened Christian churches that were already traditionally strong. This was certainly the case in Alexandria, where Athanasius was the overwhelming favorite among the people. In October 362, an edict arrived from Julian ordering Athanasius to leave the city. In response, Athanasius and his supporters prevailed upon the local senate to present the emperor with a petition that Athanasius might continue as bishop. In a furious counter-response, Julian demanded that Athanasius depart from Egypt altogether. Athanasius merely withdrew into the Thebaid, and Julian himself died the following year.

Succeeding Julian was the emperor Jovian, and Athanasius lost no time in travelling to his court and personally winning from him formal permission to return to Alexandria. Unfortunately for the embattled bishop, his new imperial ally was to die of accidental suffocation in 364. The empire was now governed by Valentinian in the West and the anti-Nicene Valens in the East. In 365 came an imperial order from Valens ordering Christian bishops who had been deposed under Constantius and allowed to return by Julian to return once again to exile. As before, Athanasius did not succumb quickly. Crowds of Alexandrian Christians demonstrated on his behalf, apparently presenting the imperial authorities with the argument—not without a certain dash of black humor—that "the imperial order did not apply to their bishop, since Athanasius had been restored as well as exiled by Constantius, and exiled as well as restored by Julian and owed his most recent restoration to Jovian, not to Julian."[24] Notwithstanding this display of legalistic wit, the imperial authorities simply waited for a respite in the public outcry and prepared to capture the bishop by force. In typical fashion, Athanasius departed from Alexandria secretly one night, and thus escaped arrest. Meanwhile, Valens soon found himself in a vulnerable position, due to a rebellion led by Julian's relative, Procopius, who had had himself proclaimed Augustus in Constantinople. Valens acted quickly to secure Egypt on his side, and, as part of that campaign, in 366 invited Athanasius to resume his episcopal duties. This time, the bishop dutifully obeyed the emperor, and Valens allowed Athanasius to remain in Alexandria without any further troubles.

From this last period of relative tranquility, we have the two important Christological letters of Athanasius, *Ad Adelphium* (*c.* 370 or 371) and *Ad Epictetum* (371). The former rebuts the doctrine that the

Word did not come in the flesh; Athanasius likens its proponents to the Valentinians who "substituted appearance for reality."[25] The latter deals with the notion that the body born of Mary is co-essential with the Godhead of the Word. In both these letters, Athanasius conducts his argument within the basic framework of an anti-Arian polemic, even though he acknowledges that those who hold these views might not consider themselves to be Arians. From the point of view of doctrine, then, Athanasius's anti-Arian polemic moved, between the 340s and the early 370s, from the issue of the relation of the Son to the Father, to that of the relation of the Spirit to Father and Son, to Christological questions. In this chapter, we will deal with the question of how his conception of the fundamental relation between God and creation underlies this whole structure of his anti-Arian polemic.

The relation between God and creation in the Arian crisis: *status quaestionis*[26]

The recent revival of interest in the Arian crisis has led to a reopening of the question of what was the fundamental issue in the controversy. Traditional interpretations tended to portray the views of Arius as resulting either from an Aristotelian rationalization or from a naive subscription to Neoplatonic schemas of a hierarchy of hypostases.[27] While not dispensing with this appeal to rationalization, Newman, in *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, introduced the theory that Arius's doctrine had its proper background in Syrian literalist exegesis and piety.[28] For Newman, the Arian doctrine represents a rather positivistic conception of reality and the realities of faith as opposed to the mystical Alexandrian conception. Harnack, in turn, saw Arius's doctrine as a quintessential expression of the Hellenistic corruption of the gospel. The Arian doctrine represents the triumph of cosmology and morality over evangelical soteriology.[29] Already in Harnack's interpretation, the theme of the relation between God and creation is seen as a fundamental element of the controversy. Arius, in Harnack's view, conceives of the person and work of Christ from within a basically cosmological (Neoplatonic) framework, in which Christ is a created mediator between creation and the transcendent God who remains unknown in himself. This cosmological framework rules out the evangelical emphasis on divine "fellowship" with humanity.[30]

In the interpretation of Gwatkin, the relation between God and creation in the controversy was seen as even more central, constituting

the very core of Arius's doctrine. "Arianism," according to Gwatkin, begins with a conception of God as "absolutely simple and absolutely isolated from a world of finite beings."[31] Thus arises inexorably "the problem of creation—how to connect the unknown God with a material world."[32] Arius's solution of conceiving Christ as a created mediator came, according to Gwatkin, from philosophic precedent, and amounted to a being who is "neither truly God nor truly man, but a heathen demigod."[33] Gwatkin concluded that Arius's solution was a failure precisely because it confirmed the isolation of God from creation: "Far from spanning the infinite abyss which philosophy, not revelation, had placed between God and sinless man, the Arian Christ is nothing but an isolated pillar in its midst."[34]

More recent scholarship has tended toward a far more generous and positive reappraisal of the position of Arius. A key element in such reappraisal has been a tendency to de-emphasize the supposed cosmological concerns and philosophical approach of Arius. Most notable among such attempts at reinterpretation has been Robert E. Gregg and Dennis W.Groh's *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation*. This work sets out to portray the rationale of Arianism in terms of a soteriology of exemplarism, in which Christ is a fellow creature whose career and access to divine prerogatives any Christian can effectively reproduce. It has been pointed out, however, that the soteriological emphasis in Gregg and Groh's approach is not evident from the extant Arian texts themselves, which are far more preoccupied with the question of the relation between Father and Son.[35] Moreover, the very logic put forth by Gregg and Groh has correctly been questioned insofar as the Arian Christ is not so straightforwardly a "fellow creature" but a pre-existent being, without a human soul, who is pointedly styled as "a creature but not as one of the creatures."[36] Nevertheless, we can point out that the theme of the relation between God and creation remains implicitly integral to Gregg and Groh's interpretation, insofar as they characterize Athanasius's model as one in which God and the world are related by participation, and distinguish that model from Arius's, which they see as relating God and world through divine will.

A more balanced and altogether more perspicacious re-reading of Arius's doctrine is Rowan Williams's *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*. Williams surveys the history of scholarship dealing with the Arian crisis, shrewdly pointing out how traditional estimates of Arius tended to produce "the image of this heresy as the radically 'Other,' projecting on to it whatever theological or ecclesiological tenets currently

represent the opposition to a Christian mainstream in which the scholar and interpreter claims to stand."[37] In the course of his survey, Williams suggests that the work of Gwatkin represented a decisive development in the discussion of Arian doctrine insofar as it "shift[s] some of the emphasis away from the supposed Christological focus of the heresy and towards the doctrines of God and creation."[38] In his own analysis of Arius's doctrine, Williams makes a conscious effort to avoid a preconception of "Arianism-as-other," and to see Arius in the context of an Alexandrian milieu. What emerges is an Arius who is a fairly "conservative" Alexandrian Christian. What is striking in Williams's account, however, is that, beyond the reconfiguration of the place of Arius in relation to previous tradition, and notwithstanding his persuasive deconstruction of "Arianism-as-other," Williams's interpretation of Arius's doctrine is finally fairly close to Gwatkin's.[39] It differs ultimately more by way of nuance than substance, with much of the nuancing due to Williams's recognition of Arius's stress on divine will as effecting a kind of relation between God and the world, as opposed to the mere "isolation" seen by Gwatkin. Nevertheless, after a careful and judicious analysis of the fragments of Arius's poem, the *Thalia*, Williams concludes that the Arian Christ "witnesses to the unbridgeable gulf between God and all else."[40] Moreover, "when we look at Arius' attack on Alexander's theology, we see, at the very least, a close parallel to the Neoplatonist dismantling of earlier Platonic models of God's relation to the world."[41] To be sure, Williams cautions that divine transcendence is conceived by Arius not so much as "the mere fact of unrelatedness" but rather in terms of the sovereignty of divine will.[42] But he goes on finally to acknowledge that there still remains an "unrelatedness" in Arius's theology, between the world and the subject of the divine will. Thus Arius's attempt to relate God to the world solely by will entails a pure voluntarism, "the inability to say anything about the subject of willing beyond the mere assertion that it wills".[43] There remains in Arius's conception an "insistence on the utter independence and separateness of the source of all."[44]

Let us add here two observations on the significance of the issue of the relation between God and creation in the Arian crisis. Firstly, from a historical point of view, it is clear that the issue of the relation between God and creation, as the latter is conceived in the particular form of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, forms a significant background to the controversy. This doctrine amounted to a decisive affirmation of the absolute sovereignty and freedom of God in relation

to the world, an acknowledgement of the radical contingency of the world and its dependence on God, and a positing of an irreducible difference between creation and its Creator. Many scholars have summarized the Arian controversy by alluding to this background with the observation that Athanasius placed the Logos on one side of this great divide and Arius placed him on the other.[45] Moreover, we can point out that, despite the rather tendentious remark that Athanasius called "Arian" anyone who disagreed with him,[46] the case is rather that Athanasius called "Arian" anyone who could be understood to mean that the Son is a creature. Secondly, from a systematic point of view, the issue of the relation between God and creation is not simply one among others. Precisely because of its all-encompassing range, the issue of the relation between God and creation bears in some way, explicit or implicit, on whatever issue we choose to see as the "center" of the controversy. We have already seen, for example, how Gregg and Groh's focus on Arian doctrine as primarily soteriological in conception nevertheless resulted in two contrasting models of the relation between God and creation. In this chapter, we shall see that the relation between God and creation, and the kind of mediation and of immediacy operative in this relation, were not only implicitly foundational issues for Athanasius, but were also explicitly considered by him. We now turn to a focused investigation of how such issues are played out in Athanasius's anti-Arian polemic.

The relation between God and creation and the theological reasoning of Athanasius

We begin with a question of method. How did Athanasius's conception of the relation between God and creation determine his theological reasoning on behalf of the full divinity of the Son and Spirit? It has been said of the term "homoousios" that "its employment by Athanasius and Nicaea was not intended to create a speculative or metaphysical theology as some historians seem to think, but to express the *utter* dialectic between God and the world. The *homoousios* is not to be understood so much as a positive statement telling us something about God's being, but rather as a negative one, indicating what the *Logos* is not, namely a creature."[47] Zizioulas's comment is a useful one, not only because it directly situates Athanasius's Trinitarian theology in the context of his conception of the "utter dialectic between God and creation" but also because it at least implicitly suggests some

connection, in Athanasius's theology, between the issue of the relation between God and creation and that of the relation between apophatic and cataphatic theological statements. The latter issue has proven to be significant in the context of contemporary theological discourse. For it is precisely the supposedly speculative and metaphysical character of traditional orthodox assertions of the Son's substantial unity with the Father that render them virtually meaningless to some modern theologians.[48] The inadequacy of such assertions is sometimes maintained precisely by recourse to a radical apophaticism. Within such an atmosphere, a retrieval of the context and logic of Athanasius's statements on the substantial unity and equality of the Father and the Son amounts to a contribution to our understanding of the history of theological method. It answers the question of how we can know and in some measure understand a statement referring to the being of the unknown God. More to the point of our immediate discussion, however, is the question of how Athanasius's conception of the relation between God and creation allows him to articulate positive statements about God that are nevertheless ultimately apophatic in signification.

A central principle in Athanasius's apophaticism is that it is "impossible to comprehend what God is, yet it is possible to say what he is not."[49] Human incapacity to comprehend the divine essence is explicitly ascribed there to the natural gulf between what is created and the uncreated Creator.[50] Although, as we have seen, Athanasius is always concerned to point out that God's love acts in such a way as to compensate for this natural difference, both by granting us participation in his Image and through the whole economy of redemption, it still remains true for Athanasius that our creaturely knowledge of God cannot amount to a direct and thorough perusal of the divine nature. It is always a matter of "seeing through a glass darkly." Thus, even in the context of the revelation of God which is consummated in Christ, and in the renewed knowledge of God to which we are thereby given access, it is still true that "all created beings, and especially we who are human, find it impossible to speak adequately concerning the things that are ineffable."[51]

One consequence of our non-comprehensive knowledge of God is that we cannot claim to know "how God is," but only that he is.[52] For Athanasius, however, this does not mean that we cannot make any statements that qualify our conception of who God is beyond a mere bare assertion of his existence. Rather, his point is that we must not inquire into God's being as if it were a mechanism which we can analyze and

find out "how it works." It is ultimately a question of the relation between revealed faith and human reason, and Athanasius wants to safeguard the basic principle that faith cannot simply be judged by reason, "for the things that have been handed down by faith ought not to be measured by human wisdom, but by the hearing of faith."[53] With regard to the doctrine of God, then, faith affords us certain insights into the being of God which do not yet amount to an "explanation" of God. In turn, our task is not to assimilate the revelation of faith to human structures of explanation but the reverse—to assimilate our human ways of explaining and understanding to the revelation of faith. Thus Athanasius often criticizes the Arians for understanding revealed data in a "fleshly" human way, and for trying to subject it to human reasoning.[54] In contrast, he himself does not advocate the disuse of human reason in theological matters. Rather, he wishes to advance the realization that what faith reveals has to be understood with an attitude of apophatic "reverence" (εὐσέβεια) that has in view the otherness between God and the world.[55] This reverence entails the effort to understand statements relating to God by reference not primarily to the signification such statements would have in the context of created realities, but rather by reference to the whole "scope" of scripture as understood in tradition.[56]

With these qualifications, Athanasius considers that scripture provides certain insights as to how we should conceive of the reality of divine being. We can make use of these insights to gain positive indications of the nature of who God is. Athanasius's espousal of this principle explains his frequent recourse to scriptural imagery (for example, of light and radiance, and fountain and river) in his articulation of the relation between the Father and the Son. Such imagery provides us with positive knowledge of God's being, providing that we do not press it too far, toward a literal analysis of the structure of divine being. Thus in castigating the Arians for their "impertinent inquiries," he challenges:

> Let them say how the Father is, that so they may learn how his Word is. But it is absurd, they will say, to ask such questions about the Father. Let them hear, then, that it is also absurd to ask them concerning his Word. Since, therefore, such an attempt is futile madness, nay, more than madness, let no one ask such questions any more, or else let him learn only that which is in the

> scriptures. For the illustrations (παραδείγματα) they contain which bear upon this subject are sufficient and suitable.[57]

An important part of Athanasius's theological method is thus devoted to a rational exposition of scriptural imagery, always careful to make the necessary qualifications so that what is proper to creaturely natures is not applied to God.[58]

While Athanasius thus has significant recourse to the exposition of scriptural imagery in his arguments for the full divinity of Son and Spirit, his dominant method of argument is to insist that the Son and the Holy Spirit belong to the essence of God simply because they are not creatures. Not only is this the primary way of reasoning toward the affirmation of the divinity of the Son and Spirit, but it is also the primary way for explaining what it means to say that the Son and Spirit are "proper" to the divine essence. Thus Athanasius explains that the whole point of the Nicene "homoousios" is "that both the pure genuineness of the Son might thereby be known and that to things originate might be ascribed nothing in common with him."[59] The divinity of the Holy Spirit is similarly to be explained in terms of its dissimilarity to created being:

> It is enough to know that the Spirit is not a creature, nor is he numbered with the things that are made. For nothing foreign is mixed with the Triad; it is indivisible and consistent [like itself, ὁμοία ἑαυτῇ]. These things are sufficient for the faithful. Thus far human knowledge goes. Here the cherubim spread the covering of their wings. He who seeks and would inquire into what lies beyond these things disobeys him who said: "Be not wise in many things, lest thou be confounded."[60]

As this quotation makes clear, Athanasius's apophaticism is consciously based on the distance between God and creation. But it is an apophaticism that not only accommodates but necessitates positive statements about God. The unlikeness of God to creatures itself leads to positive statements about God's being, and about the relationships of Father, Son, and Spirit within God. And so Athanasius applies this unlikeness to the Son and the Spirit in order to substantiate and explain the positive statements to the effect that Son and Spirit are proper to and inseparable from the divine essence. These positive statements about the divinity of the Son and Spirit are thus also apophatic

statements insofar as they differentiate Son and Spirit from the created order. They are primarily negations of creatureliness as applied to Son and Spirit. And yet if such apophatic statements do carry a positive content, it is precisely because Athanasius's conception of the relation between God and creation is such that the unlikeness between the two orders is itself conceived not in absolutely negative terms but also in terms of positive relation. We now turn to a consideration of this point.

The unlikeness between God and creation

The unlikeness of the Son and Spirit to creation is sometimes explicated by Athanasius in terms of ontological attributes. For example, he makes the argument that whereas all created things are assigned a place, the Son and Spirit are spoken of in the scriptures as transcending spatial limitation and are thus not creatures but God.[61] Much more often, however, the kind of unlikeness that is referred to is not a general attribute of being but the asymmetrical relation of the Creator to what is created. This is so pervasive a maneuver in Athanasius that it is very easy to miss the significance of it. This significance has to do with the fact that Athanasius thus puts aside, in large part, the traditional philosophical opposition between the ontological attributes of the divine and the mundane. Within such a framework, the attributes of the divine are not explicitly brought into direct relation with those of the mundane realm. To say that the divine is ubiquitous or atemporal or utterly simple is not to posit any direct connection between it and what is compound and spatially and temporally limited. Athanasius is capable of distinguishing God and creation within such a framework. But, as we have said, his most characteristic way is to posit the opposition between God and creation with specific reference to the act (and the relation) of creating.

We find therefore that his most characteristic and repeated argument for the divinity of the Son is that the scriptures speak of the creative activity of the Son, and if the Son is Creator he cannot be created:

> For in Wisdom all things were made, as David says in the Psalm, "In Wisdom you have made them all" [104:24] and Solomon says, "By Wisdom, the Lord has formed the earth, and he has established the heavens with understanding" [Prov. 3:19]. This Wisdom is the word. As John says, by him "all things were made," and "without him nothing was made" [Jn. 1:3]. And this

> Word is Christ; for "there is One God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we for him; and One Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him." And if all things are through him, He himself is not to be considered among that "all."[62]

This last statement is a constantly reiterated motif throughout the *Orationes contra Arianos*. The Son is not created and is completely unlike anything created, insofar as it is through him that all else was created.[63] So the essential principle is that what constitutes the kind of unlikeness from which the Son is distinguished from creation is the fact of being Creator and not simply that of being different from creation: "For if he be a creature, how is He at the same time the Creator of creatures?"[64] Against the Tropici, the structure of this argument is self-consciously preserved intact and simply transferred from reference to the Son to that of the Spirit:

> And if, because all things come into being through the Word, you think correctly that the Son is not a creature: then is it not blasphemy for you to say that the Spirit is a creature, in whom the Father, through the Word, perfects and renews all things?[65]

In both cases, then, it is precisely the active agency of Son and Spirit toward the world—their agency in bringing into being and healing and restoring created being—that constitutes the unlikeness to the created realm which proclaims each to be Creator and God.

Of course, the structure of such an argument (if Creator, then not created, and vice versa) presumes that being created and being Creator are mutually exclusive categories, between which there is no middle ground. Indeed, for Athanasius, it is precisely the opposition between created and Creator that constitutes the limit case of unlikeness: "for what is the likeness of what is out of nothing to the one who brought what was nothing into being?" (*CA* 1:21). Given this absolutely strict conception of the ontological dissimilarity between created and Creator, it is understandable that Athanasius considers as objectively meaningless and subjectively duplicitous the Arian qualification that the Son is "a creature, but not as one of the creatures." While his interpretation of the subjective intent of this statement as mere "pretence" (ὑπόκρισις) (*CA* 2:19) may be questionable, his inability to find any intelligible content in such a statement is consistent with his

own logic. He counters mockingly that every creature is in some way distinct from the other creatures, so that such distinction in no way distinguishes the Son, "For is any one of the creatures just what another one is, that you should claim this predication of the Son as some prerogative?" (*CA* 2:19). The only crucial distinction is whether the Son is a creature at all or rather simply Creator. In light of that primary and radical distinction, Athanasius often de-emphasizes the Origenian hierarchical conception of the universe in favor of a much more egalitarian view whereby the status of all created things is characterized principally by the common factor of being created, notwithstanding any distinctions within that common state.[66] Given such a perspective, it is easy to see that the Arian desire to ascribe some pre-eminent (albeit still creaturely) status to the Son struck Athanasius as simply unintelligible.

In his polemic against the Arians' imputing of creaturely status to the Son, Athanasius thus availed himself of every opportunity to emphasize the unqualified otherness of the Word with respect to creation and, in general, the otherness between Creator and creation. In such moments, he is given to asking rhetorically what "likeness" or "communion" there could be between what is created and the Creator.[67] Taken by themselves, such statements might give the erroneous impression that Athanasius's emphasis on the otherness between God and creation implies a mere opposition. However, such an interpretation does not harmonize well with what we have seen to be Athanasius's model of relating the world to God through participation in the Word. It remains for us now to further clarify what kind of otherness is conceived by Athanasius in the relation between God and the world, and how he conceives of the "unlikeness" of this relation as simultaneous with a certain likeness. As we shall see, such questions were not far afield from Athanasius's battles with the Arians on behalf of the substantial divinity of the Son.

In his principal dogmatic work against the Arians, the *Orationes contra Arianos*, probably the single most pervasive motif employed by Athanasius is his continual reiteration that the Son is "proper to" (ἴδιος) the Father, while all of creation is "external to" or "from outside" (ἐκτός, ἔξωθεν) the Father.[68] Throughout the *Orationes* and many of his other shorter polemical works,[69] Athanasius uses this distinction to drive home the identity of essence between Son and Father and to distinguish their relationship from the otherness between divine essence and created being. An analysis of these terms will thus bring us

to a properly contextual understanding of the kind of otherness that he conceives in the relation between God and creation.

We may begin our analysis with a typical passage in which these terms are used to differentiate the ontological status of the Son from that of creation:

> When was God without that which is (τοῦ ἰδίου) proper to him? Or how can someone consider that which is proper (τοῦ ἰδίου) as foreign and other in essence (ὡς περὶ ξένου καὶ ἀλλοτριοουσίου)? For other things, according to the nature of things originate, are unlike in essence (οὐδὲν ὅμοιον κατ᾽ οὐσίαν) to the Maker, but are external to him (ἔξωθεν αὐτοῦ), made by the Word at his grace and will, and thus are capable of ceasing to be, if it so pleases him who made them. For such is the nature of originate things. But as to what is proper to the Father's essence (τὸ δὲ ἴδιον τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς)—for this we have already found to be the Son—what an insolent impiety it is to say that "This comes from nothing," and that "It was not before generation," but was adventitious, and can at some time cease to be again.
>
> (*CA* 1:20; Bright, p. 21)

We see here that the Arian conception of the Son as originating from nothing is designated by Athanasius in the terminology of "externality" to God. Athanasius applies this terminology to the realm of τὰ γεν(ν)ητὰ, which is unlike in essence (ἀνόμοιον κατ᾽ οὐσίαν) to God. By contrast, the Son's lack of originateness, his eternal coexistence and identity of essence with the Father is expressed in terms of his being ἴδιον τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρός. However, we may note here also that the distinction of ἴδιος–ἔξωθεν is not articulated in terms of a contrast between τὰ γεν(ν)ητὰ and ἀγέν(ν)ητον, even though Athanasius is very much interested in pressing the point that the Son's nature is not originate. To be sure, Athanasius does not want to be vulnerable to the accusation that he is positing "two Unbegottens" in the Godhead.[70] Nevertheless he does not shy away elsewhere from insisting that the Son is not originate.[71] When it comes to articulating the contrast between God and world, however, he speaks not so much of the unlikeness of essence between the originate and the unoriginate, as of that between the originate and the Maker of what is originate (Τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἄλλα οἷά ἐστι τὰ γενητὰ, οὐδὲν ὅμοιον κατ᾽ οὐσίαν ἔχει πρὸς τὸν πεποιηκότα) (*CA* 1:15; Bright, p. 21).

Moreover the "externality" of τὰ γενητὰ is explained not as merely a negative concept, a sheer lack of relation to God, but directly in terms of their having been "made by the Word at his grace and will."

It is clear therefore that Athanasius's conception of the "unlikeness" or "externality" between God and the world is conditioned by its being posited within the framework of the positive relation of God's creative activity toward the world. This observation leads us to understand that, for Athanasius, creation's being external to or outside God is an ontological datum that is inseparable from another datum, of equal force, which is that creation subsists "in" God. Consistently, Athanasius wants to maintain simultaneously that God is both "outside" and "within" creation: "within all according to his own goodness and power, yet outside all in his proper nature."[72] Indeed, these two aspects go together for Athanasius in such a way that creations subsistence in God amounts, *eo ipso*, to a demonstration that God is "outside" creation. In the context of anti-Arian polemic, this leads to the oft-repeated argument on behalf of the divinity of the Word, which emphasizes the unlikeness of the Word to creation by way of insisting that creation subsists in and through the Word.[73]

A clarification and explanation of this simultaneity of God's being both within and outside the world and the world's being outside and in God can perhaps be found within the framework of the Athanasian notion of participation. Here it becomes clear that "within-outside" language is being used to delineate the structure of causality in the relation between God and world. As we have pointed out in our discussion of the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*, Athanasius's speaking of creations being "in and through" the Word refers implicitly to the model of participation. In his earlier apologetic work, Athanasius already tended to emphasize creation's participation in the Word as an argument on behalf of the Word's divinity, and by way of underlining a certain continuity between divine immanence in creation and the superlative instance of divine immanence in the incarnation. While the occasional reference to God's being "outside" creation may be found in the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*,[74] the dominant tendency is to emphasize creation's being "in the Word." However, in the full heat of battling the Arians' imputing of creaturely status to the Son, Athanasius has to spend much more time dwelling on the irreducible dissimilarity and externality between the world and God the Word. Yet, in the course of doing so, he does not leave behind his insistence on the world's being "in the Word." On the contrary, as we have

indicated, the logic of his framework is such that the world's being in the Word is an argument that affirms the Word's total unlikeness and externality to the world. For an appreciation of this logic we need to locate Athanasius's ἴδιος–ἔξωθεν distinction within his overarching presupposition of creation's participation in the Creator.

For Athanasius, to say that creatures are "external" to God means in fact that they participate in God.[75] Thus the same fundamental distinction of created and Creator is articulated in terms of what is external and what is proper to the divine essence and in terms of what partakes and what is partaken. In this way, Athanasius's argument that the Son is proper. to and not external to God amounts to the assertion that the Son is related to God not by participation but essentially, whereas all other creatures are related to God by participation. That what is created is related to God by participation is a tenet that the Arians also seem to have held, though, as we would expect, they are reported by Athanasius to have contended that the Son is also such by participation.[76] In any case, Athanasius takes it for granted that to say that the Son originated from nothing and had a beginning to his existence amounts to saying that he is related to God by participation (κατὰ μετουσίαν), "for that is how all other creatures subsist and by sanctification are glorified" (*CA* 1:15). In opposition to this view, Athanasius articulates his belief that the Son is ἴδιος to the Father by insisting that the Son does not gain his pre-eminent titles by participating in the Father but is rather himself participated in by creatures: "For He is himself the Father's Power and Wisdom, and by partaking of him (μετοχῇ τούτου) things originate are sanctified in the Spirit; but the Son himself is not Son by participation (οὐ μετουσίᾳ), but is the Father's proper (ἴδιος) Offspring" (*CA* 3:1).[77]

In general, then, Athanasius insists that the Son is not related to God by participation as is the rest of creation, but rather creation is related to God through participation in the Son. However, there is one significant exception where Athanasius himself breaks this rule, in *Contra Arianos* 1:15. While superficially this exception might be dismissed as merely inconsistent with his general principle,[78] it in fact serves to illumine it and to clarify what Athanasius means by participation and how the Son's relation to the Father is to be distinguished from that of the rest of creation. Athanasius's articulation of a certain distinctive participation by the Son of the Father has as its point of departure his attempt to meet the Arians on their own grounds, in their assertion of the Son's being called such by participation.

Athanasius then asks, "Of what does he partake?" It cannot be of the Spirit, since the Spirit receives (λαμβάνει) from the Son (Jn. 16:14). It must then be the Father. But we need to be clearer. Does the Son partake of the very essence of the Father or of "something external (ἔξωθέν) provided by the Father?" (*CA* 1:15). In the latter case, counters Athanasius, there would be an intervening principle in the relation between the Son and the Father:[79]

> In that case, he will not be partaker of the Father, but of what is external to him (τοῦ ἔξωθεν). Nor will he be even second after the Father, since the one that he partakes precedes him. Nor can he be called Son of the Father, but of the one that he partakes…And if this would be unseemly and impious…it follows that what is partaken is not external, but from the essence of the Father.
>
> (*CA* 1:15; Bright, p. 17)

It seems clear from this kind of reasoning that Athanasius takes the model of participation far more seriously and, as it were, realistically than his Arian opponents. While Athanasius himself represents the Arians as speaking of the Son as related, along with the rest of creation, to God's nature by participation, there are no indications that anything stronger or more specific was meant by that than a mere declaration of the derivative character of the Son.[80] Conceptually, the Arian way of speaking of the Son as having his being "by participation" does not seem to add any significant content to the assertion of his having come to be from nothing by God's will, and his having been granted certain prerogatives at God's good pleasure. Athanasius, however, represents a much more substantialist notion of participation, as is evidenced by his need to pose the question of precisely what it is that the Son participates in if he is said to participate, the critical alternatives being God's essence and "something external" to that essence.

Athanasius seems to hold that to be a partaker of God (here, the Father) means to participate in the very being of God, and not merely something external to God's essence. We may safely apply this principle even to his speaking of creation's participation in God, which he frequently does, and which he never qualifies by saying that creation participates in "something external provided by God." The externality of creation to God therefore is not to be understood in terms of its participation in something external to God. How it is to be understood

is indicated as Athanasius continues in his exposition of a certain unique sense in which the Son may properly be said to participate in the Father. In this exposi tion Athanasius seems to analyze the notion of participation into a *terminus a quo* (the "whence" of that which partakes) and a *terminus ad quem* (that which is partaken). The latter he treated first, arriving at the conclusion that "what is participated" is the very essence of the Father and not something external to it. Immediately he goes on to point out that what participates in the Father is none other than the very essence of the Son, for "if it is other than the essence of the Son, we encounter another absurdity: that there is something between what is from the Father and the essence of the Son, whatever way the latter may be conceived" (*CA* 1:15). As Athanasius himself conceives it, the special case of the Son's participation of the Father is one where there is absolutely no "gap" between that which participates and that which is participated. This is the only case where the essence of what participates God is perfectly continuous with what is participated. Thus there is nothing in the Father in which the Son does not participate, and there is nothing in the Son other than what he has by participation of the Father. In this way, Athanasius transposes the mystery of the consubstantial generation of the Son from the Father into the terminology and framework of participation. He thus brings together and correlates, in this passage, the terminology of participation, generation, and the Son's being **ἴδιος** to the Father:

> We must say that what is from the essence of the Father and proper to him **(ἴδιον αὐτοῦ)** is entirely the Son. For it is the same thing to say that God is wholly participated **(ὅλως μετέχεσθαι)** and that he begets; and what does begetting signify, except a Son? And so all things partake **(μετέχει τὰ πάντα)** of the Son himself according to the grace of the Spirit coming from him. This shows that the Son himself partakes of nothing. Rather, what is partaken from the Father is the Son **(τὸ δὲ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς μετεχόμενον, τοῦτο ἔστιν ὁ Υἱός)**. For, as partaking of the Son himself, we are said to partake of God—and this is what Peter said, "that you may be partakers in the divine nature"; as the Apostle says also: "Do you not know that you are a temple of God?" and, "We are the temple of the living God." And seeing the Son, we see the Father; for the thought and comprehension of the Son is knowledge about the Father,

> because He is his proper offspring from his essence (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας αὐτοῦ ἴδιον εἶναι γέννημα).
>
> (*CA* 1:16; Bright, p. 17)[81]

As always, Athanasius's exposition of the relation between the Son and the Father is closely tied up with that between the world and God. First, the Son's relation to the Father is distinguished from creation's participation in God. In the course of elaborating this distinction, Athanasius finds himself casting the unique generation of the Son from the Father in terms of participation. However, the crucial distinction between creaturely participation in God and the Son's participation in the Father is maintained by the assertion that the Son's very essence is the total participation of the Father. This cannot be said for any creature; Athanasius will insist that even when our participation in God amounts to the grace of deification, we are still "by essence" something other than that gift.[82] It is precisely with reference to this notion that we can understand how it is that that creation is "external" to God. At this point, we must apply the methodological principle that Athanasius's categories are fully intelligible only in the context of their mutual correlation. Therefore, creation's externality to God is to be understood principally in contradistinction to the "proper" relation of the Son to the Father, whereby the Son's total reception of the Father's being is identical with the Son's being, and is not something "added" to it. Whereas what is received by creation through its participation in God is not identical with its being, but rather constitutes an "addition" "from outside." In the logic of Athanasius, there is always some kind of ontological but objectively unidentifiable "remainder point" that represents a gap between creaturely essence and its participation in God. This "remainder point" is not to be conceived as a part of creaturely being that does not participate in God, so much as a *terminus a quo*, from which creaturely being participates in God. Given Athanasius's typical description of creaturely being in terms of what comes to be from nothing and participates in God, we may well conclude that the *terminus a quo* of creation's participation in God is precisely identifiable with its origin from nothing. So we can say, ultimately, that creation is external to God in the sense that it participates in God from nothing; or, to say it another way, creaturely being is essentially a movement from nothing to God. And it is this "from nothing" which renders creation's participation in God external to the divine essence.

However, Athanasius not only distinguishes and differentiates the Son's participation of the Father from that of the rest of creation, he also typically sets up a positive relation between the two kinds of participation. The progress of his argument in the passage just quoted is indicative of the rationale behind his linking of the two sets of relations, that between Son and Father, and that between world and God. For immediately after establishing that the Son's participation of the Father constitutes an identity of essence, he goes on to establish a kind of chain of participation in which our participation of the Son amounts to a participation of the Father: "for as partaking of the Son himself, we are said to partake of God…And seeing the Son, we see the Father" (*CA* 1:16).[83] Thus the logic of the Son's substantial identity of the Father is employed at once at the service of creation's access to the Father. We shall see that there is a way in which, for Athanasius, the immediacy of essence between the Son and the Father is strictly connected with the immediacy in the relation between God and the world. Indeed, the question of mediation and immediacy between God and the world was an explicit factor in the Arian controversy as opposing sides conceived distinctive models and rationales for the kind of mediation wrought by the Word in relation to the world. We now turn to Athanasius's criticisms of the Arian models of mediation and his own understanding of how God is immediately related to the world through the Word.

Word and world: mediation and immediacy

Athanasius is often prone to reducing the Arian position to the assertion that the Word is merely a creature and essentially no different from any other creature. The effect of his rhetoric is such that even contemporary scholars, who are inclined to give a more positive reading of Arian theology, fall into the trap of seeing the Arian Word as a creature like other creatures.[84] However, although Athanasius's interpretation of the Arian position was based on the principle that logically it is reducible to such an assumption, he was well aware that the Arians themselves did not accept that reduction so strictly but tried to qualify it. While Arius did, in fact, assert that the Son was a creature, it is equally evident that he qualified this assertion by adding, "but not as one of the other creatures."[85] Indeed, it seems that as much as Arius was concerned to differentiate ontologically the relative status of the Son

and the Father, he was no less concerned to differentiate also the relative status of the Son and creation:

> The Son is one among others. For He is first of things originate, and one among intellectual natures. And as with visible things, the sun is one among phenomena, and shines on the whole world according to the command of its Maker, so the Son, as one of the intellectual natures, also enlightens and shines upon all that are in the intellectual world.
>
> (*De Synodis* 19)[86]

Part of the distinction of the Son in Arian theology seems to have been the attribution to him of a mediating demiurgic activity. The Only-Begotten Son is the one "through whom [the Father] has made both the ages and the universe" (*De Synodis* 16).[87] The force of this distinction was that only the Son was created directly by God, while the rest of creation was created indirectly, through the Son: "The Father alone fashioned with his own hand only the Son, and all other things were brought to be by the Son as by an underworker" (*De Decretis* 7). Within this scheme, the relation between God and creation can be articulated in terms of a strictly graded hierarchy of participation. Athanasius represents the Arian response to the charge that the Son "in no way differs from others with respect to nature," by having them say, "In this respect we do consider that the Son of God has a prerogative over others and is called Only-Begotten: because he alone partakes the Father, and all other things partake the Son" (*De Decretis* 9).[88] On the one hand, the Arian practice of imputing to the Son a uniquely direct access to the Father and a creative function with respect to the rest of creation is meant to provide some content to the distinction of the Son from the rest of creation. In the polemical context of the controversy, such assertions have the defensive function of proving that the Son is "honored" above the rest of creation, even if He is not conceded to be equal to the Father. On the other hand, at least in the hands of Arius's supporter, Asterius,[89] the attribution of this kind of mediation to the Son included a conception of the relation between the world and God in which a Mediator performed the necessary function of shielding the world from the direct hand of God, with the understanding that without this factor of "in-directness" the relation between God and the world is not possible. According to Athanasius, the Arians believed that "the other creatures could not endure to be fashioned by the absolute Hand

of the Unoriginate, and therefore only the Son was brought into being by the Father alone, and other things by the Son as an underworker and assistant" (*De Decretis* 8).[90]

As we have already had occasion to observe, Athanasius's most fundamental response to these conceptions of the Son's mediatorial prerogatives is that they amount to a nonsensical confusion of the fundamental and mutually exclusive categories of Creator and created. If the Son is created, then he cannot be conceived, in any sense, as Creator; if he is conceded to be Creator, then he is not created. That is the basic standard of argument against which Athanasius finds the Arians to be both illogical and duplicitous. However, in the course of countering specific assertions, Athanasius ends up elaborating his own version of the kind of immediacy, the kind of mediation, and the kind of otherness that does really obtain between God and the world, and this elaboration is strictly connected to the statement of the Son's full divinity. We may now follow this Athanasian elaboration, analyzing first his rejection of the Arian notion of mediation and then his own articulation of the Son's fully divine mediation.

Athanasius seizes upon the Arian notion that there was need of a mediator because creation could not withstand the direct hand of God. Logically, he makes short work of this notion by a quite forceful argument that it leads to an infinite regress. If creation requires a mediator to withstand the direct hand of God, and if this mediator is itself created, then precisely *qua* created, it must also stand in need of a further mediation. The logic of this notion of a necessary created mediation between Creator and creation is analyzed by Athanasius to lead inexorably to "a great throng of accumulating mediators; and so it will be impossible for the creation to subsist. It would always be in need of a mediator, which would not come into being without another mediator. For all of them will be of that originate nature which cannot endure to be made directly by God alone, as you say" (*CA* 2:26).[91] However, as much as Athanasius mocks this Arian notion, it has at least one significant point of overlap with his own conception of the relation between God and creation, namely, the abyss of otherness between God and creation. We have already seen in the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione* Athanasius's emphatic employment of the motif of creation's incapacity to know God by virtue of the natural difference between creation and the Creator. Indeed, there is a sense in which Athanasius himself also holds that creation, in virtue of its very createdness, cannot withstand the immediate hand of God. However,

we have also already seen in the same earlier treatise that it is axiomatic for Athanasius that the gulf between creation and God is bridged from the side of the divine and not from that of creation. It belongs to Athanasius's exposition of the doctrine of God to ascribe to God himself this accommodation to creaturely weakness. It is precisely the Arian positing of this accommodation outside of God that offends against Athanasius's conception of the doctrine of God.

It is interesting to see how the Alexandrian bishop represents the Arian notion of mediation in reference to the doctrine of God. For Athanasius, it seems to offend particularly in implying either weakness or pride in God. With regard to the former, Athanasius ascribes to divine power the capacity to make and direct all things directly and without aid, "for God does not grow weary by commanding, nor is his strength unequal to the making of all things, that He should alone create the only Son, and need his ministry and help for the fashioning of the rest" (*CA* 2:24). In this remark we see Athanasius's complete rejection of the notion that God could stand in need of any creaturely assistance.[92] On the other hand, the bishop also wants to reject any conception of divine transcendence which places God morally "above" direct involvement with creation. His description of this as implying divine "pride" shows how much the biblical understanding of God's characteristics has, in Athanasius, supplanted a merely philosophical notion of divine transcendence in terms of a self-absorption that does not deign to become involved in lesser realities:

> And if God made the Son alone, because he did not deign to make the rest, but committed them to the Son as an assistant, it is this that would be unworthy of God! For in him there is no pride… If it is not unworthy of God to exercise his providence, even down to things so small as a hair of the head, and a sparrow, and the grass of the field [cf. Mt. 10:29, 6:25–30], then it was not unworthy of him to make them in the first place. For He is Maker through his proper Word of all those things that are the objects of his providence.
>
> (*CA* 2:25)[93]

At the same time, Athanasius is so far conscious of sharing the Arian conception of the need for a bridge between the created and uncreated realms that he allows himself to use the same language of creation's innate incapacity to withstand the "untempered" **(ἄκρατον)** hand of

God. He also agrees that this bridge is to be located in the Son. However, the decisive difference is that for Athanasius this bridge cannot be conceived as coming from anywhere outside God, but rather in terms of divine love and condescension. Thus if the Son admittedly does mediate between creation's incapacity to know God and the splendor of the Father, it is precisely in virtue of his full divinity, his unlikeness to creation, and his representation of the condescending divine love:

> For it is evident to all, that neither with reference to himself as being a creature, nor as having any connection according to essence with the whole creation, has he been called 'Firstborn' of it. Rather, it is because the Word, when at the beginning He fashioned the creatures, condescended (συγκαταβέβηκε) to things originate, that it might be possible for them to come to be. For they could not have endured his nature, which was untempered splendour, even that of the Father, unless condescending by the Father's love for humanity, he had supported them and taken hold of them and brought them into existence; and next, because by this condescension of the Word, the creation too is made a son through him, that he might be in all respects 'Firstborn' of it, as has been said, both in creating, and also in being brought for the sake of all into this very world.
>
> (*CA* 2:64; Bright, p. 134)

In this passage we see some integration between the Athanasian notion of the Word's mediation and his Trinitarian theology. We have already seen that, for Athanasius, mediation—in the sense of a bridging of the abyss between creation and the Creator—cannot be conceived in terms of a function performed by any created nature, however exalted, but only in reference to the condescension of the divine love. In this passage, Athanasius speaks of the Son's condescension toward creation, but this condescension is a manifestation of the Father's love: φιλανθρωπία πατρικῇ συγκαταβάς. The fact that mediation takes place wholly through divine condescension thus means that the Son's mediation toward creatures represents and effects the immediate presence of the Father, through the Son's own substantial identity with the Father. Athanasius is concerned to stress that his conception of the Son's mediatorial activity, as opposed to that of the Arians, entails this immediacy of the Father's presence and activity to creation:

> And the Word is not separate from the Father, nor unlike and foreign to the Father's essence. Therefore, whatever he works, those are the Father's works, and his framing of all things is one with the Father's; and what the Son gives, that is the Father's gift. And he who has seen the Son knows that, in seeing him, he has seen not an Angel, nor one merely greater than Angels, nor in short any creature, but the Father himself. And he who hears the Word knows that he hears the Father; as he who is irradiated by the radiance knows that he is enlightened by the sun.
>
> (*CA* 3:14)[94]

The logic which links the Son's mediation with the immediacy of the Father's presence and activity in the world is also employed in Athanasius's exposition of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Here too the principle is reiterated that nothing external to God can join creation to God. If the Spirit is described, in the scriptures, as fulfilling precisely that function, then the Spirit must be fully divine. Moreover, if the Spirit belongs to the Son, then it cannot be connected to the Son through any other principle which is itself not intrinsic to divine being. In this case also, we would have an infinite regress in trying to posit any creaturely principle as connecting to God what is external to God. If the Spirit is thus portrayed in scripture as "belonging" to the Son and as connecting creation to God, and as rendering present the Son's activity, then the Spirit must also be God:

> In [the Spirit] the Word makes glorious the creation, and, by bestowing upon it divine life and sonship, draws it to the Father. *But that which joins creation to the Lord cannot belong to the creatures* [my emphasis]; and that which bestows sonship upon the creation could not be alien from the Son. For we should have otherwise to seek another spirit, so that by him this Spirit might be joined to the Word. But that would be absurd. The Spirit, therefore, does not belong to things originated; he pertains to the Godhead of the Father, and in him the Word makes things originated divine.[95]

Thus, for Athanasius, both the Son and the Spirit mediate between or connect the world and God. But this mediating function is consistent with their fully divine status and, in fact, serves to distinguish them from created natures. As such, this mediating and connecting function

is precisely evidence of their "otherness" to creation. At the same time, in either case we have to do with an immediacy of the whole divine Trinity to creation. This immediacy may also be cast in the framework of participation. In partaking of the Spirit, we partake of the Son, and in partaking of the Son, we partake of the Father. This model of immediate participation in the whole Trinity through the mediation of Son and Spirit stands self-consciously in contrast to the model of "exclusive" hierarchic participation, in which creation partakes only in the Son, while only the Son partakes the Father.[96] Moreover, the world's immediate participation in the whole Trinity means a certain real correspondence between the being of the world and that of God: an "agreement by participation."[97] While this correspondence is strongly differentiated from substantial continuity, as well as from the Platonic structures of a "chain" of mediating beings, it nevertheless represents an analogical similarity between God and the world. The persevering difference of natures between God and world has to do precisely with the asymmetrical structure of this very similarity. The "agreement by participation" is a matter of creation partaking and of God as being partaken. The asymmetry is thus conceived in terms of total dependence and derivation, which makes for a real "likeness," rather than mere otherness.

To say this is to arrive at another fundamental point where the Athanasian conception of otherness differs from that of the Arians. For Athanasius, the Arian position that the world came to be "through the Word," insofar as it distinguishes this demiurgic Word from the inner being of God, breaks the "agreement" or analogical correspondence between God and world. What is left is a Word without a world (that carries an analogical resemblance of him), and a world without (an ontological-analogical correspondence to) the Word. Thus Athanasius contends that the Arians have invented for themselves a God without any "works," distinct from the biblical God who is immediately present to and evident from his works.[98] Significantly for our theme, Athanasius likens the Arians in this respect to the Manichees,[99] for whom the separation between God and the world was such that the true God was not the Creator of this world:

> For these also confess the existence of a good God, so far as the mere name goes, but they are unable to point out any of his works either visible or invisible. But inasmuch as they deny him who is truly and indeed God, the Maker of heaven and earth, and

> of all things invisible, they are mere inventors of fables. And this appears to me to be the case with these evil-minded men [i.e. the Arians]. They see the works of the true Word who alone is in the Father, and yet they deny him, and make to themselves another Word, whose existence they are unable to prove either by his works or by the testimony of others (ὃν οὔτε ἐξ ἔργων οὔτε ἐξ ἀκοῆς ἀποδεικνύειν δύνανται).[100]

Of course, we might, in the interest of fairness, point out that it is not true that the Arians would not be able "to point out any of [God's] works." They could consistently point to the whole creation as "God's work," brought into being from nothing through God's will. But Athanasius's point, while superficially distorting the Arian position, does have undeniable force: the Arians cannot "prove" their Word by his works because they do not conceive of the world (the works) as affording any analogical demonstration of God. Since they posit an ontological hiatus between the Word "through whom" creation came to be and the Word who is an immanent power in God, the analogical link between God's external work and his inner being is thus lost. And thus lost, also, according to Athanasius, would be the face of God in the world. It is partly in the interest of maintaining this correspondence by which the world offers a positive demonstration of God that the issue of the relation between God's being and God's work is crucial for Athanasius. Most urgently, however, he saw the relation between theology and economy as an issue that bore directly on the question of the divinity of the Son. We now turn to his conception of the relation between theology and economy, as it was elaborated in the antiArian polemic on behalf of the Son's divinity.

Theology and economy: the Word in God's being and work

Of course, we hardly need to point out that the question of the relation between God's being and work is fairly directly a question of the relation between God and the world. Perhaps the most significant piece of historical background with reference to this issue is Origen's view that God's being eternally almighty necessitates an eternal creation upon which God can exercise this eternal power.[101] In this way we have in Origen a quite direct correspondence between God's being and God's work to the point of threatening to posit a necessary continuity

or correlation between God and the world. The necessity of such continuity was seen to be a threat by Methodius of Olympus, who severely criticized Origen on this point.[102] In Arius, on the other hand, the discontinuity between God and the world is a matter of emphatic concern. In fact, we have seen that for Athanasius the Arian dissociation between God's being and the creation of the world threatens to result in a breakdown of the ontologically analogical relation between God and the world. For him, the source of this danger was precisely in the Arians' failure to acknowledge the Son, whom they concede to be Creator in some sense, as fully intrinsic to the reality of divine being. Thus in his effort to search out and expose every way in which the Arian doctrine distorts what he believes to be the authentic Christian revelation of God, one of the points that Athanasius dwells upon is that the Arians' refusal to attribute full divinity to the Son results in a dissociation of God's creative activity from his being, which impairs the doctrine of God as well as the doctrine of creation. As Athanasius sees it, this dissociation violates the sense of God's perfection and even leads to the notion that creation somehow adds to God's being. On the other hand, it is only by imputing a certain continuity within God of God's being and his creative activity that the proper conception is achieved of the precedence of God's being in relation to his external productions. Having thus anticipated our analysis of the import of Athanasius's statements in this regard, we must now let him speak for himself and trace the concrete outlines of his argument.

We should note first of all that Athanasius's argument on behalf of the divinity of the Son by way of demonstrating that God's creative activity is internal to his being is meant to issue in a conclusion that the Arians themselves did not and would not want to hold. This conclusion is that if the Son is not fully divine then God is not really Maker or Creator.[103] Of course, Athanasius is aware that the Arians would not agree to this conclusion, But he pursues it precisely as a demonstration of the error of the Arians, in that their doctrine follows a logic that inexorably leads to that conclusion. In the course of his argument, we gain a fuller appreciation of the fact that the way in which Athanasius conceived of God as Creator is quite different from that of his opponents. He writes:

> If God is Maker and Creator, and creates the things that are made through the Son, and we cannot conceive of the things which

> come to be, except as being through the Word, is it not a blasphemy, God being Maker, to say that his framing Word and Wisdom once was not? It is the same as saying that God is not Maker, if he did not have his proper Framing Word which is from him (οὐκ ἔχων ἴδιον ἐξ αὐτοῦ δημιουργικὸν Λόγον), and if that by which he frames accrues to him from outside (ἔξωθεν), and is alien (ξένος) from him and unlike in essence (ἀνόμοιος κατ᾽ οὐσίαν).
>
> (*CA* 1:17; Bright, p. 18)

Essentially, Athanasius's argument is that if God's creative activity (located in the Son) is conceived as external to God's being, then God cannot be truly said to be Creator. If the Arians insisted that God is Creator, notwithstanding the creaturely status of the Son, that was because they did not subscribe to the kind of logic presented here by Athanasius, in which God's being Creator entails affirming God's creative activity as internal to his being. At this point, we can subscribe to the description of the divergence between the two outlooks in terms of a substantialist versus a voluntarist logic.[104] For the Arians, all that is needed to justify calling God "Creator" is to affirm that God willed the creation to come to be. For Athanasius, however, this willing must be conceived as related to and enfolded within God's being. We can almost encapsulate the Arian position in the statement: "God creates"; and the Athanasian, in the statement that "God is Creator." With regard to the theme of the relation between God and the world, the Arian position would be simply that God relates to the world by his will. Athanasius, in contrast, seems to want to press toward a conception in which God's relation to the world is somehow intrinsic to God's being.

Of course, everything depends on the content of this "somehow." Origen's specter lurks in the background here, and it seems at least quite possible that Athanasius's arguments were reduced by his opponents to the Origenist position on the necessity of an eternal creation. Athanasius defends himself against the accusation that his position leads to an Origenist conclusion in the course of his *Orationes contra Arianos,* and it is surely most likely that he is replying to arguments actually brought forward, and not embarrassing himself with objections that no one else had thought up. The objection is that his argument for the substantial "internality" of God's creative activity leads inexorably to positing the necessity of an eternal creation:

> But, look, they say: If God is always Maker, and the power of framing did not come to him (οὐκ ἐπιγέγονεν αὐτῷ), then must we not also say that, because he is the fashioner of all things, therefore his works also are eternal, and is it wicked to say of them too, that they were not before they came to be?
>
> (*CA* 1:29; Bright, p. 30)

Confronted with this significant objection, Athanasius has to qualify and further illuminate the complex logic of his position. The first thing he does is to reiterate the fundamental discontinuity between God and the world; or, more specifically, between God the Son and the world as God's work. Within this discontinuity, Athanasius is conscious that a discontinuity of some kind is also retained between God as Father of the Word and God as Maker of the world. Characteristically, he defends himself on all these points by rhetorically moving to the offense: "These Arians are senseless. For what likeness is there between the Son and a work, that they should compare a father's with a maker's function?" (*CA* 1:29). In this context, the pervasive motif of the contrast between the Son as ἴδιος to the Father and creation as external to God is again recalled: "Let us repeat then, that a work is external to the Maker (ἔξωθεν τοῦ ποιοῦντος), but a son is the proper offspring of the essence (ἴδιον τῆς οὐσίας γέννημά)" (ibid.). Athanasius then further specifies that a work (τὸ ποίημα) does not exist by necessity, since it is contingent on the will (βουλήσει) of its Maker, whereas "an offspring is not subject to will, but is proper to the essence" τῆς οὐσίας ἐστὶν ἰδιότης) (ibid.). On the other hand—and this is the key move whereby Athanasius differentiates himself from Origen—the bishop insists that the status of God as Maker is not itself contingent on the actual existence of what he has made, for "a man may be, and may be called Maker, though the works do not yet exist; but he cannot be called a father, nor can he be, unless there is a son" (ibid.). The crucial distinction is that "father" necessarily connotes an actual relation by which God's very being is constituted and described, whereas "maker" only necessarily connotes a potency inherent in the agent. Thus "Maker," as applied to God, refers primarily merely to the "power to make" (δυνάμενος ποιεῖν). Joining this clarification with Athanasius's previous arguments, we can thus represent his logic by saying that God is always Maker in the sense that the "power to make" is always intrinsic to his being, inasmuch as the Son is inseparable from and not external to the being of the Father. For Athanasius, the Son's

being actually Maker entails that the potentiality, or "power to make," resides in the Son's being and, thus, the intrinsic presence of Son to Father entails that this "power to make" is intrinsic to the divine being, through the relation of Father-Son. Thus the necessity of the Son's being "in" the Father, correlated to the statement that God is always and "from within" the Maker, does not translate into the necessity for an eternal creation. On the contrary, creation is necessarily non-eternal since, by definition, it has come to be from nothing and thus non-eternity is essential to its definition: "although God always had the power to make, yet the things originated did not have the power of being eternal" (ibid.).[105] The essence of the argument, therefore, is that an adequate conception of God's perfection requires the affirmation that God's being Maker is "from within": not in the sense that his work is eternally correlative to his being, but rather in the sense that his power to work (which is substantially shared with the Son) is eternal and continuous with his being:

> For creatures not to exist does not lessen the Maker; for he has the power of framing them whenever He wills. But for the offspring not to be always with the Father does lessen the perfection of the Father's essence. Thus his works were framed when He willed, through his Word; but the Son is ever the proper offspring of the Father's essence.
>
> (*CA* 1:29)

We are now in a position to grasp the fundamental point of convergence between Athanasius's Trinitarian theology and his conception of the relation between God and the world. This is that the relation between God and the world is both contained in and superseded by the relation between the Father and the Son.[106] A correct understanding of the Athanasian position is one that takes note simultaneously of both these elements: on the one hand, the containment and continuity and, on the other, the precedence, both chronologically and ontologically, of the intra-divine relation over the relation *ad extra*. As to the first point, the continuity is based on the understanding that the world is created and subsists "in" the Son through participation.[107] On the other hand, part of the point in affirming that the Son is substantially in the Father is to declare that the Father's relationship to the world (through the Son) does not "over-extend" his own being, as something added to it from without, as if the

Father "does not have that in and through which He makes all things" (*CA* 2:2). We can see, therefore, that for Athanasius, part of the point, and perhaps the most important part, of affirming the continuity between the Father—Son and the God—world relations is precisely to safeguard the precedence of the former. It is a statement, ultimately, of God's perfection to insist that that whereby God is related to the world belongs, first of all, to God's very essence. If we speak of God's relation to the world comprehensively in terms of God's creative activity, then it is a statement of God's perfection to assert that this creative activity is fulfilled primarily and ultimately within God's very being and not outside it, *ad extra*.[108] By inserting this principle as a middle term, the very fact of God's external creative activity is an argument on behalf of the Trinitarian being of God, conceived as an intra-divine creativity or "fruitfulness":

> For if the Divine Essence is not fruitful itself but barren, as they hold, like a light that does not lighten, and a dry fountain, are they not ashamed to speak of his possessing framing energy? And while they deny what is by nature, do they not blush to place before it what is by will? But if He frames things that are external to him (τὰ ἐκτὸς) and did not exist before, by willing them to be, and thus becomes their Maker, much more will he first be Father of an Offspring from his proper Essence (πολλῷ πρότερον εἴη ἂν πατὴρ γεννήματος ἐκ τῆς ἰδίας οὐσίας).
>
> (*CA* 2:2; Bright, pp. 69–70)

It is in this context that Athanasius articulates his conception of the priority of being over will. But it would be a mistake to consider this principle as an abstract philosophical premise. Primarily, its reference is to the priority of "theology" over "economy," the priority of God's being over God's external acts. It is also important to emphasize that it is the external productions that are considered to be secondary to God's being, not God's will as such. Athanasius is not saying simply that God's will is secondary to God's being—which would be to introduce distinction of rank within the Godhead, something that he is always vigilant against. The point of distinction does not refer so much to the *terminus a quo* (i.e., the divine agency) as it does to the *terminus ad quem* (the external effects of that agency). So it is not God's will that is secondary to God's being, but what comes to be through God's will is secondary to what eternally exists as constitutive of the divine being.

The priority of being over will is thus ultimately a reformulation of the priority of the Word over the world:

> For if they attribute to God the willing about things which are not, why do they not recognize that in God which lies above the will? Now it is something surpassing what is by will that he should be by nature, and should be Father of his proper Word. If then that which comes first, which is according to nature, did not exist, as they foolishly hold, how could that which is second come to be, which is according to will? For the Word is first, and then the creation.
>
> (*CA* 2:2)[109]

As far as the *terminus a quo* is concerned, God's will considered in its source, it is inseparable from God's being; it is an essential (ἐνούσιος) will. The Son is identified with this essential will, as the intra-divine ground for what eventually comes to be as the external effects of God's will, "for the Word of God is Framer and Maker, and He is the Will (βουλή) of the Father" (*CA* 2:2). It is by virtue of this essential will that God is essentially "Maker" or "Creator" regardless of whether creation exists or not, inasmuch as, in the Son, He has the power to create as internal to his being—and not as a mere unfulfilled potency, but as something that is fulfilled precisely in the generation of the Son. The priority of theology over economy, in Athanasian terms, is thus the priority of divine generation over creation. But, as is characteristic of Athanasius's conception of the relation between God and creation, we are not here dealing with simply two juxtaposed and discrete realms—generation and creation—of which one is "ontologically superior" to the other. Rather, the priority of the divine realm itself constitutes a positive subsequent relation with creation. Generation is prior to creation, not simply as "better" or "before," but as its ultimate ground:

> On the contrary the Word exists, whatever they contend, those impious ones. For through him creation came to be, and God, as being Maker, clearly also has his framing Word, not external but proper to him (οὐκ ἔξωθεν, ἀλλ᾽ ἴδιον ἑαυτοῦ). For this must be repeated: If He has the will (το βούλεσθαι), and his will is effective for making (τὸ βούλημα αὐτοῦ ποιητικόν ἐστι), and sufficient for the subsistence of the things that come to be, and his Word is Maker and Framer (ποιητικὸς καὶ δημιουργός), that

> Word must surely be the living Will of the Father and an essential energy and a true Word (ἡ τοῦ Πατρὸς ζῶσα βουλὴ καὶ ἐνούσιος ἐνέργεια καὶ Λόγος ἀληθινὸς), in whom all things both subsist and are excellently governed. No one can even doubt, that he who disposes is prior to the disposition and the things disposed. And thus, as I said, God's creating is second to his begetting (δεύτερόν ἐστι . . . τὸ δημιουργεῖν τοῦ γεννᾶν τὸν Θεόν); for Son implies something proper to him (ἴδιον) and truly from that blessed and everlasting essence; but what is from his will, comes into subsistence from outside (ἔξωθεν), and is framed through his proper Offspring, who is from it (δημιουργεῖται διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου καὶ ἐξ αὐτῆς γεννήματος).
>
> (*CA* 2:2; Bright, p. 70)[110]

Thus creation is second to begetting precisely as derivative of the divine begetting. To say that the divine essential act of generation grounds God's external act of creation is to say that the relation between God and creation is somehow contained or "enfolded" within the intra-divine relation of the Father and the Son. Of course, any further elaboration on such a notion would need to have recourse to highly symbolic language, of which Athanasius does in fact avail himself. He speaks of the consubstantiality of Father and Son in terms of a common "rejoicing" in which they both "delight." The Father rejoices in creation also, but he does this on account of his delight in the Son in whose image creation is made. The following passage brings to an artful recapitulation the convergence in Athanasius's view between Trinitarian theology and his understanding of the relation between God and the world. It deserves to be quoted at length:

> Hence the whole earth is filled with the knowledge of him. For the knowledge of Father through Son and of Son from Father is one and the same, and the Father delights in him, and in the same joy the Son rejoices in the Father, saying, "I was by him, daily his delight, rejoicing always before Him" [cf. Prov. 8: 30]. And this again proves that the Son is not foreign but proper to the Father's essence (μὴ εἶναι τὸν Υἱὸν ἀλλότριον, ἀλλ' ἴδιον τῆς τοῦ Πατρὸς οὐσίας). For it is not because of us that he comes into being, as those impious ones say, nor is he out of nothing (for not from outside

> (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἔξωθεν) did God find for himself a cause of rejoicing), but the words signify what is proper and like to him (ἰδίου καὶ ὁμοίου). When then was it, when the Father did not rejoice? But if he always rejoiced, then he was always in whom he rejoiced. And in whom does the Father rejoice, except as seeing himself in his own Image, which is his Word? And though he also "delighted in the sons of humanity" after finishing the world, as it is written in these same Proverbs, yet this too can be understood consistently. *For even thus He had delight, not because joy was added to him, but again on seeing the works made after his own Image; so that even this rejoicing of God is on account of his Image* (ὥστε καὶ τὸ οὕτω χαίρειν τὸν Θεὸν τῆς εἰκόνος αὐτοῦ τὴν πρόφασιν εἶναι) (my italics).
>
> (*CA* 2:82; Bright, p. 152)

On this note, which joins together the relation between Father and Son and the relation between God and the world in terms of delight, we may conclude our analysis of Athanasius's conception of the ontological relation between God and world in the context of his anti-Arian polemic. The notion of God's delight in the world as derivative of the Father's delight in the Son serves to underscore our argument that the radical opposition between God and world in Athanasius is not merely a negative relation of "otherness." We have sought to show that the otherness between God and world is conditioned in Athanasius by being understood within the positive, if asymmetrical, relation of God's creative activity. We have identified the structure of this positive relation in terms of participation. We have also tried to show that Athanasius understands the relation between God and creation as taking place primarily in and through God. This is to be understood both in the sense of ruling out any creaturely mediation by which God and world are connected, and in the sense of positing the relation of Father to Son as superseding and "containing" the relation between God and the world. In this way, the immediacy of relation between Father and Son makes the Son's mediation one that effects an immediate access for creatures to divine participation, even if that participation continues to be distinct from the consubstantial participation of the Father and the Son. If all this is true in the context of creation, it is so *a fortiori* in the context of redemption. Indeed, the two contexts are inseparable in Athanasius, and underlying both is the principle that only God can mediate the distance between God and

creation. In the context of redemption, the argument amounts to the assertion that only God can save. We now turn to a fuller exposition of this argument.

The relation between God and creation in redemption: why only God can redeem[111]

In the *De Incarnatione* Athanasius insists that only the real Image could renew the image of God within us, which is to say that our participation in God (which constitutes our being "in the image") can only be renewed from the divine side and not reconstructed from the creaturely side.[112] If even in the original creation, the mediation of the unlikeness between divine and created natures could only be provided by God, then it is even more the case that salvation can only come from God, for the function of mediation belongs to God as Creator and certainly no less so as Savior:

> But let them listen. If the Word were a creature, He would not assume the created body to quicken it. For what help can creatures derive from a creature that itself needs salvation? But since the Word being Creator has himself made the creatures, therefore also at the consummation of the ages He put on the creature, that He as Creator might once more consecrate it, and be able to recover it. But a creature could never be saved by a creature, any more than the creatures were created by a creature, if the Word was not Creator.[113]

If even when speaking of the original creation, Athanasius downplayed a hierarchical view of the universe in favor of one in which creation is considered fundamentally equal under the common aspect of being created, so now when speaking of the need for redemption, he again considers all creation as fundamentally equal under the common aspect of requiring salvation. Beyond the radical weakness of created nature as such, all creation has been further debilitated by sin and has become equally in need of salvation. Thus no creature can, properly speaking, be a savior, for "no help will come to creatures from a creature, since all creation is in need of grace from God" (*CA* 2:41). As in the *Contra Gentes* Athanasius argued from the common interdependence and inherent neediness of all created beings to their common source of sustenance as "outside" the created sphere,[114] so

now he emphasizes that their common need for salvation can only be remedied from a source outside creation:

> And so also, when the whole creation is groaning together with us in order to be freed from the bondage of corruption, the Son is thus shown to be other than the creatures (ἄλλος τῶν κτισμάτων δείκνυται εἶναι ὁ Υἱος). For if He were a creature, He too would be one of those who groan, and would need one who should bring adoption and deliverance to him as well as to others. But if the whole creation groans together, for the sake of freedom from the bondage of corruption, whereas the Son is not one of those that groan nor one of those who need freedom, but it is he who gives sonship and freedom to all…it is clearer than the light from these considerations also that the Word of God is not a creature but by nature true and genuine Son of the Father.
>
> (*CA* 2:72; Bright, pp. 142–3)

In this way, the biblical message that Jesus is Savior translates directly for Athanasius into the inference that Jesus is God. By the same logic, the Holy Spirit is also fully divine, for if we are united to the Son through the Spirit, it cannot have been by a creature that the Son "linked us to himself and to the Father."[115] We can see that intrinsic to this kind of logic is a conception of salvation not in terms of a kind of immanent well-being, nor even principally in transactional terms as a kind of exchange between human merits and divine remittance of punishment, but rather primarily in terms of union and communion.[116] Salvation is primarily and ultimately, for Athanasius, a matter of being "joined" to God. So once again we see that a fundamental issue is that of mediation, understood precisely in terms of this "joining"; and the operative principle is that a creature cannot properly be said to join another creature to God, for only God can join creation to himself.

> For if, being a creature, he had become human, humanity would have remained just as it was, not joined to God (οὐ συναφθεὶς τῷ Θεῷ). For how is it that a work would have been joined to the Creator by a work (πῶς γὰρ ἄν, ποίημα ὢν, διὰ ποιήματος συνήπτετο τῷ κτίστῃ)? Or what help can

> have come from like to like, when one as well as the other needed it?
>
> (*CA* 2:67; Bright, p. 137)

Characteristically, Athanasius is able to cast this idea of the necessity for a wholly divine principle of salvific mediation in the framework and terminology of participation. Recast in this way, his essential point is that what possesses something by participation cannot itself grant that participation to others. The reason is that to possess something by participation is precisely to be a recipient, and not a giver, with regard to what is participated:

> And, again, if, as we have said before, the Son is not such by participation, but, while all things originated have by participation the grace of God, He is the Father's Wisdom and Word, of which all things partake, it follows that He, being the deifying and enlightening power of the Father, in which all things are deified and quickened, is not alien in essence from the Father, but coessential (ὁμοούσιος). For by partaking of him, we partake of the Father; because the Word is the Father's own (Τούτου γὰρ μεταλαμβάνοντες, τοῦ Πατρὸς μετέχομεν, διὰ τὸ τοῦ Πατρὸς εἶναι ἴδιον τὸν Λόγον). Whence, if He was himself too from participation, and had not from the Father his essential Godhead and Image, He would 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 the Giver's; and what He has received is barely sufficient for himself (Οὐ γὰρ οἷον τε τὸν ἐκ μετουσίας ἔχοντα μεταδιδόναι τῆς μεταλήψεως ἑτέροις, ὅτι μὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστιν ὃ ἔχει, ἀλλὰ τοῦ δεδωκότος, καὶ ὃ ἔλαβε, μόγις τὴν ἄρχουσαν ἑαυτῷ χάριν ἔλαβε).[117]

Admittedly, Athanasius's logic here may not be self-evident. We might wonder why it is that one cannot give what one has received. In particular, we might want to object that such a principle seems to do away with creaturely mediation of grace, which is a matter of "passing on what one has received."[118] But to press such objections is to miss the context of Athanasius's point and the fundamental framework in which it is to be interpreted. Trying to apply such objections within the

native framework of Athanasius's statement, we find ourselves to be in a parallel position to that of dealing with his apparent neglect of Christ's human soul. Indeed, the parallel is highly instructive and mutually heuristic. In both cases, we look in vain in Athanasius for any consideration of a creaturely principle of mediation between divine activity and human passivity. But in both cases, it would be at least rash to hurry to the conclusion that such a principle is denied by Athanasius or substantially incompatible with his framework. And yet the fact remains that Athanasius's focus is on the fundamental polarity of creature-Creator. If he turns his attention at all to the mediation between this polarity, it is to ascribe such mediation primarily to God, and he simply does not go on to ascribe it secondarily to anything else! And yet again, his failure to do so does not amount to a rejection of such secondary mediation, but only witnesses to the fact that such considerations do not enter his focus. Moreover, we can understand why they do not enter his focus the more we appreciate the sheer intensity of his attentiveness to the basic opposition of creature and Creator. In terms of this polarity, Athanasius is concerned fundamentally with the divine agent or source of creative and saving activity rather than with its inner-worldly mediation.

If the foregoing analysis seems rather abstract, we can try to give it a concrete application with reference to the quotation above. Athanasius says that it is not possible for one who receives by participation to grant such participation to others. If we are not very sensitive to the framework in which such a statement is cast, we could reduce this principle to the bare statement that one cannot give what one has received. But the fundamental mistake of such an interpretation is that it replaces the creature-Creator polarity which is the "horizon" of Athanasius's statement with a purely immanent horizon. Such a move in fact leads to a falsification of the original meaning of the statement. For Athanasius's meaning is not that a creature cannot give another creature what it has received, but that even within such a creaturely exchange, the overriding framework remains in which both creatures are primarily receivers and only God is ultimately the Giver. The key terms here are "primarily" and "ultimately"; and it is this primary and ultimate exchange in which only God is the Giver and all creation receptive that occupies all of Athanasius's focus. Now, even though we have just said that Athanasius does not actually mean that a creature cannot give what it has received, we can readily acknowledge that in fact Athanasius often says what amounts to precisely this that we have

denied to be his meaning. But this is no more puzzling than the fact that Athanasius uses the very argument for the interdependence (i.e. mutual help and "giving and receiving") within creation as testimony that it is all equally receptive to the divine activity.[119] And so we can conclude that even though Athanasius would readily acknowledge that creatures give and receive from each other, such giving and receiving is radically qualified by the fundamentally primary and ultimate structure of giving and receiving, which is that of creation's participation in God.

The statement that only God can redeem is therefore a primary and ultimate statement that bears reference to this fundamental structure of the radical polarity of God and creation. It means that the primary and ultimate agent of our salvation must be God; otherwise the gift of salvation does not issue from the Giver himself and thereby becomes subject to creaturely contingency. If the Son is himself a creature, even a deified creature, then whatever he passes on to us is not an immediate access to the Giver. This argument acquires greater force, the less we see the grace that is passed on as some reified stuff or as a kind of "status" passed on from the Son to us, and the more we see it in properly Athanasian terms as a participation in the Father. Because the Son is one in being with the Giver, he can truly give us this participation: "For by partaking of him, we partake of the Father, because the Word is the Fathers own."[120] Similarly, the Holy Spirit can grant us direct participation in the Godhead only because the Spirit himself belongs essentially to divine being:

> Further it is through the Spirit that we are all said to be partakers of God(**Καὶ διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος λεγόμεθα πάντες μέτοχοι τοῦ Θεοῦ**)…If the Holy Spirit were a creature, we should have no participation of God in him. If indeed we were joined to a creature, we should be strangers to the divine nature inasmuch as we did not partake therein(**ἀλλ᾽ ἢ ἄρα κτίσματι μὲν συνηπτόμεθα, ἀλλότριοι δὲ τῆς θείας φύσεως ἐγινόμεθα, ὡς κατὰ μηδὲν αὐτῆς μετέχοντες**)But, as it is, the fact of our being called partakers of Christ and partakers of God shows that the unction and seal that is in us belongs, not to the nature of things originate (**μὴ οὖσα τῆς τῶν γενητῶν φύσεως**), but to the nature of the Son who, through the Spirit who is in him, joins us (**συνάπτοντος ἡμᾶς**) to the Father.[121]

Thus, once again, the immediacy of essence between Holy Spirit, Son, and Father is the ground for the immediacy of presence between the Trinitarian God and creation.

By this point we should have gained some appreciation for Athanasius's conception of salvation in terms of an immediacy of relation between God and creation. From the one side, this immediacy can only be fulfilled if it is God himself who reunites humanity to himself, by granting it a renewed participation in himself. On the other hand, from the creaturely side, this immediacy is only ultimately fulfilled through the incarnation of the Word and the reception of the Spirit. We shall presently be dealing with the structure of this fulfillment, but for now we want only to point out how the incarnation is conceived by Athanasius in terms of immediacy.

We find Athanasius's conception of the incarnation in terms of an immediate union between God and humanity already present in the *De Incarnatione*. A decisive objection with which Athanasius deals in this apology for the incarnation is why God would not have effected our salvation merely "with a nod," without the Word having to "touch" (ἅψεσθαι) a body. Athanasius begins his response by differentiating God's interaction with creation in the act of creation itself from his interaction with it in the context of redemption. When creation did not exist, God brought it into being by a mere nod and an act of will (βουλήσεως). But having come into being, it was fitting (καλῶς) that God should redeem creation by a direct interaction with it:

> In the beginning, when nothing existed at all, only a nod and an act of will were needed for the creation of the universe. But when humanity had been made and what needed healing was not the non-existent, but what had come into being, the healer and Saviour had to come among those who had already been created to cure what existed.
>
> (*DI* 44; Thomson, p. 244)

This is actually an intriguing argument insofar as it suggests that creation's very being renders inappropriate a redemption by *fiat*, which is conceived as a redemption *ex nihilo*. In other words, God's way of redeeming creation takes seriously creation's being already in existence, and relates to it by interacting with it as something already existing, rather than simply "creating" its redemption from nothing. Already, we can see here that redemption is conceived by Athanasius

in terms of a new kind of relation between God and humanity, a new mode of interaction, rather than in terms of an act of God which "imputes" a certain status to humanity. When he tries to describe just what is new about this new relation between God and humanity, Athanasius essentially gropes for ways to articulate the notion that this relation achieves a new level of internality or immediacy, from the human point of view. In the *De Incarnatione,* he is able to articulate this kind of immediacy by speaking of it as supplanting the internality of sin in the fallen human body:

> This also must be known, that the corruption which had taken place was not outside (οὐκ ἔξωθεν) the body, but was attached to it (αὐτῷ προσεγεγόνει). And it was necessary that instead of corruption, life should cling to it (αὐτῷ προσπλακῆναι) so that, as death had been in the body, so life also would be in it (ἐν αὐτῷ). If death had been outside (ἔξωθεν) the body, life would also have had to be outside (ἔξωθεν) it. But if death was combined (συνεπλάκη) with the body and dominated it as something united to it (ὡς συνὼν αὐτῷ), it was necessary for life also to be combined (συμπλακῆναι) with the body, so that putting on life the body might cast out corruption. Otherwise, if the Word had been outside the body and not in it (ἔξω τοῦ σώματος . . . καὶ μὴ ἐν αὐτῷ), death would still have been conquered by him—since death does not overpower life—but the corruption attached to the body would have remained in the body. For this reason it was fitting that the Saviour put on a body in order that the body, being mingled with life (συμπλακέντος . . . τῇ ζωῇ) might no longer remain mortal in death, but having put on immortality, might henceforth rise up and remain immortal.
>
> (*DI 44;* Thomson, pp. 244–6)

In this way, Athanasius uses the notion of the inherence and internality, and even unity, of sin with the flesh to posit the incarnation as "internal" enough to supplant this combination. Thus the redemption worked through the incarnation is conceived in terms of the greatest possible unity or "joining" of God and humanity. Later on, in the *Orationes contra Arianos,* Athanasius's characterization remains substantially unchanged. Any mode of redemption that falls short of that most intimate and internal unity of the incarnation would be too

"external." Apart from the incarnation, "we did not have him in ourselves but outside of us (οὐκ εἴχομεν αὐτὸν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, ἀλλ' ἔξωθεν εἴχομεν); for instance, as receiving instruction from him as from a teacher. And in that case, sin would not have lost its rule over the flesh, being embedded (ἐμμένουσα) in it and not cast out of it" (*CA* 2:56; Bright, p. 125). In fact, in something of a development, Athanasius now portrays even the prelapsarian grace enjoyed by Adam in paradise as "external" compared to the model of the incarnation. The internality of the incarnation is contrasted not only with the internality of sin in the flesh but also distinguished from an "external reception" of grace, as was the condition of pre-lapsarian humanity. The incarnation thus represents a stage beyond that of original beatitude,[122] whose vulnerability was so tragically demonstrated by Adam's transgression:

> Moreover, the good reason of what he did may be seen thus: If God had merely spoken, because it was in his power, and the curse undone in this way, the power of the one who gave the word would have been revealed, but humanity would have become like Adam was before the transgression, having received grace from outside and not having it united to the body (ἔξωθεν λαβὼν τὴν χάριν καὶ μὴ συνηρμοσμένην ἔχων αὐτὴν τῷ σώματι); for such was Adam when he was placed in Paradise. In fact, perhaps humanity would have become worse, because it had learned to transgress. In those circumstances, if humanity were to be seduced again by the serpent, there would arise a new exigency for God to command and undo the curse. And thus the need would become endless, and humanity would remain guilt-ridden no less than before, as being enslaved to sin. And, always sinning, it would always be in need of pardon, and would never become free, being in itself of the flesh, and always defeated by the Law because of the weakness of the flesh.
>
> (*CA* 2:68; Bright, pp. 138–9)

In a footnote to this passage, Newman comments that "Athanasius here seems to say that Adam in a state of innocence had but an external divine assistance, not an habitual grace; this, however, is contrary to his own statements already referred to, and the general doctrine of the fathers."[123] In this comment, we have once again a misunderstanding that issues from the imposition of categories foreign to Athanasius's

thinking. As we said before, a crucial principle for the correct interpretation of Athanasius is to understand his terms in the context of their mutual correlation. When Athanasius speaks of Adam's "receiving grace from without," he is definitely not distinguishing between "external divine assistance" and "habitual grace." Rather, the specific correlation is that between the supreme instance of "internality" constituted by the unity of the Word with the body and absolutely every other model of interaction between God and humanity. The point of setting up these contrasts is that they allow Athanasius to drive home his emphasis on the sheer unparalleled immediacy that subsists in the unity of divine Word and human flesh. All along, Athanasius has emphasized the immediacy in the relation between God and creation. We have tried to show that his description of this relation in general is determined by this emphasis. Yet precisely in order to emphasize the altogether superlative immediacy obtaining in the relation of God to humanity in the incarnation, he can portray all other modes of this relation as relatively "external." A more positive explication of this preeminent immediacy represented by the incarnation is contained in Athanasius's Christological passages. But before we move to consider these, we need to set the stage by analyzing Athanasius's general characterization of the kind of relation that obtains between God and creation in the context of the incarnation.

God and creation in the incarnation: Athanasius's rhetoric of reversal

One of the more striking rhetorical maneuvers of the *Orationes contra Arianos* is Athanasius's way of reversing, or drastically modifying, his distinctive descriptions of God and creation, in the respective contexts of creation and incarnation. The paradigmatic instance of this modification is in reference to the pervasive contrast between what is "proper" (**ἴδιος**) and what is "external" (**ἐκτός, ἔξωθεν**) to God. As we have seen, in the context of creation, the structure of this motif is that creation is "external" to the Godhead while Son and Spirit are "proper" to the divine being. This contrast is so emphatically and repeatedly made that it virtually sums up Athanasius's intense awareness of the radical abyss of difference between God and the world. It is all the more striking, then, that in the context of the incarnation, we are told that the created human body of Christ is "proper to and not external to" the Word.[124] The "externality" between God and world thus is

represented as undergoing a drastic reconfiguration in the instance of the incarnation. Along the same lines, the pervasive structures of contrast between Son and "works," and between generation and creation are also reversed in this context. Whereas the Son, as proper to the Father, is to be differentiated from all works that are created "from without," nevertheless the Son consents to be "created" as a work in order to make us sons.[125] Thus, God who is our Maker by nature, and who is essentially Father of his only-begotten Son, becomes our Father by grace and Maker of the Incarnate Word.[126] While only the Son is related to God by substantial generation and we merely by creation, nevertheless we come to be "generated" by grace and the Son comes to be created for our sakes.[127] In short, Athanasius rhetorically makes the point that there is no fundamental distinction between God and creation that is not in some way modified by the incarnation, and this modification is emphatically dramatized by the rhetorical strategy of reversal of attributions.[128] This reversal basically amounts to an interchange of relations between Word and world with respect to the Father:

> God is first Creator, and then, as has been said, becomes Father of human beings, because of his Word dwelling in them. But in the case of the Word the case is reversed: God, being his Father by nature, becomes afterwards both his Creator and Maker when the Word puts on that flesh which was created and made, and becomes human. For, as human beings, receiving the Spirit of the Son, become children [of God] through him, so the Word of God, when he himself puts on the flesh of humanity, is then said both to be created and to have been made. If we are "sons" by nature, then he is by nature creature and work; but if we become "sons" by adoption and grace, then it was also when he became human in grace towards us that the Lord said, "The Lord created me."
>
> (*CA* 2:61)

This "rhetoric of reversal" in Athanasius's dramatization of the new relation between God and creation in the incarnation communicates in a quite potent way his awareness of the "newness" as well as the "goodness" of the good news of gospel. The reversal is all the more effective and powerful in that the differentiation between God and world has been expressed so strongly by the use of the very terms that

are now reversed. Nevertheless, while rhetorically what occurs is a simple reversal of attributions with respect to God and the world, Athanasius finds other ways to introduce necessary qualifications and modifications. As we just indicated, the rhetorical reversal of terms justifies itself by its sheer effect on the reader, communicating a strong sense of the new intimacy in the relation between God and the world. But without disturbing or de-emphasizing this effect, which seems to be so integral to his conception of the good news of the gospel, Athanasius is also careful, at times, to insert certain statements of qualification, with the intent of showing that this reversal does not simply do away with the irreducible difference between God and world.

It is important to see that both the reversal itself and the qualification of this reversal are simultaneous for Athanasius. In other words, the difference between God and world is both modified and maintained at the same time. The key terms by which this simultaneous modification and maintenance of difference is conceptualized in Athanasius are "by nature" **(φύσει)** and "by grace" **(χάριτι)**. We already saw in our last quotation that our becoming children of God is "by adoption and grace," whereas the Word's becoming a creature and work is due to the fact that "in grace towards us he became human." The crucial point is that this distinction between nature and grace allows Athanasius to maintain that both the original attributions of difference and the reversal of these attributions coexist. In other words, the status of human creatures in the context of redemption is that of adopted children as well as servants or works. And God's being our Father in no way reduces the relation toward us of being Lord and Master:

> It is reasonable then that when he became as we are—we being servants—He too calls the Father Lord, as we do. He did this out of love for humanity **(φιλανθρωπευόμενος)**, so that we too, being servants by nature **(κατὰ φύσιν)**, and receiving the Spirit of the Son, might have confidence to call him by grace **(τῇ χάριτι)** Father who is by nature **(φύσει)** our Lord. But as we, in calling the Lord Father, do not deny our servitude by nature **(οὐκ ἀρνούμεθα τὴν κατὰ φύσιν δουλείαν)**—for we are his works, and it is "He that has made us, and not we ourselves"—so when the Son, on taking the servant's form, says, "The Lord created me a beginning of his ways," let them not deny the eternity of his Godhead, and that "in the beginning was the

> Word," and "all things were made by him," and "in him all things were created."
>
> (*CA* 2:51; Bright, p. 120)

We see some parallel here with the passages in the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*, where the bridging of the natural difference between God and creation is attributed to God's love and grace,[129] which however does not obviate the natural difference between them. In the context of redemption, this work of bridging achieves an altogether new level of intimacy, and yet the original polarity of natural difference remains. For Athanasius, to live in this new dimension of intimate grace and to appraise it rightly is not at all a matter of "forgetting" or leaving behind the original natural difference between God and creation. Rather, paradoxical as it may seem superficially and initially, the proper conception of the realm of "grace" contains within it the awareness of this natural difference. Otherwise, what is conceived is not grace, but impious pride. In this way, Athanasius differentiates his account of our sonship in redemption from that of the Arians. Notwithstanding his teaching on deification and the rhetoric of reversing the attributions referring to God and creation, Athanasius insists that all of this has to be understood within the underlying context of the natural difference between God and creation. Insofar as they collapse this tension between what is by nature and what is by grace in strictly identifying our sonship with that of the Son, the Arians deconstruct the whole logic of grace by appropriating the gift as a claim to be equal to the Giver:

> Thus they idly babble. But in this perverseness of theirs I see nothing but irrational insolence and recklessness from the devil, since it amounts to saying after his example, "We will ascend to heaven, we will be like the Most High." For what is given to humanity by grace, they want to make equal to the Godhead of the Giver. Thus hearing that human beings are called sons, they thought themselves equal to the true Son who is by nature. And again hearing from the Saviour, "that they may be one as we are," they deceive themselves and are arrogant enough to think that they may be just as the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son; not considering the fall of their 'father the devil," which followed upon such imaginings.
>
> (*CA* 3:17)[130]

Thus Athanasius insists that the grace of sonship and deification does not collapse the difference between God and creation into a strict equality.[131] This latter statement may be misinterpreted to mean that, according to Athanasius, even within our redemption and deification, we remain less endowed with divine "stuff" than God is. However, the inequality within the redeemed relation between God and humanity is never conceived by Athanasius in such quantitative objective terms. Rather, the irreducible inequality that persists in the context of grace is typically expressed by Athanasius not so much in terms of the objective unlikeness between redeemed humanity and God, but rather in terms of the acknowledgement that our likeness to God even in deification is wrought by God and thus does not derive from ourselves. It is once again the very act by which God relates us ever more closely to himself which itself confirms and dramatizes the absolute difference between God and us. If we are to properly conceive God's relation to us as "Father," we must therefore acknowledge that this has come about through the agency of the fully divine Son and Spirit. This acknowledgement is thus simultaneously an affirmation of the essential unlikeness of Son and Spirit to us, precisely in virtue of the consideration that it is through their agency that we are brought into relation to the Father:

> But if He wills that we should call his own Father our Father, we must not on that account measure ourselves with the Son according to nature, *for it is because of the Son* [my italics] that the Father is so called by us; for since the Word bore our body and came to be in us, therefore, by reason of the Word in us, is God called our Father. For the Spirit of the Word in us names through us his own Father as ours, which is the Apostle's meaning when he says, "God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father' [Gal. 4:6]."[132]

Again, characteristically, all this can be recapitulated in terms of participation. The inequality that persists within the relation of deification is intrinsic to the very structure of that (asymmetrical) relation, and correlative with the opposition of what partakes and what is partaken. The difference is that we "receive" or "partake" of our intimacy of "being in God"; this participation, which constitutes our "being in God," is thus not continuous with our being as such but derives from his "becoming in us." While the Word's being in the

Father is strictly continuous with his own being, "our being in the Father is not ours":

> Therefore because of the grace of the Spirit which has been given to us, we come to be in him, and He in us. And through his becoming in us, and we having the Spirit, it is reasonable that, since it is the Spirit of God, we are considered to be in God and God in us. Not then as the Son is in the Father, do we also become in the Father; for the Son does not merely participate in (οὐ γὰρ . . . μετέχων) the Spirit in order to be in the Father. Nor does He receive (οὐδὲ λαμβάνων) the Spirit, but rather supplies it himself to all. And the Spirit does not unite the Word to the Father, but rather the Spirit receives from the Word. And the Son is in the Father, as his proper ἴδιος Word and radiance; but we, apart from the Spirit, are foreign and distant (ξένοι καὶ μακράν) from God, and by the participation of the Spirit we are knit into the Godhead (τῇ δὲ τοῦ Πνεύματος μετοχῇ συναπτόμεθα τῇ θεότητι) ; so that our being in the Father is not ours, but is the Spirit's, which is in us and remains in us, while by the true confession we preserve it in us.
>
> (*CA* 3:24; Bright, pp. 178–9)

To say that "our being in the Father is not ours" recapitulates the paradoxical simultaneity of proximity by grace and distance by nature within our redeemed relation with God. For a full appreciation of this paradox we cannot reduce either element in favor of the other: it is precisely our being in the Father that is not ours. Therefore, it is both ours and not ours: ours, by grace and as gift; not ours by nature, not something identical with our being. Ultimately, we are here dealing with the mystery of our "appropriation" by God. It is the Son's "ownership" of us, his taking "to himself" our humanity, that constitutes "our being in the Father" in the superlative condition of deification. And it is precisely in virtue of the fact that our being in the Father is derivative from this prior appropriation by God in Christ that it is "not ours." In order to probe further this simultaneity of God's life being ours and not ours, we need now to investigate Athanasius's rendering of that event whereby the Word made what is "not his own" to become "his own."

The redeemed relation between God and creation as a Christological problem

The reversal of attributions referring to God and world in Athanasius takes place primarily within a Christological matrix and presents itself concretely as a resolution to exegetical problems. The problem is that there are passages in scripture that indicate, in one way or another, the creatureliness of the Son, and these have to be reconciled with Athanasius's insistence that, by nature, the Son is other than creatures and proper to the Father's Godhead. The resolution of this problem, for Athanasius, is to acknowledge a "double proclamation" of the Word in the scriptures, as the divine equal of the Father and as coming into the world as a creature for our sakes. Indeed, this "double proclamation" (διπλῆν ἐπαγγελίαν) defines "the scope and character of Holy scripture" (σκοπὸς . . . καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ἁγίας γραφῆς).[133]

If recognizing this "double proclamation" is necessary for a proper interpretation of scripture, it is equally crucial for the structure and interpretation of our salvation. Our salvation, considered as a union with God to the point of our deification, could not have taken place if not for this "double proclamation":

> For humanity would not have been deified if joined to a creature, or unless the Son were true God. Nor would humanity have been drawn into the Father's presence, unless the one who had put on the body was the true Word by nature. And as we would not have been delivered from sin and the curse, unless it had been by nature human flesh which the Word put on (for we would have had nothing in common with what was foreign), so also humanity would not have been deified, unless the Word who became flesh had been by nature from the Father and true and proper to him (ἴδιος αὐτοῦ)…Therefore let those who deny that the Son is from the Father by nature and proper to his essence (ἴδιον αὐτοῦ τῆς οὐσίας) deny also that he took true human flesh of Mary Ever-Virgin. For in neither case would it have profited us human beings, if the Word had not been true Son of God by nature, or the flesh not true which he assumed.
>
> (*CA* 2:70; Bright, p. 140)

Here, salvation is again understood in terms of being "joined to God" (συναφθεὶς τῷ θεῷ), and thus the "double proclamation" in this scheme identifies Christ as himself "joined" to the Father by nature and

joined to our humanity through the true human flesh which he put on. It is by being joined to both God and humanity that Christ can effectively join us to God. It is, understandably, an important point for Athanasius to establish Christ's identity in terms of this double joining. We have seen that, by the terms of his logic, a creature cannot "join," in the profoundest sense, another creature to God, for no creature can bridge the gap between created nature and the Creator. The creature's ontological identity is unequal to this task; and it is characteristic of Athanasius's logic, which posits the primacy of being over will, to assert that a task can be executed only by an agent whose identity is correlative to that task. As "proper to the Father's essence," the Son's identity is *a priori* commensurate to the divine task of joining creation to God. However, the particular mode of this joining in the incarnation is such as to require the Son to be in fact truly joined to human nature. It is again characteristic of Athanasius's logic not simply to assert that the divine Son joined human nature to the Father, but to conceptualize and justify this assertion by inserting this joining into his conception of the identity, or subjectivity, of the Incarnate Word. That is consistent with his way of linking "works" and acts with being.

With regard to the subjectivity of the Incarnate Word, it has become commonplace among modern commentators on Athanasius to say that, according to the Egyptian bishop, the divine Word is the sole subject of all the acts of Jesus Christ and the humanity of Christ is conceived as an instrument by which the Word acts.[134] While it is indeed true that Athanasius speaks of Christ's humanity as an instrument, the interpretation of this concept within the framework of an agent—instrument model is highly misleading. It is simply not the case that Athanasius relates the divinity and humanity of Christ in terms of subjectivity and instrumentality, with the implied extrincism of this model.[135] Rather, as we have been trying to suggest, it is typical of Athanasius's logic to refer the act back to the subject in the same way that he refers will to being, and the task of redemption to One who is adequate to the task. Now, whereas the Son as Word is in some sense adequate to the task merely by virtue of his divinity, the task of divinization, according to Athanasius, requires that the Word also acquire a commonality with our human nature. The important thing to see is that this commonality is expressed by Athanasius not primarily within the framework of an agent using an instrument that is "extrinsic" to that agent, but much more fundamentally within the framework of predicating the humanity of Christ to the divine Word.

This model of predication is consistent with his fundamental emphasis on the correlation of being and acting, and, within that correlation, the primacy of the subject with respect to the act. It is only by keeping this principle in mind that we can fully appreciate the emphasis placed by Athanasius on attributing the human acts and condition of Jesus Christ to the divine Word, and thus on inserting the incarnation into the subjectivity of the Word. But we must now delineate the grounds for this interpretation in Athanasius's own writings.

In the *Orationes contra Arianos,* Athanasius's most usual explanation of the dynamics of our salvation in Christ is made precisely in terms of predication. Once again, the motif of the contrast of **ἴδιος–ἔξωθεν** is decisive. In the context of Trinitarian statements, Athanasius's insistence that the Son is "proper" (**ἴδιος**) to the Father expresses his understanding that the being of the Son is intrinsically and wholly bound up with that of the Father: "always Father, always Son." In that context, then, **ἴδιος** denotes the mutually coexistent "inter-subjectivity" of Father and Son. In the context of Christological statements, Athanasius uses this term (**ἴδιος**) to express the unity of divinity and humanity in Christ, "extending" the subjectivity of the Word in such a way that the human condition is predicated of the Word. According to this model, Athanasius can effectively say that our salvation consists in the act which makes it possible for our humanity to be predicated of the Word.[136] Such a model surely does not do away with the conception of the Word's acting "through" the body as an instrument, but it goes farther in expressing the unity of humanity and divinity by focusing on the actual attribution of the bodily state to the divine subject:

> For if the works of the Word's Godhead had not taken place through the body, humanity would not have been deified. And again, if the properties of the flesh had not been attributed to the Word, humanity would not have been thoroughly delivered from them (**εἰ τὰ ἴδια τῆς σαρκὸς οὐκ ἐλέγετο τοῦ Λόγου, οὐκ ἂν ἠλευθερώθη παντελῶς ἀπὸ τούτων ὁ ἄνθρωπος**) …But now that the Word has become human and has appropriated (**ἰδιοποιουμένου**) what pertains to the flesh, these things no longer touch the body, because of the Word who has come in it, but they are destroyed by him…Similarly, he has transferred to himself (**εἰς ἑαυτὸν μετέθηκεν**) the other affections of the body also…so that we, no longer being merely human, but as proper to the

> Word (ὡς ἴδιοι τοῦ Λόγου), may participate in eternal life…the flesh being no longer earthly, but being henceforth made Word (λογωθείσης) through God's Word who for our sake "became flesh."
>
> (*CA* 3:33; Bright, pp. 187–8)

It has sometimes been said that Athanasius conceives of the presence of the Word in the body and the union of divinity and humanity in "physical" terms.[137] We have already alluded to the problematic nature of such an interpretation. Much more intelligible, in light of the texts themselves, is to speak of a model of predication. According to this model, Athanasius speaks of the ἴδια of the flesh as being "ascribed" (ἐλέγετο) to the Word, as being "appropriated" (ἰδιοποιουμένου) by the Word and as being "transferred" (μετέθηκεν) into the active agency of the Word.[138] This means that our humanity and all humanity now has accessible to it the possibility of belonging to the subjectivity of the Word: we become "proper to the Word," and are henceforth "made Word" or "Worded."

If, admittedly, all this seems merely to confirm the standard interpretation that the divine Word is the sole subject in Christ, it should also serve to put it into its proper context. The problem with the standard interpretation is that it ignores this predication model, which reveals Athanasius's rationale in terms of the effort to include humanity within the subjectivity of the Word—or, conversely, in terms of the effort to extend the subjectivity of the Word in such a way that it encompasses the human condition. The standard interpretation tends to imply that the Word and his human instrument are extrinsic categories, as in Hanson's quip about an astronaut and his space-suit.[139] But even though an astronaut acts in and through his space-suit and uses it as an instrument, it is not intelligible to speak of the space-suit as predicated of the astronaut himself in such a way that whatever is predicated of the space-suit is also predicated of the astronaut. This example reveals the perhaps subtle but still quite radical discrepancy between such standard interpretations and what Athanasius is actually saying. In Athanasius's terms, the crucial discrepancy lies in the implied externality in such interpretations. For him, as we have seen, the transformation of the human condition is effected precisely because it becomes "not external" to the Word but belongs to his very subjectivity, so that its condition is to be predicated of the Word at every stage:

> Thus, when the flesh suffered, the Word was not external to it, and therefore the suffering is said to be his (οὐκ ἦν ἐκτὸς ταύτης ὁ Λόγος. διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ αὐτοῦ λέγεται καὶ τὸ πάθος). And when he divinely accomplished his Father's works, the flesh was not external to him (οὐκ ἦν ἔξωθεν αὐτοῦ ἡ σάρξ), but the Lord did them in the body itself…And it was fitting that the Lord, in putting on human flesh, put it on entirely with the passibilities proper to it (μετὰ τῶν ἰδίων παθῶν); so that, *as we say that the body was proper to him* (ἴδιον αὐτοῦ), *so also we may say that the passibilities of the body were proper to him alone* (οὕτω καὶ τὰ τοῦ σώματος πάθη ἴδια μόνον αὐτοῦ λέγηται), though they did not touch him according to the Godhead. If then the body had been another's, the passibilities of the body would have been attributed to that other, but if the flesh is the Word's (for "the Word became flesh"), *necessarily then the passibilities also of the flesh are attributed to him whose flesh it is* (ἀνάγκη καὶ τὰ τῆς σαρκὸς πάθη λέγεσθαι αὐτοῦ, οὗ καὶ ἡ σάρξ ἐστιν). *For this reason, it is consistent and fitting that such passibilities are ascribed not to another, but to the Lord* (οὐκ ἄλλου, ἀλλὰ τοῦ Κυρίου λέγεται τὰ τοιαῦτα πάθη); so that the grace also may be from him.
>
> (*CA* 3:32; Bright, pp. 186–7; my emphasis)

It becomes clear from this passage that it is crucial for Athanasius, from a soteriological point of view, that the human condition of Jesus Christ be "attributed" or "ascribed" to the Word. In fact, as we have just seen, Athanasius can say that our whole salvation and deification are rooted in our human condition's being "ascribed" to the Word, for that is what essentially constitutes our own being "Worded."[140] In view of this emphasis on the necessity of ascribing human properties to the Word, we must deal with another standard interpretation, which sees in Athanasius a tendency to separate the Word from the human experiences of Christ.[141] We must say, first of all, that such interpretations are seriously impaired by their lack of explicit engagement with Athanasius's own emphasis on the attribution of human qualities to the divine Word. But even notwithstanding this very significant omission, we must try to deal with the data in Athanasius on which this interpretation is usually based.

Indeed, both the evidence for this view and the omission which impairs the interpretation of that evidence can be seen already in

a single statement in the passage just quoted: "These things were so done, were so manifested, because He had a body, not in appearance, but in truth; and it became the Lord, in putting on human flesh, to put it on whole with the affections proper to it; that, as we say that the body was his own, so also we may say that the affections of the body were proper to him alone, though they did not touch him according to his Godhead." Thus, ignoring Athanasius's emphasis on the body's belonging to the Word (as ἴδιον) in such a way that the affections of the body are ascribable to the Word, such interpretations focus simply on the later remarks, that the human affections do not touch the Word. Clearly, the significant qualifier here is: "according to his Godhead." This assertion of the impassibility of the Word to human affections is, of course, the prevailing classical doctrine; indeed, one wonders how those who criticize Athanasius for making this emphasis would themselves articulate a doctrine of the passibility of the Godhead of the Word. Nevertheless, in Athanasius himself, the impassibility of the Word is inseparable from the ascription of human attributes and "affections" to the Word. The result is that the relation of the Word to its "own" human attributes is essentially paradoxical. Athanasius is quite conscious of this paradox and considers it to be intrinsic to the structure of our salvation and deification in Christ:

> For the Word dwelling in the body attributed to himself (εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἀνέφερεν) what the human body suffered, in order that we might be enabled to be participators in the Godhead of the Word. And it is truly wonderful (παράδοξον) that it was He himself who suffered and did not suffer (αὐτὸς ἦν ὁ πάσχων καὶ μὴ πάσχων). He suffered, because his own body suffered, and he was in that which suffered. Yet he did not suffer because the Word, being by nature God, is impassible. And while he, the incorporeal, was in the passible body, the body had in it the impassible Word, which was destroying the infirmities inherent in the body.[142]

What makes both elements of the paradox equally valid and maintains the tension as well as the unity between them, in Athanasius's doctrine, is that they are both ascribed to the same subject. It is the same Word who both suffers and suffers not. Again, a common interpretation is simply to ignore this tension, neglecting specifically the significance of Athanasius's model of predication, and arriving at the conclusion that

he is asserting that the Word does not himself suffer or undergo human experiences, but his body does.[143] While being inconsistent with these authors' own concomitant interpretation that the Word is the sole subject in Christ—thus leading to the conclusion that the human experiences simply had no subject!—such a way of reading Athanasius simply misses the complexity of his position. What he repeatedly says, in fact, is not simply that the Word does not suffer and his body does, but rather that the Word suffers and does not suffer; in either case, it is the Word himself (αὐτός) of whom both suffering and impassibility are predicated.[144]

Of course, as in every case where we are dealing with paradoxical affirmations of faith, one could dismiss such talk as nonsensical. But in Athanasius such talk has a parallel which might make at least somewhat intelligible the mystery that he is trying to articulate. To say that the Word suffers and does not suffer, and that humanity is both predicable and non-predicable of the Word himself, seems to be directly parallel to his saying that "our being in the Father is not ours."[145] In the latter case, the issue is differentiating our adopted sonship from the Word's natural sonship. In both cases, a crucial distinction is made between what is true by nature and what is true by grace. On the one hand, impassibility belongs to the nature of the Word: τὸ ἀπαθὲς τῆς τοῦ Λόγου φύσεως.[146] On the other hand, the ascription of the humanity to the Word belongs to the "appropriation" that takes place through grace. But, as in the case of our divinization, the fact of Christ's humanity being both predicable and not predicable of his Godhead is a simultaneous condition. One way that Athanasius articulates this paradox is to distinguish between what is "proper" to Christ's humanity and what is proper to his divinity, by nature. Then the unity of these distinct natural properties is asserted by ascribing them both to a single one: "For if we recognize what is proper to each, and see and understand that both these things and those are done by One, we are right in our faith and shall never stray."[147] But this unity in subject can only be posited inasmuch as the original natural difference between what is proper to each is somehow qualified, without being nullified, by the fact that what is proper to the flesh becomes, by grace, proper to the Word:

> For this reason the apostle himself said, "Christ then having suffered," not in his Godhead, but "for us in the flesh," that these passibilities may be acknowledged as not proper to the

> Word himself by nature, but proper by nature to the flesh itself (ἵνα μὴ αὐτοῦ τοῦ Λόγου ἴδια κατὰ φύσιν, ἀλλ᾽ αὐτῆς τῆς σαρκὸς ἴδια φύσει τὰ πάθη ἐπιγνωσθῇ). Let no one then stumble at what pertains to the human, but rather let it be understood *that in nature the Word himself is impassible, and yet because of that flesh which He put on, these things are attributed to him, since they are proper to the flesh, and the body itself is proper to the Saviour* (ὡς τὴν φύσιν αὐτὸς ὁ Λόγος ἀπαθής ἐστι, καὶ ὅμως δι᾽ ἣν φύσιν αὐτὸς ὁ Λόγος ἀπαθής ἐστι, καὶ ὅμως δι᾽ ἣν ἐνεδύσατο σάρκα, λέγεται περὶ αὐτοῦ ταῦτα, ἐπειδὴ τῆς μὲν σαρκὸς ἴδια ταῦτα, τοῦ δὲ Σωτῆρος ἴδιον αὐτὸ τὸ σῶμα).
>
> (*CA* 3:34; Bright, pp. 188–9; my emphasis)

The key to how Athanasius understands his own paradoxical statements is perhaps contained in the last sentence in the quotation above. Even within the unity of Christ, it is important to keep in mind that what naturally belongs to the flesh is not as such (i.e. by nature) proper to the Word. But the "appropriation" of the flesh by the Word means that what is not proper to the Word, in himself, becomes proper to the Word for the sake of our salvation. Again, there is a parallel here with his typical way of speaking of the distance between God and creation "by nature" and its bridging and modification "by grace." But beyond this distinction and simultaneity of nature and grace, it is precisely the phrase, "for us" (ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν),[148] that perhaps can lead us farthest in understanding just how Athanasius conceives of the simultaneity of the body's being proper to the Word and the Word's impassibility. In order to grasp this, we must redirect our focus to the soteriological and functional emphasis of Athanasius's Christology.

We have noted earlier that Athanasius was not interested so much in an analytical Christology—a Christology primarily concerned with the internal constitution of Christ's person—as he was in seeing the new relation between God and creation that is given in Christ. The distinction between an analytical stance and Athanasius's own approach is well-illustrated by a statement in his letter to Epictetus. Speaking against those who argue that the body of Christ is consubstantial with the Word, he counters that "they have failed to perceive that the Word is become flesh, not by reason of an addition to the Godhead, but in order that the flesh may rise again."[149] What is striking about this statement is that it is compounded of two different lines of reasoning and offers two different kinds of Christological

statements. The first raises the question of whether the Word's becoming flesh constitutes an addition to the Godhead. It is an analytical statement, concerned with the structure of Christ and how that is related to the "structure," or being, of God. In rejecting his opponents' assertion, Athanasius, however, does not respond on the same level nor follow the same line of reasoning. His response is simply that the incarnation takes place "in order that the flesh may rise again." Now, this "in order to"is precisely not an analytical statement about the structure of Christ; it simply prescinds from the issue of whether the humanity assumed by the Word constitutes an "addition." The way Athanasius inserts this "explanation" in response to a different kind of reasoning dramatizes the way his Christology tends to bypass analytical frameworks in favor of an emphasis on soteriological effect. Fundamentally, Athanasius's Christology is what we might call a "ἵνα Christology"; his Christological statements tend to be conceived in teleological terms, the *telos* being always our salvation. The emphasis is not on how the constituent "parts" of Christ fit together, but what they do for us, ὑπὲρ ἡμών. Thus, the unity of Christ is explicated in terms primarily of the "structure" of the act which joins humanity to God, rather than in terms of how the "parts" of Christ intrinsically cohere:

> For the union (ἡ συναφὴ) was of this kind, *that He might unite what is human by nature to him whose nature is that of the Godhead* (ἵνα τῷ κατὰ φύσιν τῆς θεότητος συνάψῃ τὸν φύσει ἄνθρωπον), so that human salvation and deification may be secure.
>
> (*CA* 2:70; Bright, p. 140; my emphasis)

As we see, such a functional Christology does not at all preclude statements about the structure of Christ, but rather leads to a perception of the necessity of such statements as derivative of the logic indicated by the redemption worked by Christ. The unity of Christ is thus understood as being "of such a kind" as to cohere with the logic of the act of uniting humanity to God. The unity of the person of Christ is thus continuous with the unity of the act of redemption, while the act of redemption derives its stability and integrity from the fact that its constituent elements—humanity and divinity—are themselves united in the being of the Word Incarnate. Thus we can understand that, for Athanasius, separating the humanity from the divinity of Christ

amounts to "breaking up" and so destabilizing the "oneness" and integrity of Christ's work of redemption: "And they who divide the Word from the flesh do not hold that one redemption from sin has taken place, or one destruction of death."[150]

It is precisely in view of this oneness of redemption that we can answer our previous question of how it is that Christ is both passible and impassible, according to Athanasius. Paradoxical Christological statements of this kind can be dismissed as simply nonsensical and meaningless. While we will not attempt to "explain away" the paradoxical element, what we can do is go beyond glib assertions that Athanasius simply does not take Christ's humanity seriously and try to see how such statements were intelligible for Athanasius himself. It is clear that he considers it integral to the notion of God to be impassible. Insofar as the Word continues to be God and is not diminished in his divinity through the incarnation, he also continues to be impassible and his impassibility does not diminish. On the other hand, it is also clear that, for Athanasius, when the Word became human he took on our passibility. Following his own emphasis and terminology, we can say that, for Athanasius, the Word took on our passibility in such a way as to make it "his own," so that it became his and not another's.[151] It was therefore the Word himself who became passible. Even if it was only in virtue of the flesh that he became passible, it still remains that the flesh was his and not another's, and so the passibility pertained to the Word as subject and "owner" of the flesh. And yet again, it was not the Word *qua* Word, by virtue of his divine nature, that became passible. So the question, again, is how we can unify the two statements that the Word becomes passible yet remains impassible; how can the unity of the Word Incarnate be conceived in light of these contradictory attributes and assertions?

The answer, insofar as it exists or is intimated in the writings of Athanasius, is found precisely within the logic of redemption. Once again, we have to insist that it is not such an answer as to do away with the paradoxical element or the dimension of mystery. But it does help us to see the kind of logic that is operative in such an affirmation of the unity of passibility and impassibility in Christ, an affirmation which reopens the whole question of how the humanity of Christ is both predicable and not predicable of the Word. Anticipating our conclusions, we can say that the reconciliation of such seemingly contradictory statements has to do with the asymmetrical and teleological character of the unity of humanity and divinity in Christ, according to

Athanasius. By way of setting up a heuristic counterpoint, we can try to imagine a kind of static model in which the human and divine attributes are simply juxtaposed in an egalitarian manner, as both belonging to Christ.[152] This is not Athanasius's model, but it is a model where the question of the unity of the human and divine attributes in Christ becomes most problematic. In Athanasius's view, however, the human attributes of Christ are not simply juxtaposed to the divine; they are transformed. And they are transformed precisely into an orientation toward the divine attributes. That is what we mean by speaking of an asymmetrical and teleological unity in Christ. It is clearly implied by Athanasius that the unity of the human and the divine in Christ is to be conceived in terms of the dynamic by which the human attributes are oriented to and transformed by the divine. It is the oneness of this dynamic of salvation that indicates the oneness of Christ. This means that the unity of Christ in Athanasius is best represented linguistically not as a substantive but as a verb. If we look closely, we will see that when the question of the unity of Christ is raised at all, Athanasius implicitly answers it precisely in terms of action—of this transforming dynamic whereby the humanity is "changed" into a divine state. Thus the unity of the human and divine in Christ is globally posited in terms of the one dynamic of Christ deifying humanity. This dynamic necessitates both human and divine qualities, but it mutually orients their differences into the one act of deification. In short, the reconciliation of the impassibility and passibility of Christ is achieved within the one process whereby our passibility is rendered impassible:

> And while he himself, being impassible in nature, remains as he is, not harmed by these passibilities, but rather annulling and destroying them, humanity, having its passions changed and abolished in the Impassible, henceforth becomes also impassible and free from them forever…since the flesh is now able to respond…"I am from earth, being by nature mortal, but afterwards I have become the Word's flesh, and he carried my passibilities, though He is without them; and so I became free from them, being no more abandoned to their service because of the Lord who has made me free from them…For as the Lord, putting on the body, became human, so we humans are deified by

> the Word as being taken to him through his flesh, and henceforth inherit everlasting life."
>
> (*CA* 3:34)

We should not pass too quickly by the achievement of Athanasius's logic here, but rather seek to draw out its implicit resources. He is able to orient the differences of the human and the divine toward each other in a way that simultaneously reasserts these differences and grounds the possibility of their unity. We should note, first of all, that this passage occurs precisely at a point where Athanasius is struggling to reconcile the Word's divine impassibility with the assertion that the passibilities of the flesh "are attributed to him, since they are proper to the flesh, and the body itself is proper to the Saviour" (*CA* 3:34). And so his point of departure is the problem of the simultaneous predication of impassibility and passibility to the "Word himself." The heart of Athanasius's logic is in seeing the unity of this double predication in reference to the one act of human passibility becoming divine impassibility. Within this one act, divine impassibility remains what it is—impassible. However, this impassibility "involves" itself in human passibility, precisely not by becoming passible but by transforming human passibility into impassibility. At the same time, human passibility retains its passible character—even while transcending it—within the very act of being passible precisely to the divine influence whereby it becomes impassible.

Thus, integral to Athanasius's conception of the unity of Christ and the "oneness" of the act of redemption is precisely the non-equality of the human and the divine. This observation again justifies our calling his conception of this unity asymmetrical and teleological; we might say "theo-teleological." Again and again, Athanasius emphasizes that the act of the Word's becoming flesh does not constitute the diminishment of the Word: "The assuming of the flesh did not make a servant of the Word" (*CA* 2:14). How then can the Word be truly said to have taken the form of a servant? Athanasius would answer that the Word takes the form of a servant in a "lordly" way (ibid.), insofar as his taking it is simultaneous with his transforming it. This simultaneity means that there is a way in which it must be understood that the Word's becoming flesh is not a mere hominization of God. God does not simply become a man, for Athanasius. It is crucial for him to qualify the statement by stating that it takes place "in such a way that" or "in order to" transform our humanity into the likeness of his

divinity. But this "in order to" is not a mere consequence, for Athanasius, objectively separable from its antecedent cause, so much as it is an actual description of the kind of hominization that God "underwent" and the kind of unity this event represents and achieves between humanity and God. The hominization of God is thus to be understood in terms of the divinization of humanity. God does not become a human being in such a way as to arrive at a destination that is merely "external" to him, but in such a way that he immediately acts to transform what he is putting on and thus "appropriates" it precisely by way of transforming it. His act of taking on our humanity is thus simultaneous with the act whereby He transforms humanity. It is in this way that his taking on the form of a servant is achieved in the mode of "lordliness":

> The Father, in making him human (for to be made belongs to the human), did not merely make him human, but has made him for the sake of his being Lord of all humanity, and for the sake of consecrating all through the anointing (οὐχ ἁπλῶς δὲ ἐποίησεν ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλ' εἰς τὸ κυριεῦσαι πάντων αὐτόν, καὶ ἁγιάζειν πάντας διὰ τοῦ χρίσματος πεποίηκεν). For though the Word, being in the form of God, took a servant's form, yet the assumption of the flesh did not make a servant of the Word, who was by nature Lord; but rather, not only was it that liberation of all humanity which takes place by the Word, but that very Word who was by nature Lord, and was then made man, has through a servant's form been made Lord of all and Christ, that is, in order to make all holy by the Spirit.
>
> (ibid.; Bright, pp. 82–8)

Thus, the Word's taking on the form of the servant is to be understood in terms of the Word's sanctifying of this form. This means that the Word is never simply a servant, but becomes a servant in the particular mode of transforming the condition of servanthood and emancipating humanity. To become a servant or a creature in this particular mode means to become a creature or a servant in a lordly mode, εἰς τὸ κυριεῦσαι πάντων. This means that the Word was never merely a servant (or merely passible, etc), since he was a lordly servant. But it also means that he was never, as incarnate, not a servant, for it was precisely by means of the servant's form that he effected its emancipation. Moreover, it means that his being both Lord and servant

is not a mere juxtaposition, and thus does not result in an "equalization" of these two "forms," but a dynamic process which unites the two conditions precisely by asserting the lordly mastering of the servant's form:

> And we know that while "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God," now that he has become also human for our salvation, we worship him, *not as though he had come in the body equalizing himself with it* **(οὐχ ὡς ἴσον ἐν ἴσῳ γενόμενον τῷ σώματι)** but as Master, assuming the form of the servant, and as Maker and Creator coming in a creature, in order that, in it delivering all things, He might bring the world near to the Father **(τὸν κόσμον προσαγάγῃ τῷ Πατρὶ)**, and make all things to be at peace, things in heaven and things on earth [my italics].[153]

Here we have a key to those supposedly troublesome Christological passages in which Athanasius seems to hold that the Word was "unaffected" by human experiences as well as to the trouble certain modern interpreters have had with these passages.[154] For, in order to be hermeneutically shrewd, we have to consider not only "from on high" the seemingly problematic character of Athanasius's statements, but we have to let our own standards of interpretation and evaluation be rendered problematic by his viewpoint. As to what seems problematic in Athanasius's way of speaking, we may sum it up bluntly by saying that it can give the impression that the Word did not really become completely human.[155] This, despite the fact that, as we have seen, Athanasius insists that the Word did in fact become completely human, and in no way else could we have become divinized. However, the problem remains of how he became human in such a way that the Word, *qua* Word, did not become affected by the human experiences. On the other hand, if Athanasius were to be able to speak back to his modern critics, he would probably respond that their criticism seems to imply that the only way they can conceive of the Word's becoming fully human is precisely by way of an "equalizing" of the Word with humanity. But, he would go on to contend, if the Word simply "equalizes" himself with humanity, how is his condescension our exaltation, how does his hominization amount to our deification, and how is his taking on a servant's form continuous with his mastery and emancipation of that form? In a word, how does the incarnation

represent our transformation, unless the Word's taking on of humanity is simultaneously a transformation of humanity into the likeness of God, and not a mere equalizing of God with humanity?

Returning to Athanasius's own perspective, we can concretize it by noting the way he deals with gospel passages which depict Jesus as weeping, troubled, afraid, etc. These are apparently put forward by "Arians" to show that Jesus is not the fully transcendent God. Insofar as Athanasius's position requires him to assert both that this same Jesus is the Word who is essentially one with the Father and that he truly took on our human flesh, he has to reconcile the tension between divine transcendence and these human passions. Some interpreters seize on Athanasius's distinction that such "affections" do not belong to the Godhead but are "proper to the manhood."[156] But that is to isolate only one aspect of the dialectic by which Athanasius conceives this tension, an aspect which is, undeniably, an irreducible moment in Athanasius's Christological dialectic, and which he represents in bold terms: "If then He wept and was troubled, it was not the Word, considered as the Word, who wept and was troubled, but it was proper to the flesh…it was not the Godhead that was in terror, but this passibility too was proper to the humanity" (*CA* 3:56). Principally, what Athanasius wants to affirm here is that the human "passions" do not originate from and are not essentially continuous with the transcendent divinity of the Word. They are thus not to be ascribed directly to the divine nature. On the other hand, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that this aspect in Athanasius's Christological dialectic is complemented by another characteristic emphasis: his conception that it is intrinsic to the incarnation that what is not to be ascribed to the divine nature becomes nevertheless applicable to the Word: "For the properties of the body would not have been in the Incorporeal, unless he had taken a corruptible and mortal body: for mortal was Holy Mary, from whom was his body. Necessarily, then, when he was in a body suffering and weeping and toiling, these things which are proper to the flesh are attributed to him together with the body **(αὐτοῦ λέγεσθαι μετὰ τοῦ σώματος καὶ ταῦτα, ἅπερ ἐστὶν ἴδια τῆς σαρκός)**" (ibid.; Bright, p. 208). So we return to the position that all these experiences are both applicable and not applicable to the Word. Yet, once again, we notice that whenever Athanasius seems to find himself dealing with the intrinsic contrariness of this position, he spontaneously and, as it were, instinctively, seeks a reconciliation by referring to the transformative mode in which the Word undergoes these experiences:

> And that the words "Why have you forsaken me?" are his (ὡς αὐτοῦ), according to the above explanations (though He suffered nothing, for the Word was impassible), is nevertheless declared by the evangelists: since the Lord became human, and these things are done and said as from a man, *that He might himself lighten these very sufferings of the flesh, and free it from them* (ἵνα καὶ ταῦτα τὰ παθήματα τῆς σαρκὸς κουφίσας αὐτός, ἐλευθέραν αὐτῶν ταύτην κατασκευάσῃ).
>
> (ibid.; Bright, pp. 208–9; my emphasis)

So the reconciliation of the Word's Impassibility with his sufferings is achieved by conceiving his suffering as effecting a freedom from suffering. But this again is not to be understood in terms of a chronological antecedent and consequent, as if, first of all, the Word "equalized" himself with human suffering and, later, as a result, we were freed from suffering. Athanasius seems to see the very mode of Christ's suffering as simultaneously effecting a freedom from suffering. In this respect, freedom from suffering is intrinsic to Christ's mode of suffering and can be called an "impassible" suffering. Christ suffers as one who masters suffering in the very act of appropriating it; he thus remains impassible by virtue of this mastery, insofar as his suffering is simultaneously a freedom-from-suffering, or, even more to the point, a freeing-from-suffering.[157]

All this is to say that, for Athanasius, the Word Incarnate does not undergo any merely human experiences. This does not mean that his human experiences are not fully human, but only that they are inseparable from the influence of his divinity. There is a combination, therefore, of passibility and Impassibility, of weakness and power, of humanity and divinity, in all the experiences of Jesus Christ, and it is this combination that makes them intrinsically transformative. This means that, especially with regard to the "negative" experiences of fear, ignorance, death, etc., Christ's appropriation of these simultaneously constitutes their very reversal: Christ's fear takes away our fear; his ignorance grants us knowledge; his death is a destruction of death:

> And as for his saying, "If it be possible, let the cup pass," notice how, though he said this, he also rebuked Peter saying, "You do not consider the things of God, but human things." For he willed what he deprecated; He had come for this. The willing was his

> (for he came to do it), but the terror pertained to the flesh. Therefore he says this as a man, and yet both were said by the same (καὶ ἀμφότερα πάλιν παρὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἐλέγετο), to show that he was God, willing in himself, but when he became human, having a flesh that was in terror. For the sake of this flesh, he combined his own will with human weakness, so that destroying this passibility he might in turn make humanity fearless in the face of death (συνεκέρασε τὸ ἑαυτοῦ θέλημα τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ ἀσθενείᾳ, ἵνα καὶ τοῦτο πάλιν ἀφανίσας, θαρραλέον τὸν ἄνθρωπον πάλιν πρὸς τὸν θάνατον κατασκευάσῃ). *For as He abolished death by death, and by human means all human evils, so by this so-called terror He removed our terror, so that humanity may never more fear death.*
>
> (*CA* 3:57; Bright, pp. 209–10; my emphasis)

From this passage we glean that, for Athanasius, Jesus's appropriation and simultaneous transformation of human experiences has its basis in the combination of "his own will with human weakness." Thus Christ "takes on" our negative human experiences but at the same time wills to overcome them; this "willing" can even be considered as the whole mission of Christ ("for for it He came"). His taking-on is, therefore, simultaneous with his overcoming. And, henceforth, these human experiences, when undergone in communion with Christ, can also be overcome from within.

If it still seems altogether too difficult to conceive how, throughout all this, Christ is both passible and impassible, the problem could well be that we are conceiving the matter in a much more psychological framework than did Athanasius. For Athanasius, the interaction of passibility and impassibility in Christ is conceived not so much in terms of feeling and non-feeling, but of activity and passivity—in terms of what is acting upon what, and the distinction between the "subject" and "object" within the process of transformation. Thus the unity and distinction in Christ is conceived in terms of the divine working upon the human in order to make the human divine. The distinct elements of divinity and humanity are in this manner united in the one act of deification. While this active-passive framework lies at the basis of Athanasius's global understanding of the person and work of Christ, it becomes explicit in one key formulation, which we find especially in *Contra Arianos* 1:43–50, that has not been sufficiently

appreciated, either for the light it throws on his conception of Christ or for its intrinsic interest as a Christological model.

Within this model, the divinity and humanity of Christ are conceived in terms of "giving" and "receiving," and thus within a radical framework of activity and passivity. Athanasius seems to conceive this framework again with reference to the model of participation. We have already noted his emphatic insistence, throughout the *Orationes contra Arianos*, that the Son and Word is Creator and partaken, not created and partaking. Indeed, one ventures to suggest that between the writing of the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione* and the *Orationes*, the terminology of "giving" and "receiving" had acquired an emblematic and focal character in the controversy. Both Arius and Athanasius referred significantly to the model of participation; and the terminology of "giving" and "receiving" seemed to evoke this model almost spontaneously. Indeed, already in the Contra Gentes, the term **δίδωμι**, in the unassuming context of a verse about God giving food to animals, leads Athanasius spontaneously to articulate the principle that God gives to all, and is himself not in need and not partaken.[158] Moreover, the term "giving," in particular, seems naturally to evoke the notion of grace, as in Athanasius's compact expression "the grace of the Giver."[159] We know, too, that the issue of the status of Christ with respect to grace was a basic issue of controversy between Athanasius and the early Arians.[160] Therefore, it seems natural enough that scriptural passages apparently referring to the Son as "being given" and "receiving" gifts and honors from God were quickly taken up in the controversy, and that they would be controversial precisely with reference to the notions of participation and grace. Moreover, such passages would have to be taken even by Athanasius as referring to the humanity or creaturely aspect of the Incarnate Word. In looking at Athanasius's handling of these texts in the passages we are about to consider, what is striking is that, compared to the *De Incarnatione*, he is now able to make a much more positive use of such texts.

In the section of the *Orationes* with which we will now be dealing, Athanasius is occupied with refuting two Arian proof-texts, Philippians 2:9, and Psalm 45:8. The verse from Philippians reads, "Wherefore God has highly exalted him, and has given him a name that is above every name," while the Psalm verse runs, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, has anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." In both cases the Arian contention, as presented by Athanasius, is that these verses

testify to the alterable nature of the Son and his advancement by grace. While Athanasius is of course concerned, in his response, to defend the unalterability of the Son, the fundamental issue for him is whether the rôle of the Son is to be seen as merely passive with regard to the exaltation mentioned in Philippians and the anointing spoken of in the Psalm. He discusses this question in the terminology of "giving" and "receiving," and the framework in which this question is to be placed is clearly that of the Creator—creature, or partaken—partaking distinction. The problem, then, in Athanasian terms, is this: to give is essentially a divine activity; to be given and to receive is essentially a creaturely stance; if, then, the Son is "given" a name above every other name (Phil. 2:9), and if he "receives" the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Ps. 45:8), does this not suggest that the Son is a creature and not the Creator?

In response, Athanasius reiterates that the Son, as God, cannot be given anything. Rather, it is only the terminology of active "giving" that is properly applicable to the divinity of the Son. For "the Word of God is full and lacks nothing" (*CA* 1:43) and "what the Father gives, He gives through the Son" (*CA* 1:45). Therefore, the Son's essential activity, as God, belongs in the sphere of divine giving. However, Athanasius also distinguishes between what can be spoken of the Son humanly, ἀνθρωπίνως, "on account of the flesh that he bore," and what is spoken of the Son divinely, θεικῶς (*CA* 1:41). The distinction between "giving" and "receiving" is then articulated in terms of the distinction between the divine and human in Christ. In this way, Athanasius applies the terminology of "receiving" to the entirety of Christ's human career, which is viewed essentially as a reception of grace. Christ, he says, received grace "as far as his humanity was exalted and this exaltation was its deification (ἐλάμβανε γὰρ κατὰ τὸ ὑψοῦσθαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ὕψωσις δὲ ἦν τὸ θεοποιεῖσθαι αὐτὸν)" (*CA* 1:45; Bright, p. 47). From Athanasius's perspective, it is of course essential to view this conjunction of divine giving and human receiving in such a way that a continuity of identity is maintained and the Son's unalterability is thus safeguarded. So he sums up his Christology of "giving" and "receiving" with an emphasis on the unalterability of the Word, quoting Hebrews 13:8: "'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever,' remaining unalterable, and it is the same one who gives and receives, giving as God's Word, receiving as a human being (μένων ἄτρεπτος, καὶ ὁ αὐτός ἐστι διδοὺς καὶ λαμβάνων, διδοὺς μὲν

ὡς Θεοῦ Λόγος, λαμβάνων δὲ ὡς ἄνθρωπος)" (*CA* 1:48; Bright, p. 50).

However, Athanasius does not refer to the notion of Christ's human receptivity exclusively to deflect the challenge aimed at the unalterability and essential divinity of the Word, but goes on to make a positive and striking use of this notion. This is best appreciated in the context of our earlier discussion of the emphasis in the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione* on God's effort to secure the grace that is given and humanity's persistent failure to hold on to that grace. But whereas in the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione* the resolution of the dilemma of humanity's failure to keep this grace is generally identified with the incarnation of the Word, in this section of the *Contra Arianos* it is the notion of Christ's human receptivity that plays a key role in resolving the dilemma. This role is described in terms of his "securing" the grace, and allowing us to definitively "remain" (μένειν) in it. It is Christ's reception of grace—more specifically, Christ's human reception of the Holy Spirit on our behalf—that is seen as the ultimate "securing" of grace for humanity. In fact, Athanasius says categorically that our own reception of the Spirit, on which hinges our salvation and deification, is impossible except as derivative of Christ's human reception of it in the incarnation. Thus, while continually reiterating the principle that Christ is the divine giver of the Spirit, he also goes on to emphasize the importance of Christ's human reception of the Spirit:

> Through whom, and from whom should the Spirit have been given but through the Son, since the Spirit is his? And when were we empowered to receive it, except when the Word became human? And…*in no other way* [my emphasis] would we have partaken of the Spirit and been sanctified, if it were not that the Giver of the Spirit, the Word himself, had spoken of himself as anointed with the Spirit for us. And in this way we have securely received it (βεβαίως ἐλάβομεν), insofar as He is said to have received the Spirit in the flesh. For the flesh being first sanctified in him and he being said, as human, to have received through it, we have the Spirit's grace, in a derived way, "receiving out of his fullness"(δι' αὐτὴν εἰληφέναι, ὡς ἀνθρώπου, ἡμεῖς ἐπακολουθοῦσαν ἔχομεν τὴν τοῦ Πνεύματος χάριν, ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ λαμβάνοντες).
>
> (*CA* 1:50; Bright, p. 53)[161]

I do not think that Athanasius here wants us to understand literally that before the incarnation, there was absolutely no communication of grace and reception of the Spirit. But he does want to emphasize that our reception of the Spirit is to be ascribed in a most eminent way to the incarnation. This is because it is in the incarnation that the Word himself received grace humanly on our behalf, and thus granted us the definitive ability to "remain" in grace, which, as the *De Incarnatione* demonstrated, had been the block in human—divine communion. The great consequence of the incarnation is that henceforth grace was to be united to the flesh in a way that is analogous to, derivative from, and yet still also distinct from Jesus Christ's natural reception of grace. For, in the incarnation, the Word assumed as his own a human body that was yet a natural recipient of divine grace (τὸ φύσιν ἔχον τοῦ δέχεσθαι τὴν χάριν) (*CA* 1:45; Bright, p. 47). Thus it is precisely in the incarnation, through Christ's human receptivity on our behalf, that our reception of the grace of the Spirit finally becomes securely united with our own flesh. The terms βέβαιος and μένειν, the significance of which we have already underlined with reference to the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*, occur repeatedly in Athanasius's description in the *Contra Arianos* of the effect of Christ's receiving of grace on our behalf in the incarnation.[162]

The notion of the "securing" of grace effected by Christ's reception of the Spirit in the incarnation is thus integral to Athanasius's understanding of the incarnation as the supreme instance of grace, and it demonstrates the importance of Christ's human receptivity in his conception of the incarnation. It also leads us back to the Christological question proper, the interrelation of human and divine in Christ. With reference to the humanity of Christ, Athanasius's point is that we are able to be saved and deified because Christ has securely received grace in a human way on our behalf, and has thus rendered us receptive of the Spirit by his own human reception of it (καὶ δεχομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ τὸ Πνεῦμα, ἡμεῖς ἦμεν οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ γινόμενοι τούτου δεκτικοί.) (*CA* 1:47; Bright, p. 49). Our deifying reception of the Spirit is thus derived from Christ's human receptivity. As long as the Word's activity was confined to the realm of divine "giving," we were not able to receive securely in him. But if Christ's humanity enables us to receive the Spirit in him, this reception is rendered perfectly secure, βέβαιος precisely because it is indivisibly united to the unalterable divine Word, who is one in being with the Father.[163] Athanasius's key move is thus to envisage the unity of

subject in Jesus Christ in such a way that he extends the unalterability of the Word *qua* Word to apply even to the receptivity of the Word's humanity. In this context, the alterability of creatures, of things originate, is seen as a threat to the securing of grace. He concludes:

> There was here also need for someone who is unalterable, so that humanity might have the immutability of the righteousness of the Word as an icon and archetype (τύπον) of virtue…It was fitting, therefore, that the Lord, who is eternally unalterable by nature, who "loves righteousness and hates unrighteousness" [2 Cor. 2: 11] should be anointed and himself sent, so that He who is and remains the same (ὁ αὐτός τε ὢν καὶ αὐτὸς διαμένων), by taking alterable flesh, "might condemn sin in it" [Rom. 8:3], and might supply its freedom so that it may henceforth be able to "fulfil the righteousness of the law in itself" [Rom. 8:9].
>
> (*CA* 1:51; Bright, pp. 53–4)

We should note well that Athanasius thus conceives of the freedom of the flesh not as an ability to alter, but precisely as an unalterability in the reception of grace which results from the union of alterable flesh with the unalterable Word. Because of this union, the flesh appropriates the unalterability of the Word, while the Word himself receives the Spirit humanly because of his union with humanity.

The whole matter is summed up in a passage of the Third Oration, where the terminology of "giving" and "receiving" also recurs:

> For though He had no need, He is still said to have received humanly what He received, so that inasmuch as it is the Lord who has received (ὡς τοῦ Κυρίου λαβόντος), and the gift remains in him, the grace may remain secure (βεβαία ἡ χάρις διαμείνῃ). For when humanity alone receives, it is liable to lose again what it has received (and this is shown by Adam, for he received and he lost). But in order that the grace may not be liable to loss, and may be guarded securely for humanity, He himself appropriates the gift (ἵνα δὲ ἀναφαίρετος ἡ χάρις γένηται, καὶ βεβαία φυλαχθῇ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, διὰ τοῦτο αὐτὸς ἰδιοποιεῖται τὴν δόσιν), and so He says that he has received power, as a man, which He always had as God.
>
> (*CA* 3:38; Bright, p. 193)

That Christ humanly appropriates or receives the gift which He himself divinely gives is what makes the incarnation for Athanasius the supreme instance of grace. At this point, we can venture to suggest that it is precisely this conjunction of "giving" and "receiving" which takes place in the event of the incarnation that represents, for Athanasius, a dialectic of redemption and divinization corresponding to the radical ontological dissimilarity between God and creation. That is because, given the nature of this dissimilarity as Athanasius conceives it, the only bridge possible is what he calls "the gift of the Giver." But since the giving of one party is always contingent on the other party's capacity to receive, and since humanity had already demonstrated its woeful incapacity to receive and keep the gift, the unsurpassable gift of the incarnation is that we were given the very reception of the gift. In the incarnation, God not only gives but his giving reaches the point of receiving on our behalf, thus perfecting our capacity to receive, which is our only access to the divine. In this way, divine giving and human receiving continue to be irreducibly distinct, but they are now united in the unity of Christ himself, who becomes the source of our receptivity by virtue of his humanity, and the perfector and securer of this receptivity, as well as the giver of the Gift itself, by virtue of his divinity. Here, the distinction between **γέν(ν)ητα** and the **ἀγέν(ν)ητος** achieves its final qualification. Humanity's origin from nothing, which it shares with all created nature, becomes decisively qualified insofar as now that origin is transferred to Christ and thus becomes the locus of a stable **(βέβαιον)** reception of the Spirit, unto eternal life:

> For we no longer die according to our former origin **(κατὰ τὴν προτέραν γένεσιν)**. But from now on, since our origin and all the weakness of flesh has been transferred to the Word **(ἀλλὰ λοιπὸν τῆς γενέσεως ἡμῶν καὶ πάσης τῆς σαρκικῆς ἀσθενείας μετατεθέντων εἰς τὸν Λόγον)**, we rise from the earth, the curse from sin having been removed, because of him who is in us, and who has become a curse for us. And reasonably so; for as we are all from earth and die in Adam, so being regenerated from above of water and Spirit, in Christ we are all enlivened; the flesh being no longer earthly, but being henceforth made Word **(λογωθείσης)**, by reason of God's Word who for our sake "became flesh."
>
> (*CA* 3:33; Bright, p. 188)

Conclusion

We conclude the present chapter with this Christological model of "giving" and "receiving," which we take to be the divinized version of the relation between God and humanity in the mature writing of Athanasius. We have sought to analyze Athanasius's account of the relation between God and creation in the context of his anti-Arian polemic. We began with a cursory historical reconstruction of the events which formed the dramatic background to Athanasius's theological reflections. We also pointed out that the theme of the relation between God and creation has been considered previously (by Gwatkin, most notably) to be at the heart of the controversy; in any case, our theme was comprehensive enough that any interpretation of the controversy would imply some reference to it. We then began to consider the actual texts in which Athanasius dueled with his Arian opponents. Starting with some remarks on methodology, we noted how Athanasius's apophaticism is consciously based on the otherness of God and creation. At the same time, such apophaticism entailed positive statements about God's being in distinction to creaturely being. Moreover, we saw that the unlikeness between God and creation is always understood by Athanasius within the positive relation of God's link to creation through his creative agency. Thus, God is not primarily "other," for Athanasius, but "Creator." This means that the unlikeness (or "externality") that does exist between God and creation is conceived by Athanasius precisely in terms of creation's being "in God." Similarly, the otherness of the Word to creation, which proves his divinity, is itself proved by the fact that creation subsists in the Word.

We also analyzed our theme with reference to the question of mediation and immediacy in the relation between God and creation. We saw that Athanasius's whole logic was averse to the notion of a created mediation between God and creation, since it is exclusively a divine characteristic to be able to bridge the distance between God and creation. In essence, only God can relate the world to himself. Moreover, the immediacy of essence, or lack of "externality," among Father, Son, and Spirit means that the mediation of the Son and Spirit to creation renders immediate access to the Triune God.

With reference to the relation between theology and divine economy, we noted Athanasius's emphasis on the continuity between God's being and work. We characterized his conception as one where God's relation to the world is both enfolded in and super seded by the intra-divine relations. We then approached the theme of God's relation

to the world from the perspective of the incarnation of the Word, noting the "rhetoric of reversal" by which Athanasius emphasizes the new relation of God to creation which takes place in Christ. We studied this reversal as a Christological problem, trying to elaborate the logic whereby Athanasius asserts the paradoxical applicability of creaturely qualifications to the divine subject of the Word. We concluded that this logic achieves its proper clarification through an emphasis on the unity of the transformative process of deification that takes place in Christ. Finally, we described a Christological model in which Athanasius's typical conception of the relation between God and creation in terms of activity and passivity is transposed into a dialectic of divinization, in which the Incarnate Word's human receptivity of the Spirit, which he himself gives, renders us secure access to the Spirit's divinizing power. We now turn to Athanasius's account of the divinized relation between humanity and God, from the perspective of the human side of the relation, in the graced context of Christian discipleship.

4
THE RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND CREATION IN THE CONTEXT OF GRACE

In our analysis of the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*, we have already noted how Athanasius uses the notion of **χάρις** to articulate God's gracious intervention in terms of qualifying the difference and separateness that necessarily obtains between created nature and the Creator. Thus while it is intrinsic to the definition of created nature[1] to relapse into the nothingness whence it came, God acts to qualify this ontological poverty of creation by granting it a participation in the Word.[2] Such participation stabilizes and orders creation in a way reflective of the divine power and goodness rather than of creation's intrinsic definition. The natural difference between God and creation is thus *de facto* modified by this participation. This kind of modification achieves a much more intensified expression in the case of humanity. In this context also, Athanasius speaks in terms of God acting to mitigate the intrinsic definition of creaturely being by means of "grace": "**θεωρήσας ὡς οὐχ ἱκανὸν εἴη κατὰ τὸν τῆς ἰδίας γενέσεως λόγον διαμένειν ἀεί, πλέον τι χαριζόμενος.**" [3] The "added grace" granted to humanity consists in a distinct level of participation in the Word which renders human beings **λογικοὶ**.[4] As a result, the natural difference by which human beings would have been prevented from knowledge of God, "since he was uncreated, while they had been made from nothing,"[5] is overcome such that humanity can come to know God and "live a divine life."[6]

Through sin, however, humanity began to fall away from grace[7] and thus the natural difference between created nature and the Creator reasserted itself, the consequences being "natural corruption"[8] and loss of the knowledge of God. It was fitting, therefore, that the Word, in whose image humanity was created, should become incarnate in order to renew the grace of being in the image. In our study of the anti-Arian writings, we have seen how Athanasius construes this renewal and how

he expresses it through a "rhetoric of reversal" that seeks to dramatize the new order of relation between God and creation. While we are by nature "works" and "servants" of God, who is our Maker and Master, we become "sons" (and daughters) of the Father through the incarnation of the Son.[9] From the divine side, our Maker becomes our Father and Maker of his own Son, while the Son becomes a creature and Word for the sake of our adoption as "sons." Pointing out that this "reversal" does not simply nullify the original natural order but complements it dialectically, we have sought to clarify the paradoxicality of this dialectic whereby our life in God is not ours. Heretofore, we have approached the issue mainly in Christological terms, in which this paradoxicality expresses itself in the dialectic whereby the creaturely condition which naturally does not apply to the Word becomes properly ascribed to him.

In this chapter, we propose to study this dialectic more from the human point of view, within the context of the life of grace. To this end, we will have in focus primarily two texts in which the theme of the life of grace is integral: the *Festal Letters* and the *Life of Antony*. The former represent Athanasius's adherence to the Alexandrian tradition of an annual announcement by the Patriarch of the date of Easter, accompanied by pastoral exhortation. To be sure, Athanasius's anti-Arian polemic is not left behind in these letters. He sums up their doctrine with the charge that "they say that He is not the Creator, but a creature."[10] In seeking to protect "the simple" from the subtle deceits of "the heretics," Athanasius does not enter into detailed representations of Arian doctrine here, but simply underlines what for him is the crucial point: that the Arian "Word" falls on the wrong side of the Creator—creature divide. Applying the issue to the context of the impending feast, he argues that "if He were a creature, He would have been holden by death; but if He was not holden by death, according to the Scriptures, He is not a creature, but the Lord of the creatures, and the subject of this immortal feast."[11] The fruit of the resurrection, incorruptibility, is thus inseparable from the divine origin of the Son, "for he does not derive his being from things that are not; therefore, we have incorruptibility."[12]

However, if there is a main theme that runs through these letters, it is not so much that of the error of the "Ariomaniacs" as the exhortation to gratitude. In light of the grace of the resurrection that is proclaimed through this feast, Athanasius warns against "despising the grace";[13] we should not be ungrateful like the lepers who were healed but did not

return to give thanks,[14] "for there is no hope for the ungrateful…those who have neglected divine light."[15] Rather, we must "acknowledge the grace as becomes the feast";[16] we must "be sensible of the gift,"[17] never forgetting the noble acts of God,[18] "for the feast does not consist but in the acknowledgement of God and the offering of thanksgiving."[19] Moreover, this acknowledgement of grace must take concrete form; it is a matter of "conduct…in accordance with grace,"[20] "the practice of virtue"[21] which is characterized above all by diligence.[22] In this way, we will not have received the grace in vain,[23] but will be like those who are praised in the gospel for increasing the grace which they have received.[24] Thus Athanasius seems preoccupied throughout with the proper response to God's grace, and it is in such terms that he outlines to his flock the proper way to keep the feast. In studying these exhortations, we are therefore dealing with the issue of the human relation to God in grace from a concrete existential and liturgical perspective.

Our access to the relevant texts from the *Festal Letters*, however, will be regulated by the framework evoked by our analysis of the *Life of Antony*. Ostensibly, this account is Athanasius's response to an inquiry from some monks outside Egypt who sought to learn more about the youth, career, and death of the famous Antony: "if the things said concerning him are true."[25] Although the Athanasian authorship of this work has lately been questioned,[26] its consistency with Athanasian theology and terminology offers much stronger evidence of its authenticity than any conjectures to the contrary.[27] This consistency will become further manifest in the course of our analysis. It was probably written soon after the death of Antony in 356,[28] while Athanasius was in hiding, possibly in a monastic setting. It is clear from Athanasius's framing of his interlocutor's request and the tone of his own response that Antony had already become a celebrated figure even before this account, which was destined to magnify his fame for the rest of posterity. In laying hold of a real-life figure with a larger-than-life reputation, Athanasius thus has the opportunity to dramatize his theology to striking effect. In his "theologizing" of Antony, the bishop attempts to provide an interpretation of his career that is consistent with sound theology, and which can therefore provide a correct model for those who wish to emulate the great monk. In the hands of Athanasius, Antony becomes the "ideal type" of the redeemed Christian. In turn, the Athanasian Antony provides us with an ideal representation of Athanasius's conception of the life of grace.

Of course, it is a foregone conclusion that such an Athanasian theologizing of Antony would present him as a staunch and fervent defender of Nicene orthodoxy against the impious heresy of the Arians. But it has lately been argued that the *Life of Antony* is meant not only to represent the Nicene conception of the divinity of Christ and Antony's championing of this, but also an Athanasian account of salvation that consciously pits itself against the Arian account.[29] This thesis bears directly on the topic of our inquiry and we must begin by looking at it more closely. Gregg and Groh sum up the decisive difference between Athanasian and Arian accounts of salvation and grace in these terms: "In contrast to orthodoxy's substantialist concept of grace as something 'stored' in and dispensed from divine nature, Arianism attaches connotations of volition and transaction to the term."[30] The Arian version of salvation and grace indicates an *askesis* which "proceeds from the axiomatic identification of Christ with creatures. Possible of attainment by other originate beings is his progress in wisdom, stature and divine favor."[31] The Arian account of the life of grace is thus to be characterized in terms of the striving of the human will, with the goal of attaining equality with Christ. As a creature, the Arian Christ provides an exemplar who "is not categorically other, 'unlike us and like the Father'; hence the imitation envisioned is straight-forward and strictly possible."[32] The reward for this imitation is "a sonship equal in glory to that of their earthly savior, their fellow pilgrim in *askesis*."[33]

On the other hand, the Athanasian version of salvation and grace "insists that no such equality is possible between creatures and the uncreated redeemer."[34] Indeed, "the Christ worshipped by Athanasius… does not encourage creatures to attain the very same sonship he has won through his labors."[35] Moreover, the Athanasian version de-emphasizes the element of human striving; it wants to communicate the message that "advance in perfection comes not through striving for equality with Christ but by participation and intervention from above. Antony's holiness is not achieved, it is received";[36] "the monk's deeds are not, strictly speaking, his own."[37] Thus, in an attempt to disqualify Arian interpretations and appropriations of the success of Antony, Athanasius writes his *Life of Antony* in order to cast the career of the illustrious holy man in terms of a pro-Nicene anti-Arian soteriology: "The *Vita Antonii* is constructed with a view to counteracting the Arian concept of adopted sonship as a progress in virtue."[38] Gregg and Groh further conjecture that the conflict between the two soteriologies, as outlined above, is in some measure internal to the text, insofar as the

text can be presumed to be constituted not only of the "Antony of Athanasius" but also of "Antony-traditions" which are "explicable by more than one scheme of salvation,"[39] i.e., Arian as well as Athanasian. This consideration grounds a methodology of spying out "tensions…between particular actions attributed to Antony and the interpretive remarks that frame them and are recognizable as Athanasian themes."[40] Such a strategy of identifying "redactional seams" would thus allow us to gauge the tension between Arian and Athanasian soteriologies.

Gregg and Groh can be commended at least for emphasizing the importance of the themes of grace and salvation in the Arian controversy. In doing so, they are not breaking completely new ground. In effect, they are reading the Arian controversy in light of the Pelagian controversy, a strategy already anticipated—albeit cursorily—in Gwatkin, who speaks of "the Pelagianism which is an essential element of the Arian system."[41] It is certainly an interesting theoretical question to ask about the mutual implications of the issues and viewpoints raised in these two controversies. However, such a theoretical question is to be carefully distinguished from the historical question of how far the Arian controversy actually and explicitly broaches issues that were played out a little later in the Pelagian debates. Failure to make such a careful distinction can lead to a rather anachronistic reading which simply projects the framework of the Pelagian debate onto the Arian controversy. It is one thing to say that the Arian viewpoint logically implies a kind of Pelagian emphasis on free will and human striving; it is quite another to take this implication as an explicit and conscious position taken by the Arians. Without any explicit reference to the Pelagian debates, Gregg and Groh seem to have unjustifiably projected that problem onto the Arian crisis. The result is a highly speculative and probably erroneous version of the Arian position and a demonstrably distorted view of the Athanasian position, both basing themselves on a methodology of circular reasoning. Because Gregg and Groh raise issues that are very germane to our inquiry and because their interpretations of these issues is, in my view, distorted, we must analyze this distortion preparatory to our own constructive analysis of the texts.

We begin with the question of methodology. Gregg and Groh are able to come up with two antithetical views of grace and salvation—one emphasizing human striving, the other "participation and intervention from above"[42]—by locating tensions in the

text, identifying these tensions as "redactional seams," and then exploiting these seams to divide the one Athanasian text into two antithetical accounts, Athanasian and Arian. However, it should be fairly obvious that such a strategy simply begs the question. What if the "tensions," such as they may be, belong together in the Athanasian account? It is inadmissible that this quite natural supposition should be completely bracketed. Of course, once it is bracketed, then the discovery of "redactional seams" and two antithetical accounts follows not so much from the text as it stands, but rather from the presumption that in fact such tensions do not belong together but stem from two separate and opposite accounts. The actual complexity of the text is thus deconstructed by the invincible circularity of this presumption and the strategy which implements it.[43]

Indeed, it can be shown that the two antithetical accounts "discovered" by Gregg and Groh are, in both cases, distorted and oversimplified. With regard to their stress on Arian soteriology as based on the equality of the Son with the rest of creation, Gregg and Groh overlook the textual evidence that explicily shows the efforts of Arius to stress the inequality and pre-eminent distinction of the Son. Athanasius's mocking rejection of this effort, whatever its logical force, should not be mistaken for Arius's own position. Moreover, Gregg and Groh also overlook the very relevant fact that the Arians considered Christ not to have a human soul. Thus there is significant evidence that the Arians were emphatic in their insistence on the distinction of the Son from the rest of creation, and none to suggest that they actually wanted to exploit and emphasize the notion that the Son was simply "like us." What is evident from the extant texts of Arius and Asterius is both an effort to distinguish the Son from the One Ungenerate God and an effort to distinguish the Son from the rest of creation. Any attempts to emphasize positively the equality of humanity with the Son of God would have struck a decidedly false note in the atmosphere of fourth-century theological debate; indeed, it must be said that such a notion has a suspiciously modern ring to it.

With regard to the supposed Arian emphasis on human volition and striving as opposed to participation, that interpretation too is problematic on several grounds. First of all, there is the lack of Arian texts concerned with the issue of the dynamics of salvation from the human point of view. We can perhaps explain this fact by saying that Arian texts have been largely destroyed and so there might have been such texts. But it is reasonable to assume that if the Arians did have

such an antithetical soteriology developed from the human point of view, Athanasius would have referred to it and countered it. Certainly, we could not impute to him any shyness in attacking Arian doctrine. The extant evidence, however, seems to suggest that the focus of Arian teaching was emphatically on the non-equality of the Father and the Son, with a view to maintaining a certain conception of divine transcendence that necessitated a monist conception of God.[44] Even if we were to grant the highly conjectural and textually unsubstantiated point that the ultimate motive for this doctrine was soteriological, the fact remains that we do not have sufficient evidence of an Arian soteriology such as is described by Gregg and Groh, notwithstanding the supposed "redactional seams" of the *Life of Antony*. 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. Indeed, insofar as Gregg and Groh oppose an emphasis on human will and striving with participation, they neglect texts that seem to indicate that the Arians themselves spoke of human participation in God.[45] This is another indication that their account of two antithetical soteriologies is altogether over-simplified.

When we turn to their interpretation of Athanasian soteriology, we find Gregg and Groh's account equally unsatisfactory. To begin with, we must note a point in which they make a more or less correct observation which is expressed, however, in a decidedly wrong key, amounting to a real distortion. This point is their portrayal of the Athanasian version of salvation in terms of an insistence on the impossibility of equality "between creatures and the uncreated redeemer."[46] To hear Gregg and Groh tell it, it is as if Athanasius's primary concern was to ensure that Christians did not consider themselves capable of attaining to the level of Christ; they must be reconciled to being "lower" than Christ. Now this is a subtle but important point and a correct perspective on it requires a proper interpretation of Athanasius's whole conception of the relation between God and creation. It is true enough that Athanasius is always insistent that there is no equality between creatures and the Creator, and we have seen that this insistence is not put aside in the context of salvation. We are not saved by becoming equal to God. But just as it was important to see exactly what kind of "otherness" obtains between God and creation, and how such otherness was understood by

Athanasius in terms of positive relation, so it becomes crucial now to specify the kind of inequality that obtains between God and creation in the context of salvation. Since Athanasius's persistent objective is to argue on behalf of the full divinity of the Son—which entails the Son's "otherness" to creation—he is consistent in insisting that we who become "sons by grace" are not equal to Him, who is "Son by nature." But this kind of inequality has to be differentiated at once from the kind of inequality envisioned by Gregg and Groh, which is conceived rather objectively in terms of "progress" and levels of "attainment." Gregg and Groh seem to conceive this inequality in such objective terms, as if creatures who are saved can progress to a certain level and can go no farther, there being a further level of attainment reserved only for Christ. They make it seem as if Athanasius is jealous to defend that line of demarcation which marks off creaturely levels of attainment from the divine perfection.

However, the kind of inequality conceived by Athanasius is much less objective in this way and is again to be understood in the framework of positive relation. In fact, the inequality of the Son by nature compared to those who are "sons" by grace is not to be understood in terms of levels of attainment, but rather in terms of the structure of the relation by which we derive our sonship-by-grace through his Sonship-by-nature and his incarnation.[47] As far as levels of attainment are concerned, this is a framework that is utterly foreign to Athanasius. He is simply not thinking in those terms, precisely because he conceives salvation not in terms of levels of moral progress but rather in terms of relation and union. The inequality between the Son and redeemed humanity is thus to be understood in light of the fact that it is through the Son that humanity is redeemed. What makes Gregg and Groh's interpretation positively misleading is that it evokes the conception that Athanasius is concerned to maintain a kind of objective "distance" between God and creation, even in the context of salvation—as if he wanted to ensure that creation never attained to that highest step of the ladder which is the level of God. But Athanasius's perspective is altogether different. In his view, the difference and inequality between God and creation is conceived in terms of the structure of the relation by which God unites creation to himself. As we have seen previously, God is other as Creator, as the One who constitutes and establishes a relation with what was not. He continues to be other, as the one in whom creation subsists. His inequality to creation is conceived in terms of creation's being "in Him," even

though He is substantially "outside" creation. Similarly, in redemption, the Son can be seen to be other precisely by virtue of the fact that it is He who grants us immediate access to the Father. Indeed, both the Son and Spirit are other than and incommensurate with creation again precisely by virtue of the fact that they "bind us to the Godhead." Ultimately, then, the inequality between redeemed humanity and Christ is not a matter of "levels of attainment" but of the fact that Christ works our deification and makes us to be "gods by grace." It would indeed be difficult to explain Athanasius's language of deification in light of Gregg and Groh's characterization of his emphasis on the inequality between God and creation. The fact that it is Athanasius, after all, rather than Arius, who uses this language most emphatically again underscores the inadequacy of Gregg and Groh's interpretation. In light of our own analysis, however, it becomes clear that there is no tension between the language of deification and the emphasis on inequality. Rather, they are perfectly consistent; the inequality between creation and the Son is manifest in that creation is divinized through the Son.

Aside from emphasizing the inequality between the Christian disciple and Christ himself, we have already noted that Gregg and Groh's interpretation of Athanasius's account of salvation stresses the latter's "substantialist concept of grace as something 'stored in' and dispensed from divine nature."[48] Thus the disciple achieves perfection not by striving, volition, etc., but "by participation and intervention from above."[49] Even before looking at the actual texts, one spontaneously suspects that this is altogether a caricatured account. After all, it is hard to imagine such a one-sided Christian account of salvation, especially one that is cast in the mold of a hagiography. Indeed, even in the thick of the Pelagian controversy itself, such a bracketing of human striving was not adopted by Augustine.[50] But, returning to Athanasius, we find that the evidence exists to suggest that, after all, the "tension" between human striving and divine dispensation of grace is a dialectic that is interior to the Athanasian account of salvation, and not one that arises merely from conflict with Arian soteriology. Since the evidence provided by the *Life of Antony* is put into question by the suspicion that there are "redactional seams" along such lines within the text, we will put that text aside for now and look for other evidence in the *Festal Letters*.

First of all, it needs to be noted that whenever Athanasius mentions the Arian version of the Christian message, whereby the Son

"achieves" his exaltation through virtue, moral progress, and grace, it is clear that, for both him and his Arian opponents, these latter categories go together and belong all on one side, to be differentiated from what is "by nature."[51] In other words, the dichotomy imagined by Gregg and Groh, between virtue, volition, and moral progress, on the one hand, and grace and participation, on the other hand, simply does not appear that way in the Athanasian account. Instead, all these categories are grouped together as indicating a status received "from outside" (and thus pertaining to the created realm) as opposed to the holiness that is integral by nature (and belongs uniquely to God the Creator). Nowhere, in fact, does Athanasius differentiate what is "by grace and participation" from what is by will and merit. Indeed, in his assertion that the Arian Christ who achieves his status through moral progress and the grace of participation is no different from us,[52] Athanasius clearly indicates that he takes the Arian version of Christ's exaltation to be applicable to human beings. The fact is that the actual dichotomy was articulated in terms of what is by both grace and participation, on the one hand, and, on the other, in terms of what is by nature. Athanasius seemed to take it for granted that our exaltation through grace and participation was also "in consequence of virtue"[53] and through moral progress.

If we want to investigate further the dialectic between human striving and divine dispensation of grace, therefore, we should not look for a specifically anti-Arian polemical context. There are no signs that this dialectic is perceived by Athanasius to be a direct issue in the Arian controversy. Instead, we should expect to find the elaboration of such a dialectic in a more pastoral setting, where the bishop wants both to preach to his flock the wonderful and gratuitous works of God and to exhort them to a more fitting response to divine grace. So it is to the *Festal Letters* that we should turn for the elaboration of this dialectic and it is precisely there that we do find it.

Divine grace and human striving in the *Festal Letters*

There is no question that what we find in the *Festal Letters* is a clear emphasis on divine initiative and grace. It is this emphasis that accounts for the persistent theme that we have already noted, of the necessity for thankfulness. But what we do not find is any corresponding de-emphasis on human striving, volition, moral progress, attainment of virtue, and so on. In fact, what corresponds to the

emphasis on divine grace seems to be a fairly reciprocal emphasis on the need to strive to respond fittingly to that grace. The two emphases, far from showing any indications of being conceived as antithetical by Athanasius, are presented as quite complementary. Thus we read that "our will ought 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."[54] Here the reciprocity between divine grace and human will is presented as a standard for moral and spiritual welfare. That our will should "keep pace" and "not fall short" of the divine grace seems to be an exhortation to "match" God's grace by a fitting response. Moreover, an implicit principle seems to be that the availability of God's grace is in some way contingent on our human response. If there is nothing from our side to correspond to the divine grace but a mere "idle will," the grace will depart and become "unprofitable." Therefore, to guard against this loss of grace and the spiritual unfruitfulness that results, it is necessary to "be diligent and careful."[55]

The reciprocity between divine dispensation of grace and the striving of the human will to respond to and appropriate this grace is not, however, envisioned by Athanasius in merely dialectical terms. That is to say that he does not see these two movements as having absolutely distinct points of departure—one, divine, and the other, human. Rather, he sees the human response as strictly derivative of the divine initiative. In this context, Athanasius again reverts to the kind of paradoxical language that we have encountered elsewhere in a Christological context: our response to God is not our own. It seems to me that such language has to be interpreted precisely in a Christological context, for there is a mutual paradoxicality in the human relation to the divine that is focused in Athanasius on the Christological event. Just as the Word made his own the human condition which does not properly belong to him, so humanity can make its own the divine mode of life which does not properly belong to it. In both cases, the mystery of grace is the mystery of "appropriation":

> Therefore the present season requires of us, that we should not only utter such words, but should also imitate the deeds of the saints. But we imitate them, when we acknowledge him who died, and no longer live unto ourselves, but Christ henceforth lives in us; when we render a recompense to the Lord to the utmost of our power; though when we make a return we give nothing

> of our own but those things which we have before received from Him, this being especially of His grace, that He should require, as from us, His own gifts. He bears witness to this when He says, "My offerings are my own gifts" [Num. 28:2, LXX]. That is, those things which you give Me are yours, as having received them from Me, but they are the gifts of God. And let us offer to the Lord every virtue, and that true holiness which is in Him, and in piety let us keep the feast to Him with those things which He has hallowed for us.[56]

With this passage, we need to emphasize, as we did in the Christological passages, the necessity not to reduce the paradox in any one direction. Our response to God's grace both is and is not our own. It is not our own insofar as even this response derives from God's grace and is "received." And yet it is our own precisely because we do actually receive it: "those things which you give Me are yours, as having received them from Me." Moreover, it is precisely their becoming "our own" through our having received them which makes it possible for us to "give" them back to God. If they do not become our own, we would not be able to give them back to God; neither would God be able to require them back of us. But the fact that they do become our own means that the reciprocity of human and divine continues in an ascending cycle: God gives us grace and requires it back of us; we receive it and offer it back to God. "Virtue" and "holiness" are thus conceived in terms of this ascending dialectic, as the "offering back" as gift, of what is already received as gift. Here we see how a perceived dichotomy between striving for virtue and the participation in grace is really quite far from the more complex conception of Athanasius.

Within this conception, the human striving for virtue is simply a matter of acknowledging God's grace and assenting to our participation in this ascending dialectic of giving back to God the gifts that are his. Thus, Athanasius represents diligence and the striving for virtue in terms of conducting ourselves "in accordance with his grace."[57] On the other hand, to be careless and lacking in diligence and not to strive for virtue amounts to despising grace.[58] But the choice of either assenting to grace or departing from it pertains to the human will. Notwithstanding the implication of Gregg and Groh's account, Athanasius is not a predestinationist, and he does not abstract from the importance of human volition in the acquiring and persevering in grace.[59] We can safely say that it is not by way of any redactional seams

that we have the statement in one of his *Festal Letters*, that "we float on this sea [i.e. the world], as with the wind, through our own free-will, for every one directs his course according to his will, and either, under the pilotage of the Word, he enters into rest, or, laid hold of by pleasure, he suffers shipwreck and is in peril of storm."[60] Yet, even within this statement, we can see the dialectic inherent in Athanasius's account. Athanasius himself does not seem to see any contradiction in conceiving of human life as both directed by the will and under the pilotage of the Word. The will continues to be free and can still be said to be directing the course of one's life, even while submitting to the "pilotage of the Word." If we conceive of this pilotage, as Athanasius undoubtedly would, in terms of participation in the life and power of the Word, then we see that such a participation is not a mechanical affair of something "stored up" in God and dispensed by "divine intervention" in a way quite unrelated to human volition. Rather this participation, from the human side, is constituted by a free act of the will that submits to the pilotage of the Word.

It is because Athanasius takes seriously the freedom of the human will that virtue and vice are not for him simply indications of an intervention or non-intervention of the divine, as it would be in Gregg and Groh's version of Athanasian soteriology, but are really conditions that reflect diverse modes of human self-determination. Thus we find in Athanasius, no less than in Gregg and Groh's version of Arian soteriology, a quite straightforward account of divine judgement as something that corresponds to human attainment of moral progress. Even among those who take refuge in the Word and live a godly life, the schema of a divine reward commensurate with deeds and moral progress is applicable: "To this intent He has prepared many mansions with the Father, so that although the dwelling place is various in proportion to the advance in moral attainment, yet all of us are within the wall…For through virtue a [person] enters in unto God…But through vice [a person] goes out from the presence of the Lord."[61]

It should be clear by now that the texts do not substantiate Gregg and Groh's account of an Athanasian soteriology that bases itself on a "substantialist" notion of participation by grace, in opposition to an Arian "volitional" soteriology. Having earlier expressed our doubt about their account of Arian soteriology, we have now also demonstrated that Gregg and Groh's account of Athanasian soteriology is seriously distorted and over-simplified. The texts indicate a much more complex account of the relation between human and divine than

is presented by Gregg and Groh. Having established this point without reference to the *Life of Antony*, we have thereby proved the likelihood that the "redactional seams" indicating tensions within that work between volitional and participational accounts of grace are in fact simply manifestations of a dialectic that is interior to the Athanasian account of salvation, as it is presented in other works. As such, there is no justification for dividing it into two antithetical, Athanasian and Arian, accounts. We can now, therefore, return to the *Life of Antony* for a further elaboration of this Athanasian dialectic.

The co-working of Christ and Antony

Athanasius typically speaks of the relation between Christ and Antony in terms of "co-working," **συνεργία**; the ground and explanation for Antony's success is that Christ has become his co-worker. In order to analyze the inner structure of this relation of co-working, we must first put it in the context of Athanasius's general characterization of divine "working," of God's primordial activity in the universe. This kind of contextualization is justified by the use of the same term—**ἐνέργεια**—in both contexts. We have already had occasion to emphasize how Athanasius is prone to conceive of the relation between God and creation in terms of an active—passive framework. Within this framework, God's primordial activity in relation to the universe is emphasized in very vitalistic terms. The Word is characterized as "living and acting" **(ζῶντα καὶ ἐνέργεια.**[62] The immanent activity of creatures is thus derivative of the primordial activity of the Word, who "by his own power **(τῇ ἑαυτοῦ δυνάμει)** moves and contains **(κινεῖ καὶ συνέχει)** both the visible world and the invisible powers, giving each their proper activity **(ἑκάστῳ τὴν ἰδίαν ἐνέργειαν ἀποδιδούς)**."[63]As these passages bear out, the characterization of God as "working" (**ἐνεργός**) in the universe is closely associated in Athanasius with the terminology of divine power, **δύναμις**, and, in general, with the vocabulary of movement and life. According to his characteristic active-passive framework, God as **ἐνεργός** means that all creation is "enlivened in the Word": **τὰ πάντα ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ κινεῖται καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ζωοποιεῖται.**[64]

When he comes to explain the doctrine of the incarnation, Athanasius maintains the emphasis on God as **ἐνεργός**. Indeed, the significance of the incarnation is articulated in terms of the extension of the manifestation of primordial divine activity from the universe in

general to the human body of Christ in particular, and thence to the disciples of Christ. Through the providence and government of the universe, the Word "moves (κινοῦντος) all things in creation and through them makes the Father known,"[65] whereas, in the incarnation, the knowledge of God manifested by creation is focused particularly on the "works" of the Word in the body, "in order that those who were unwilling to know him by his providence and government of the universe, might yet know the Word of God who was in the body, by the works of the body (ἐκ τῶν δι' αὐτοῦ τοῦ σώματος ἔργων), and through him the Father."[66] A crucial pedagogical function of the incarnation, according to Athanasius, is precisely to give a humanity that has become subject to sensible things a sensible manifestation of divine power through Christ's works in the body: "in order that those who thought that God was in corporeal things might understand the truth from the things which the Lord did through the works of his body (ἀφ' ὧν ὁ Κύριος ἐργάζεται διὰ τῶν σώματος ἔργων), and through him might recognize the Father."[67] This pedagogy is effected insofar as Christ's works in the body are manifestly incommensurate with merely human capacities. The superior "works" of Christ indicate the superiority of the agent who is the acting subject of these works: "weakening and overshadowing by his own works (διὰ τῶν ἰδίων ἔργων) those of all human beings who ever lived, in order to raise up people from whatever level to which they had been drawn and teach them his true Father."[68] Thus Athanasius can say in summary that the soteriological efficacy of the incarnation is twofold. The first aspect is that Christ destroyed our death and granted us a renewal of life, while the second is the self-revelation of the Word and his Father through the bodily works of Christ: "by his works (διὰ τῶν ἔργων) he revealed and made himself known to be the Son of God and the Word of the Father, leader and ruler of the universe."[69]

An important aspect of Athanasius's explication of and apology for the veracity of the incarnation is his attempt to show that the activity of Christ in the body is manifest not only in the works of the historical person of Jesus Christ but also in those of his disciples in the Church. Thus, for example, the empirical "proof" of Christ's resurrection can be found in the fact that his disciples no longer fear death.[70] In general, the holiness of the community of disciples which is the Church is described in rather triumphalistic terms by Athanasius with the intention of showing that the primary agent behind these manifestations of holiness is Christ himself, "who grants to each one the victory over death."[71]

Ultimately, Athanasius's point is to show that the act of the incarnation does not amount to any debilitation of the primordial divine **ἐνέργεια**. On the contrary, the active-passive relation between God and the world is exhibited in the activity of Christ which is manifest through his disciples. It is only when seen from this perspective that the activity of Christ's disciples amounts to a demonstration of the primordial activity of Christ. Thus, Athanasius concludes his description of the activity of Christ's disciples by stressing that such activity amounts to a sure demonstration of Christ's resurrection, for the activity of the disciples derives from the **ἐνέργεια** of Christ:

> For a dead person cannot act **(οὐδὲν ἐνεργεῖν δύναται)**, but the grace of activity lasts only to the grave and there has its end, whereas deeds and activity that influences people **(αἱ πρὸς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐνέργειαι)** belong only to the living… Now that the Saviour is so active among humanity **(ἐνεργοῦντος ἐν ἀνθρώποις)**, and every day in every place invisibly persuades so great a multitude of Greeks and foreigners to come to faith in him and all to obey his teaching, would anyone still doubt in his mind whether the resurrection of the Saviour has taken place and that Christ is alive, or rather that he himself is life?…Or, how, if he is not active **(εἴπερ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐνεργῶν)**—for not to act is proper to the dead—did he cause those who were active and alive to stop their activity **(αὐτὸς τοὺς ἐνεργοῦντας καὶ ζῶντας τῆς ἐνεργείας παύει)**, so that the adulterer no longer commits adultery, the murderer no longer kills, the unrighteous no longer unjustly claims more than his due, and the impious is henceforth pious?…This is not the work of a dead man **(τοῦτο δὲ οὐ νεκροῦ τὸ ἔργον)**, but of one living, and rather of God…For if it is true that a dead person does not act, but the Saviour works so many things every day **(εἰ γὰρ ἀληθὲς τὸν νεκρὸν μηδὲν ἐνεργεῖν, ἐργάζεται δὲ τοσαῦτα καθ' ἡμέραν ὁ Σωτήρ)**…whom then would one say was dead: Christ who works all these things **(τὸν τοσαῦτα ἐργαζόμενον Χριστόν)**? But it is not a proper characteristic of the dead to be active. Or someone who is not active in any way but lifeless, which is the proper mark of demons and idols like dead objects? For the Son of God "is alive and active" and every day works and activates the salvation of all

(ὁ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ Θεοῦ Υἱὸς ζῶν καὶ ἐνεργὴς ὢν καθ' ἡμέραν ἐργάζεται, καὶ ἐνεργεῖ τὴν πάντων σωτηρίαν).

(*CG* 30–1; Thomson, pp. 206–10)[72]

We have quoted this passage at some length in order to show how pervasive and strong is Athanasius's emphasis on the **ἐνέργεια** of Christ as antecedent to and causal of the activity of his disciples. It is clearly in this context that we should interpret the "co-working" of Christ with Antony, in which Antony's triumphs are rather the triumph of the Savior in Antony.[73] Indeed, as in *De Incarnatione,* the very fact that human beings struggle against the demons is taken as evidence that demonic power has been overcome by the power of Christ.[74] This kind of logic is exploited by Antony in a pastoral exhortation to his fellow monks in which a consideration of their own struggle against the devil is supposed to lead to the conclusion that the devil has been made powerless by the victory of Christ. Thus the dialectic between human activity and divine activity leads to a logic in which a self-reflection on human activity leads to an assurance that this activity is grounded and secured by divine activity. So Antony consoles his fellow monks by saying that, despite the flamboyant antics of the devil, they should not be intimidated, for "he was also bound by the Lord like a sparrow, to receive our mockery. And…he and his fellow demons have been trampled underfoot by us Christians. The evidence of this is that we now conduct our lives in opposition to him. For he who threatened to dry up the sea and seize the world, take note that now he is unable to hinder your asceticism, or even my speaking against him. So here it is not necessary to fear them, for by the grace of Christ, all their pursuits come to nothing."[75] As presented by Athanasius, the spirituality of Antony emphasizes confidence and fearlessness before the machinations of the devil. The ground of this confidence is that the battle has already been won in Christ: "Since the Lord made his sojourn with us, the enemy is fallen and his powers have diminished. For this reason, though he is able to do nothing, nevertheless like a tyrant fallen from power he does not remain quiet, but issues threats, even if they are only words. Let every one of you consider this, and he will be empowered to treat the demons with contempt."[76] As a spiritual guide, therefore, Antony encourages his fellow monks to interpret the attacks of the devil as impotent bombast. Trusting not in one's own powers but in the victory already won by the Lord, the Christian

disciple should be contemptuous of the opposition of the devil, and thus the struggle will be waged not in fear but in courage and joy:

> Therefore let us not be plunged into despair in this way, nor contemplate horrors in the soul, nor invent fears for ourselves, saying, "How I hope that when a demon comes, he will not overthrow me—or pick me up and throw me down—or suddenly set himself next to me and cast me into confusion!" We must not entertain these thoughts at all, nor grieve like those who are perishing. Instead, let us take courage and let us always rejoice, like those who are being redeemed. And let us consider in our soul that the Lord is with us, he who routed them and reduced them to idleness. Let us likewise always understand and take it to heart that while the Lord is with us, the enemies will do nothing to us.[77]

In this way, the principle that the Christian's activity in holiness derives from the prior activity and victory of Christ, when applied to the spiritual life, renders the conclusion that the disciple should transcend his or her fears and sense of weakness by a joyful consideration of the powerlessness of the devil before the power of Christ. Likewise, in the actual waging of spiritual battle, the winning strategy exemplified by Antony is that of invoking the power of Christ. This strategy is announced by way of concluding the account of Antony's first struggle with temptation in the desert: "But in thinking about the Christ and considering the excellence won through the intellectual part of the soul, Antony extinguished the fire of his opponent's deception."[78] It is at this juncture also that the motif of Christ's "co-working" with Antony is introduced, in a context that makes clear that such co-working is an asymmetrical relationship in which Antony's work derives from that of Christ:

> For he who considered himself to be like God [i.e. the devil] was now made a buffoon by a mere youth, and he who vaunted himself against flesh and blood was turned back by a flesh-bearing man. Working with Antony was the Lord (Συνήργει γὰρ ὁ Κύριος αὐτῷ), who bore flesh for us, and gave to the body the victory over the devil, so that each of those who truly struggle can say, "It is not I, but the grace of God which is in me."[79]

We should note that the Lord's "working with" Antony seems to derive specifically from the event of the incarnation. This point is implied rhetorically by speaking first of the devil's overthrow by a "flesh-bearing man" (ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπου σαρκοφοροῦντος), after which it is clarified that working with Antony was the Lord "who bore flesh for us" (ὁ σάρκα δι' ἡμᾶς φορέσας). It is by bearing flesh for our sakes that Christ can work with us in our vulnerable flesh, giving "to the body the victory."[80]

An important part of Athanasius's presentation of Antony as a model co-worker of Christ is Antony's conscious awareness of the derived character of his success. This awareness is presented as an essential element of the holiness of Antony. Thus, in narrating to his fellow monks some stories of his successful resistance of demonic attacks, he attaches the disclaimer: "But I was not the one who stopped them and nullified their actions—it was the Lord, who says, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven'."[81] Antony's ministry of healing is exercised in the same self-effacing mode; after healing a young woman of "a terrible and altogether hideous ailment," he insists to the monks: "For this good deed is not mine, that she should come to me, a pitiable man; rather, her healing is from the Savior who works his mercy everywhere for those who call on him."[82] Indeed, it is typical of Antony to accomplish miraculous healings even while dramatically insisting on his own powerlessness.[83] In general, Antony is shown as someone who is concerned to put himself forward as a witness of Christ's power and glory, rather than as someone who possesses these things of his own accord: "He asked that no one marvel at him on this account, but rather that they marvel at the Lord, for he has shown favor to us in the measure of our capacity for knowing him."[84] As presented by Athanasius, Antony's ministry of healing includes the very important pedagogical element of teaching people that the wonders worked through him originate in the activity of the Incarnate Word. As such, Antony's life becomes dramatically integrated into the pedagogical function of the Word's incarnation. We noted earlier that, in the *De Incarnatione*, Athanasius made the point that the works of Christ indicate the superiority of the divine agency that is their active source, while the fact that these works take place through a human body serves the purpose that from the level where people were attracted, Christ might raise them up and teach them his true Father.[85] Antony is thus presented as prolonging this pedagogy of the incarnation by proclaiming his own realization that the works effected through him are

incommensurate with his own capacities. This witness redirects the people's attention from Antony himself and steers it toward the person of Christ, in whom is gained knowledge of the Father.

It is true enough, then, that Athanasius's Antony presents a model in which human virtue and holiness are conceived as derived from participation in the power and ἐνέργεια of the Incarnate Word. Thus far, Gregg and Groh's account is serviceable. Where it is seriously distorted, however, is in the suggestion that such participation precludes an emphasis on human volition and striving. Putting aside the *Life of Antony*, we have already shown how participation by grace and human striving are conceived in dialectical complementarity in the *Festal Letters*. We may now safely observe this same complementarity in Athanasius's account of Antony, without resorting to any speculations about "redactional seams." It is most interesting, in fact, to see how Athanasius makes statements that emphasize Antony's striving immediately following statements about the intervention of the Lord on behalf of Antony. Two significant examples will illustrate this point. The first concerns Antony's "first contest against the devil," a statement which is immediately qualified by Athanasius into: "or, rather, this was in Antony the success of the Savior…"[86] Athanasius, however, seems concerned to make the point to his readers that the fact of the Lord's working with and in Antony does not mean that Antony himself does not have to work. So he follows the preceding statement by stressing that "Antony did not then become careless or arrogant" (οὔτε . . . ἠμέλει λοιπὸν καὶ κατεφρόνει).[87] The rest of the chapter is taken up with the presentation of Antony as the very model of ascetical striving: Antony "practiced the discipline with intensity"; he "mortified the body and kept it under subjection" and accustomed himself to increasingly stringent practices; his disposition is described in terms of ardor (ἡ προθυμία) and watchfulness (ἠγρύπνει).[88] Finally, as if to balance the statement at the beginning of the chapter that Antony's contest represented the success of the Savior in Antony, Athanasius's Antony presents a conception of virtue that emphasizes the element of human striving: "And this tenet of his was also truly wonderful, that neither the way of virtue (τὴν τῆς ἀρετῆς ὁδόν) nor separation from the world for its sake ought to be measured in terms of time spent, but by the aspirant's desire and purposefulness (ἀλλὰ πόθῳ καὶ τῇ προαιρέσει)."[89]

A similar dramatic configuration of emphases on both Antony's striving and divine aid occurs in one of the key passages of the treatise, *Vita Antonii* 10. In the preceding chapter, Antony is presented as the

victim of a terrifying and rather extravagant attack by demons, his cell having been invaded by "the appearances of lions, bears, leopards, bulls, and serpents, asps, scorpions, and wolves."[90] In the midst of much bodily pain, Antony remains in himself "unmoved and even more watchful in his soul."[91] Finally, Antony is rescued by divine intervention:

> In this circumstance also the Lord did not forget the wrestling of Antony, but came to his aid. For when he looked up he saw the roof being opened, as it seemed, and a certain beam of light descending toward him. Suddenly the demons vanished from view, the pain of his body ceased instantly, and the building was once more intact. Aware of the assistance and both breathing more easily and relieved from the sufferings, Antony entreated the vision that appeared, saying "Where were you? Why didn't you appear in the beginning, so that you could stop my distresses?" And a voice came to him: "I was here, Antony, but I waited to watch your struggle. And now, since you persevered and were not defeated, I will be your helper forever, and I will make you famous everywhere." On hearing this, he stood up and prayed, and he was so strengthened that he felt that his body contained more might (πλείονα δύναμιν) than before. And he was about thirty-five years old at that time.[92]

If we choose to read this passage through a predetermined schema of redactional seams, what we have here, rather uncomfortably close together, is both a model of grace as something "stored in" God and "inserted" into the human being, and a "transactional" framework, in which Antony's autonomous initial effort is rewarded by the promise of divine assistance. However, taken as it stands, it simply dramatizes the kind of dialectic that we have already found in the *Festal Letters*, in which the emphasis on divine initiative and grace is balanced by exhortations to "match" the grace of God by our own efforts. While it is clear that this incident is meant to portray a critical point in Antony's career, as is evidenced by the dramatic mention of his age at the time of the incident, it is also true that it is not at this point that the "co-working" of the Lord with Antony begins. The motif of "co-working" was introduced a good deal earlier, in chapter 5. So it is not as if Antony "achieved" the reward of having the Lord as "his helper" by persevering to that point strictly through his own strength. Rather, the

incident is meant as a kind of testing. In the context of the grace already bestowed on him, Antony is here given the opportunity to "match" this grace by the response of perseverance. Taking full advantage of this opportunity, Antony is then rescued by divine aid and the co-working between the Lord and Antony seems to graduate to a more intense level, dramatized by the beam of light, the divine vow of "I will be your helper forever, and I will make you famous everywhere," and the references to Antony's renewed strength and augmented δύναμις. The element of human exertion continues to be integral to this higher and more intense level of "co-working," and itself becomes intensified, as we see from succeeding references to Antony's becoming "more enthusiastic in his devotion to God"[93] and "intensifying more and more his purpose."[94] Moreover, the principle of the complementarity of divine aid and human striving is integrated by Athanasius's Antony in his pastoral discourses with the other monks:

> Therefore, my children, let us hold to the discipline, and not be careless. For we have the Lord for our co-worker in this, as it is written, God "works for good with" everyone who chooses the good. And in order that we not become negligent, it is good to carefully consider the Apostle's statement: "I die daily."[95]

Thus Antony's spirituality, as presented by Athanasius, is not one where divine aid precludes human effort but rather one in which divine aid is seen to be an inducement to greater human effort, with the confidence that comes from trusting that this effort is guaranteed success through the victory of the Incarnate Word.

However, notwithstanding our attempts to emphasize the complementarity in Athanasius between divine aid and human striving, it is not inappropriate to ask what is the specifically human element in the divine—human "co-working" which is the content of the life of grace. In fact, the issue of differentiating what properly belongs to the divine from what properly belongs to the human is discussed several times in Athanasius's account of the *Life of Antony*. For the most part, it is raised by way of Antony's insistence that miraculous acts cannot be initiated or accomplished by human volition but issue from divine dispensation. Such acts, then, are not the proper objects of human striving in general, nor ascetical striving in particular: "For the performance of signs does not belong to us—this is the Savior's work."[96] Thus despite his many healings, "he encouraged those who

suffered to have patience and to know that healing belonged neither to him nor to men at all, but only to God who acts whenever he wishes and for whomever he wills. The ones who suffered therefore received the words of the old man as healing, and learned not to dwell on their infirmities but to be patient. And the ones who were cured were taught not to give thanks to Antony, but to God alone."[97] Whenever Antony does perform miraculous works, he is quick to disclaim ownership of the act: "For this good deed is not mine…rather, her healing is from the Savior who works his mercy everywhere for those who call on him."[98]

This still leaves us with the question of what is the properly human aspect in the divine-human "synergia" of the life of grace, of which Antony is presented as an ideal example. The answer implicitly given by Athanasius is that the properly human activity of Antony is prayer—in the large sense of the term, which includes all of Antony's ascetical "discipline," insofar as it is understood to derive from his invocation of divine assistance. Prayer, understood as the invocation of divine presence and assistance, is the human counterpart to the divine power which is operative in Antony's life of holiness. Thus, in Antony's struggle against the demons, we are made aware that, while the power of the demons is weakened through the victorious power of the Lord,[99] Antony participates in this victory through prayer: "As I prayed and lay chanting psalms to myself, they immediately began to wail and cry out, as though they were severely weakened, and I glorified the Lord, who came and made an example of their audacity and madness."[100] The same point is made when Antony refuses to come out of his cell to heal the daughter of a military officer, who was "disturbed by a demon." Antony seems concerned that the request for healing implies a conviction on the part of the officer that Antony possesses a certain "power" to heal. Antony wants therefore to reinforce the point that, as a mere man, the only thing he can do is invoke the power of Christ through prayer. In fact, to further dramatize this point, he tells the officer that he himself should pray for his own daughter. The whole construction of the episode underlines the principle that the act was accomplished primarily through the divine power of Christ, but also through the instrumentality of human prayer:

> [Antony] was unwilling to open the door, but stooping from above said, "Why do you cry out to me, man? I too am a man like you, but if you believe in Christ, whom I serve, go, and in the same way you believe, pray to God, and it will come to pass."

> Immediately he departed, believing and calling on Christ, and having his daughter purified of the demon. Through Antony many other things have been done by the Lord, who says, "Ask and it will be given you."[101]

This division of labor, by which the effective power belongs to the Lord and the invocation of prayer belongs to Antony, is finally made explicit toward the end of the treatise:

> Antony did, in fact, heal without issuing commands, but by praying and calling on the name of Christ, so it was clear to all that it was not he who did this, but the Lord bringing his benevolence to effect through Antony and curing those who were afflicted. (Οὐ προστάττων γοῦν ἐθεράπευεν ὁ Ἀντώνιος, ἀλλ' εὐχόμενος καὶ τὸν Χριστὸν ὀνομάζων, ὡς πᾶσι φανερὸν γενέσθαι, ὅτι οὐκ ἦν αὐτὸς ὁ ποιῶν, ἀλλ' ὁ Κύριος ἦν, ὁ δι' Ἀντωνίου φιλανθρωπευόμενος καὶ θεραπεύων τοὺς πάσχοντας.)
> Only the prayer was Antony's, and the discipline for the sake of which he dwelled in the mountain, and he rejoiced in the contemplation of divine realities, but he was disconsolate at being annoyed by so many visitors and drawn to the outer mountain.[102]

This passage provides us with an opportunity to underline the consistency between Athanasius's presentation of the *Life of Antony* and his general conception of the relation between God and creation. From the point of view of cosmology, we noted earlier how the relation between God and creation is conceived by Athanasius in terms of an active—passive framework; from the point of view of Christology, we noted how this framework is conceived in terms of the conjunction of divine giving and human receiving in Christ. Similarly, in his presentation of the desert saint, Athanasius is jealous to safeguard the primary active agency of God. The implicit but persistent emphasis of the whole treatise, which is also made explicit in this passage, is that throughout Antony's illustrious career and progress in holiness, it is the Lord, the Incarnate Word, who is ὁ ποιῶν. Antony is really simply the receptacle of the power of the Word. At the same time, however, Antony is not deprived of all subjectivity, in the sense of being an agent who actualizes himself in a certain activity. There is an activity that properly belongs to Antony as a human being; it is prayer, and the

ascesis that derives from prayer. Prayer is here understood as spiritual receptivity, an invocation of and openness to the power of the Lord, the inner form of prayer being "that the Lord may be our fellow worker."[103] However, insofar as Antony is presented as someone who strives in prayer and insofar as prayer is described as properly belonging to Antony as a human subject, we can see Antony's prayer as a credible model of active receptivity. Antony may then be seen as the human model in which the relation between God and creation achieves an ideal perfection.

To fully appreciate Athanasius's presentation of Antony as the ideal type of the Christian, we need to observe some resonances within this presentation that recall the bishop's account of the original condition of humanity before the fall, in the *Contra Gentes*. In that earlier treatise, Athanasius presents unfallen humanity as fully absorbed in the contemplation of God. The pre-lapsarian human being clung to the "divine and intelligible realities" by "the power of his mind" **τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ νοῦ** allowing nothing "from outside" (**ἔξωθεν**) to mix with this contemplation, but having the mind fixed solely on God, **τὸν νοῦν ἐσχηκέναι πρὸς τὸν Θεόν**.[104] However, after turning away from God, the soul's capacity to perceive God through its inherent powers were critically impaired:

> Thus turning away, and forgetting that it exists according to the image of the good God, the soul no longer beheld through its own power God the Word, according to whose image it had been created **(οὐκ ἔτι μὲν διὰ τῆς ἐν αὐτῇ δυνάμεως τὸν Θεὸν Λόγον, καθ' ὃν καὶ γέγονεν, ὁρᾷ)**, but going outside itself **(ἔξω δὲ ἑαυτῆς γενομένη)** it conceived and imagined things that did not exist. For it had hidden away in the complications of fleshly desires the mirror it had within itself, through which alone it was able to see the image of the Father.
>
> (*CG* 8; Thomson, p. 20)

For Athanasius, then, the soul's turning away from God is simultaneously an estrangement from itself, a "going outside itself" which is the opposite of the ecstatic vision of God by which the soul perceives God within itself. Thus the turning away from God repre sents an alienation of the soul from its native dynamism through which it has ready access to the vision of God, for the soul is "its own

path, receiving the knowledge and understanding of God the Word not from outside but from itself" (οὐκ ἔξωθεν, ἀλλ᾽ ἐξ ἑαυτῆς).[105]

In the *Contra Gentes*, Athanasius seems to indicate that, even after the sin of Adam, the soul has not irretrievably lost this inherent dynamism which leads to the knowledge of God. The path to God is therefore still accessible through the soul: "For just as they turned away from God with their mind and invented gods out of nothing, so they can rise towards God with the mind of their soul (δύναται γὰρ . . . οὕτως ἀναβῆναι τῷ νῷ τῆς ψυχῆς) and again turn back towards him."[106] This turning back of the soul toward God through itself is exemplified in Antony, whose estrangement from the world is correlative with a self-recollection that may be understood as the opposite movement of the soul's sinful "turning outside itself." Thus, Antony's first progress in the life of holiness is presented in terms of his recollecting his mind (συνάγων ἑαυτοῦ τὴν διάνοιαν),[107] and being attentive to himself (προσέχων ἑαυτῷ).[108] However, as we pointed out in our earlier discussion of the *Contra Gentes*, Athanasius's emphasis on the soul as its own path to God, however much it may raise red flags in post-scholastic Catholic—Protestant polemic, is not meant to imply that the soul is autonomous and independent of grace. This point is substantiated by the way Athanasius portrays Antony's return to the νοῦς as simultaneous with the contemplation of Christ: "But in thinking about the Christ and considering the excellence won through him and the intellectual part of the soul (τὸν Χριστὸν ἐνθυμούμενος καὶ δι᾽ αὐτὸν τὴν εὐγένειαν, καὶ τὸ νοερὸν τῆς ψυχῆς λογιζόμενος), Antony extinguished the fire of his opponent's [i.e. the devil's] deception."[109] The convergence of the return to the soul and the return to Christ finds an explanation in the principle that the purity of the soul renders it receptive to the revelatory activity of the Word: "For I believe that when a soul is pure in every way and in its natural state, it is able, having become clearsighted, to see more and farther than the demons, since it has the Lord who reveals things to it."[110]

Athanasius's emphasis on the continuity between the soul's inherent dynamic and its accessibility to the divine power has been vulnerable to certain misinterpretations. As we pointed out in an earlier chapter, some scholars find him inconsistent by interpreting some passages as meaning that the soul can find its own way to God without divine assistance and other passages as ruling out that possibility. What such interpretations misunderstand fundamentally is precisely this continuity in Athanasius between the intrinsic dynamism of the soul and its

receptivity to the divine. This continuity does not mean, to be sure, that the soul is of divine essence but it does mean that the soul is naturally constituted by the momentum of receptivity to the divine.[111] Moreover, the reparation of this momentum in a post-lapsarian context is not to be separated from reference to the incarnation of the Word, even if such reference is not explicitly made by Athanasius in every case. As one case in point, we may refer to a speech by Antony on virtue that bears a striking resemblance to a passage in the *Contra Gentes* on the soul's access to God. In the latter treatise, Athanasius emphasizes the souls natural accessibility to the vision of God:

> We do not need anything except ourselves for the knowledge and faultless understanding of this way. For the path to God is not as far from us (πόρρωθεν) or as external to us (ἔξωθεν) as God himself is high above all, but it is in us (ἐν ἡμῖν) and we are capable of finding its beginning by ourselves, as Moses taught: "The word of faith is within your heart." The Saviour also declared and confirmed this, saying: "The kingdom of God is within you." For insofar as we have faith and the kingdom of God within us, we are capable of arriving quickly to the vision and perception of the King of all, the saving Word of the Father. So let the Greeks who worship idols not make excuses, nor anyone else deceive himself that he does not know such a road and thus claim a pretext for godlessness. For we have all stepped on that road and know it, even if not all wish to follow it but would rather depart from it…And if someone were to ask what this road might be, I say it is each one's soul and the mind within it (τὴν ἑκάστου ψυχὴν…καὶ τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ νοῦν). Only through this can God be seen and contemplated, unless these impious Greeks refuse to admit they have a soul, just as they denied God.[112]

The parallel passage in the *Life of Antony* occurs in the context of a discourse by Antony to some younger monks exhorting them to strive for virtue:

> But do not be afraid to hear about virtue, and do not be a stranger to the term. For it is not distant from us (οὐ μακρὰν), nor does it stand external to us (οὐδ' ἔξωθεν ἡμῶν), but its realization lies in us, and the task is easy if only we shall will it

> (ἐὰν μόνον θελήσωμεν)…For the Lord has told us before, "the Kingdom of God is within you." All virtue needs, then, is our willing (τοῦ θέλειν ἡμῶν), since it is in us, and arises from us (ἐν ἡμῖν ἐστι καὶ ἐξ ἡμῶν συνίσταται). For virtue exists when the soul maintains its intellectual part according to nature (Τῆς γὰρ ψυχῆς τὸ νοερὸν κατὰ φύσιν ἐχούσης ἡ ἀρετὴ συνίσταται). It holds fast according to nature when it remains as it was made (ὅταν ὡς γέγονε μένῃ) and it was made beautiful and perfectly straight…As far as the soul is concerned, being straight consists in its intellectual part's being according to nature (τὸ κατὰ φύσιν νοερὸν), as it was created. But when it turns from its course and is twisted away from what it naturally is, then we speak of the vice of the soul. So the task is not difficult, for if we remain as we were made, we are in virtue (Ἐὰν γὰρ μείνωμεν ὡς γεγόναμεν, ἐν τῇ ἀρετῇ ἐσμὲν), but if we turn our thoughts toward contemptible things, we are condemned as evil. If the task depended on something external (ἔξωθεν) that must be procured, it would be truly difficult, but since the matter centers in us (ἐν ἡμῖν), let us protect ourselves from sordid ideas, and, since we have received it as a trust, let us preserve the soul for the Lord, so that he may recognize his work as being just the same as he made it.[113]

The first point that we need to make with regard to the combination of these two passages is that in the latter we see Athanasius emphasizing the role of volition in the progress of virtue, going so far as to say that "all virtue needs is our willing, since it is in us and arises from us." Such language flies in the face of Gregg and Groh's simplistic characterization of the differences between Athanasian and Arian soteriologies. And, certainly, there cannot be any question here of a "redactional seam" caused by the intrusion of independent "Antony-traditions"; the close similarities in thought and terminology between this passage and the one in *Contra Gentes* rule out any such speculation. Indeed, the fact that there are such striking similarities between passages embedded in works that are far apart in both subject matter and time strongly suggests the possibility that the conceptual framework propounded in these passages is integral to Athanasius's vision. We now want to show that this is in fact the case, but before we do so, we need to rule out some misinterpretations.

The task of ruling out misinterpretations and of showing how these passages reveal a line of thought that is quite integral to Athanasius's vision centers on a correct understanding of what Athanasius means when he says that virtue is not "external" to us but "within" us. Once again, we note that the categories of externality and internality are fundamental to Athanasius's way of thinking. We have recognized this fact in our analysis of Athanasius's conception of the relation between God and creation vis-à-vis the Trinitarian relations, and also in our analysis of his interpretation of the incarnation of the Word. We now see the same categories employed in his articulation of the relation between human nature and human goodness. Just as we tried to show that Athanasius's articulation of the externality between God and creation has to be understood in light of the correlation of concepts that forms its native context, we now must do the same in this instance.

It must be repeated that, despite the unease of certain interpreters,[114] his saying that we do not need anything for the knowledge of God "except ourselves" does not in fact mean that this knowledge can be acquired apart from divine assistance. Athanasius is simply not thinking along the lines of a demarcation of what belongs to humanity and what belongs to God in this context. It is important to recognize that when he says that we do not need anything "except ourselves" to know God—insofar as access to knowledge of God is within us and not external to us—the "not external" is not meant to rule out a rôle for God altogether, as if the power of the Word was one of the things "external" to the soul. Rather, what Athanasius means by saying that the soul has no need of anything external to it is that the intrinsic dynamism of the soul leads of itself to God, which is not at all to say that the power of the Word is itself extrinsic to this dynamism. According to Athanasius, in fact, quite the contrary is the case, since this dynamism of the soul is itself a participation in the **δύναμις** of the Word. So the "external," which the soul does not need for the knowledge of God, is not God himself but rather what is discontinuous with the inherent dynamism of the soul, which for Athanasius would mean specifically the visible creation and the desires of the body.[115] Similarly, when Antony is made to say that virtue is "in us and arises from us" and does not depend on something "external," Athanasius certainly does not want us to understand that human virtue does not depend on divine aid. Again, from Athanasius's perspective, the divine **δύναμις** cannot be conceived as something "extrinsic" to human virtue. Virtue, by definition, is Christic; indeed, Athanasius says explicitly in another

place that one of the necessities for knowledge of God is "Christic virtue," **τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν ἀρετῆς.**[116] So, to say that virtue is internal to us and not external is simply to say that virtue does not require the acquisition of anything that is discontinuous with the dynamism of the soul. It is also to say that virtue requires a spiritual recollection in which the "outer senses" are not allowed to disturb the integrity and equanimity of the soul.[117] But it is not to say that divine power can be understood as extrinsic to this dynamism of the soul but rather as something that constitutes it from within.

Those critics who would understand *Contra Gentes* 30 as representing a Platonic framework that departs from the perspective of the incarnation[118] would have to explain why Athanasius would put so similar a passage in the mouth of Antony, whom Athanasius so clearly and persistently depicts as having his holiness derived from the power of the Incarnate Word.[119] But, in fact, it is crucial to recognize that the notion of the "internality" and lack of "externality" of virtue to the soul is not one that, for Athanasius, mitigates against the significance of the incarnation of the Word, but rather derives from it. In making this statement, we rejoin our central theme of the relation between God and creation, and recall that Athanasius understands the significance of the incarnation precisely in terms of divine power becoming "internal" to us in a distinctively more intense mode than previously. We have already shown how this theme is played out in Athanasius through his "rhetoric of reversal," in which the body is "not external" to the Word. If the incarnation is the event through which grace became "internal" to us in a pre-eminent mode,[120] then it is not at all inconsistent but rather most fitting that it is precisely Antony, as the model "co-worker" of the Lord, who should speak of virtue as "in us" and not external to us.

We can take Antony, therefore, as representative of the new mode of internality that obtains between God and creation through the incarnation. Antony is the one in whom the Incarnate Word manifests his victory over sin and corruption. This victory and the divine power through which it is effected is, in Athanasian terms, something internal to Antony and not external. It is true that Athanasius often makes the point that Antony's deeds are not his own but Christ's, but this way of speaking needs to be interpreted with reference to the active-passive framework, as emphasizing the primary agency of the Word and the receptive stance of Antony with respect to these acts. It should not be interpreted with reference to the "internality-externality" framework, as suggesting that these acts are somehow "external" to Antony.

Athanasius always wants to emphasize the lack of externality between God and creation through the incarnation. This emphasis seems to suggest that, while God's life and work within us must be conceived as primarily God's, it is also in a real sense ours, as internal to us and thus correlative to our subjectivity. Of course, it would not be appropriate for Athanasius to dwell on this latter point in the *Life of Antony* by insisting that the miraculous acts of Antony should really be ascribed to Antony. The actual situation is that Antony has become a popular hero, and Athanasius's theological task is to make sure that the glorious fame of Antony is traced back to the glory of the Incarnate Word. Thus his project is not to dissociate Antony from the glory ascribed to him by the multitude but to show the correct configuration of this glory as ascribable to Antony by way of derivation from the Incarnate Lord. To this end, Athanasius indicates that the whole point of his treatise is to show "that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ glorifies those who glorify him."[121] It is not a matter, therefore, of dissociating the glory of Antony from the glory of Christ (as indicating an extrincism of one to the other), but of showing that it is Christ who glorifies and Antony who is glorified.

To interpret the lack of externality between God and humanity in the context of the incarnation as indicating that God's life in us is really ours is to suggest that the incarnation indicates a new level of intersubjectivity in the relation between God and humanity. This is to say that, through the incarnation, what naturally belongs to God and was historically effected through the agency of the Incarnate Word becomes in some sense ascribable to us as subjects, through grace. This is simply the reverse perspective from that wherein the condition of humanity is considered to be ascribable to the subject of the Word. To be sure, it is this latter perspective that really dominates Athanasius's attention. Nevertheless, the former is implied by the whole logic of the "rhetoric of reversal," which we have analyzed previously. There is at least one place, however, where this perspective comes into the foreground, and where the significance of the incarnation is considered in terms of its aligning of human and divine subjectivity.[122] This example occurs in Athanasius's letter to Marcellinus on the Psalms, an analysis of which will lead us conveniently back to the *Life of Antony*.

The grace of the Psalms

In the *Letter to Marcellinus,* Athanasius is responding to the request of a sick friend who is seeking guidance on how to understand the Psalms. In his response, Athanasius begins by stressing the "agreement of the Holy Spirit" among all the books of the Scriptures.[123] Nevertheless, he also emphasizes that the Book of Psalms has "a certain grace of its own," a distinctive way in which it is applicable to the spiritual life of the Christian. Athanasius's explanation of this distinctive position of the Book of Psalms within the scriptures is striking in its characteristic emphasis on the internalization of grace. It is also illuminating in the way this emphasis is played out in terms of identity and otherness. Athanasius identifies the distinctive "grace" of the Psalms in this way:

> For in addition to the other things in which it enjoys an afifinity and fellowship with the other books, it possesses, beyond that, this marvel of its own—namely, that it contains even the emotions of each soul, and it has the changes and rectifications of these delineated and regulated in itself (ὅτι καὶ τὰ ἑκάστης ψυχῆς κινήματα, τάς τε τούτων μεταβολὰς καὶ διορθώσεις ἔχει διαγεγραμ-μένας καὶ διατετυπωμένας ἐν ἑαυτῇ). .[124] Therefore anyone who wishes boundlessly to receive and understand from it, so as to mold himself, it is written there. For in the other books one hears only what one must do and what one must not do. And one listens to the Prophets so as solely to have knowledge of the coming of the Savior. One turns his attention to the histories, on the basis of which he can know the deeds of the kings and saints. But in the Book of Psalms, the one who hears, in addition to learning these things, also comprehends and is taught in it the emotions of the soul, and, consequently, on the basis of that which affects him and by which he is constrained, he also is enabled by this book to possess the image deriving from the words (δύναται πάλιν ἐκ ταύτης ἔχεσθαι τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν λόγων).[125] Therefore, through hearing, it teaches not only not to disregard passion, but also how one must heal passion through speaking and acting.[126]

What strikes one immediately about this passage is the similarity between Athanasius's explication of the distinctive "grace" of the Psalms and his way of conceiving the unique significance of the

incarnation in relation to other acts of divine grace. In the same way that he stresses the relative "externality" of divine grace compared to the incarnation,[127] here he characterizes the other books of the scriptures as providing external and "objective" admonition and information. These other books are described as answering the question of "what?"—what one must do and not do, "knowledge of the coming of the Savior," the deeds of kings and saints, etc. The Psalms, however, not only provide objective knowledge of these things (the "what") but they also answer the question of "how" such knowledge may be internalized in the emotions and manifested in action. They empower the reader toward the subjective appropriation of the content delineated in the other books: "he is enabled by this book to possess (ἔχεσθαι) the image deriving from the words."[128] Moreover, the interiority of this appropriation is emphasized by his stress on the possession of the "image" contained in the Psalms in terms of "the emotions of the soul." The Psalms thus provide a pattern of feeling and acting that is ultimately oriented toward the dispassionate state of equanimity: "And in the case of each person one would find the divine hymns appointed for us and our emotions and equanimity (πρὸς ἡμᾶς καὶ ἡμῶν κινήσεις καὶ καταστάσεις)."[129]

We can see, therefore, that although Athanasius does not explicitly use the terminology of "internality" and "externality" in his comparison of the Psalms with the other scriptures, he nevertheless evokes this framework insofar as he characterizes the Psalms as enabling the interiorization and subjective appropriation of the objective commandments and exhortations contained in the other scriptures.[130] The Psalms do this by providing a concrete pattern by which these commandments and counsels may be appropriated by the hearing subject, a pattern of how to feel, act, and speak. Moreover, Athanasius further emphasizes the "internality" of this pattern by stressing that, in the act of prayerfully reading the Psalms, this pattern is not encountered as external to the speaker but as internal to his or her subjectivity. Again, Athanasius does not use the language of internality and externality here, but that framework is evoked by the terminology of identity, otherness, and ownership.[131] In essence, the distinctive grace of the Psalms has to do with the claim that their contents are encountered as "not other" than the hearer (hence, we can translate: "not external" to the hearer's subjectivity) but as one's own (so we can say, "internal" to the hearer's subjectivity):

> There is also this astonishing thing in the Psalms. In the other books, those who read what the holy ones say, and what they might say concerning certain people, are relating the things that were written about those earlier people. And likewise, those who listen consider themselves to be other than those about whom the passage speaks(οἵ τε ἀκούοντες ἄλλους ἑαυτοὺς ἐκείνων ἡγοῦνται, περὶ ὧν ὁ λόγος φησὶ) ,[132] so that they only come to the imitation of the deeds that are told to the extent that they marvel at them and desire to emulate them. By contrast, however, he who takes up this book—the Psalter—goes thro-ugh the prophecies about the Savior, as is customary in the other Scriptures, with admiration and adoration, but the other Psalms he [reads] as being his own proper words (ὡς ἰδίους ὄντας λόγους ἀναγινώσκει).[133] And the one who hears is deeply moved, as though he himself were speaking (ὡς αὐτὸς λέγων),[134] and is affected by the words of the songs, as if they were properly his (ὡς ἰδίαν ὄντων αὐτοῦ) [135]…Indeed, it is clear that one who reads the [other] books utters them not as proper to himself (μὴ ὡς ἰδίους), but as the words of the saints and those who are signified by them. But contrariwise, remarkably, after the prophecies about the Savior and the nations, he who recites the Psalms is uttering the rest as his own words (ὡς ἴδια ῥήματα), and each sings them as if they were written concerning him (ὡς περὶ αὐτοῦ), and he accepts them and recites them not as if another were speaking, nor as if speaking about someone else. But he handles them as if he is speaking about himself (καὶ οὐχ ὡς ἑτέρου λέγοντος ἢ περὶ ἑτέρου σημαίνοντος δέχεται, καὶ διεξέρχεται, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς αὐτὸς περὶ ἑαυτοῦ λαλῶν διατίθεται).[136] And the things spoken are such that he lifts them up to God as himself acting and speaking them from himself (ὡς αὐτὸς πράξας καὶ ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ λαλῶν).[137]

Despite Athanasius's pointed exclusion of the Christological or "Messianic" Psalms from this applicability of the Psalms to the hearer's own person, an exclusion meant to safeguard the prophetic witness to Christ, it remains true that what Athanasius says here about the special characteristic of the Psalms is also applicable, in his view, to the act of the incarnation. This much can be intimated by the similar use of the motif of "appropriation" which he makes with reference to

the incarnation. But the bishop himself expressly makes this connection:

> Again, the same grace is from the Savior, for when he became man for us he offered his own body in dying for our sake, in order that he might set all free from death. And desiring to show us his own heavenly and well-pleasing life, he provided its type in himself (ἐν ἑαυτῷ ταύτην ἐτύπωσεν), to the end that some might no more easily be deceived by the enemy, having a pledge for protection—namely, the victory he won over the devil for our sake. For this reason, indeed, he not only taught, but also accomplished what he taught, so that everyone might hear when he spoke, and seeing as in an image, receive from him the model for acting (ὡς ἐν εἰκόνι δὲ βλέπων λαμβάνῃ παρ' αὐτοῦ τὸ παράδειγμα τοῦ ποιεῖν). A more perfect instruction in virtue one could not find than that which the Lord typified in himself (ἐτύπωσεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ). For whether the issue is forbearance of evil, or love for mankind, or goodness, or courage, or compassion, or pursuit of justice, one will discover all present in him, so that nothing is lacking for virtue to one who considers closely this human life of his…Those legislators among the Greeks possess the grace as far as speaking goes, but the Lord, being true Lord of all and one concerned for all, performed righteous acts, and not only made laws but offered himself as a model for those who wish to know the power of acting (ἀλλὰ καὶ τύπον ἑαυτὸν δέδωκεν, εἰς τὸ εἰδέναι τοὺς βουλομένους τὴν τοῦ ποιεῖν δύναμιν). It was indeed for this reason that he made this resound in the Psalms before his sojourn in our midst, so that just as he provided the model of the earthly and heavenly man in his own person (ἵν' ὥσπερ ἐν αὐτῷ τὸν ἐπίγειον καὶ οὐράνιον ἄνθρωπον τυπῶν ἔδειξεν), so also from the Psalms he who wants to do so can learn the emotions and dispositions of the soul, finding in them also the therapy and correction suited for each emotion.[138]

Thus, in the same way in which the Psalms provide a "mirror"[139] or "image" wherein the soul can recognize a perfected image of itself, the same is true of the act whereby the Word became flesh and "typified in himself" human virtue. Henceforth, humanity can find "in itself"—that is, in the model of its own humanity in Christ—the perfect image of

virtue. There is a mutual internality whereby the human is typified "in Christ" in such a way that there is thus provided for humanity a model which is accessible to it "in itself." It is in such a context that we must place Athanasius's saying that the way of virtue is intrinsic to the soul. Not that it necessarily follows that whenever Athanasius makes such a statement, he is altogether consciously intending to say that the way of virtue is intrinsic to the soul through the agency of Christ's humanity. But insofar as he tends to see the significance of the incarnation in terms of making the divine presence and power "internal" to the human condition, we cannot take his statements about the intrinsic nature of virtue in the soul as excluding this divine grace. Moreover, we must take his model of the internality of the incarnation as the overarching context or horizon of interpretation which informs such statements.

Returning to Antony, we can see now that his statements about virtue being "not distant" and "not external" but "in us" should not be totally divorced from the perspective whereby the significance of the incarnation is understood precisely in terms of the power of the Word becoming internal to our human flesh. The power of virtue which conquers evil is introduced into "a flesh-bearing man," precisely through the co-working of the One who "bore flesh for us."[140] Within this perspective, what primarily belongs to the agency of God is not thereby "external" to the human subject and, conversely, what is "internal" to the human subject is not thereby "external" or independent of the primary agency of divine power. The incarnation thus represents a relation between God and creation that is characterized in some way by a "co-subjectivity," insofar as what is effected primarily by the divine Subject is also appropriated by and becomes internal to (i.e., not other than) the human subject. Antony, as the model of the redeemed and perfected Christian, represents this co-subjectivity inasmuch as he is portrayed as the co-worker of the Lord. While this co-working is dramatized, for the most part, in terms of struggle and victory over the devil, it is also represented through one significant motif that pertains to our portrayal of co-working in terms of co-subjectivity, and that is the emphasis on the equanimity of Antony, to which we now turn.

The notion of "order" is a fundamental category in Athanasius's thinking. We have already noted his emphasis on the "working" of the Word within the universe, according to which the Word is presented as the primary acting subject who leads and co-ordinates the distinct parts of creation into a coherent and harmoniously ordered whole.[141] At the

same time, Athanasius also articulates the goal of human spiritual striving in terms of achieving an immanent harmony or equanimity, an inner order. Thus in the *Epistle to Marcellinus*, the Psalms are described in terms of regulating and coordinating the emotions and passions of the soul towards "equanimity."[142] Similarly Antony, as the one in whom "the success of the Savior" is manifest, presents us with a perfect model of "utter equilibrium,"[143] an "unshaken mind,"[144] and "stability of character."[145] We can describe such a state as one of divine—human co-subjectivity insofar as it represents the co-working and co-leadership of Christ and the human soul over the passions and emotions. Again, within this perspective, a human person's being self-consistent and "not at variance with himself" is convergent with his or her submission to the divine "leadership." This dynamic is analyzed by Athanasius in his examination of the effect of the singing of the Psalms on the soul:

> The second reason [that the Psalms are sung] is that, just as harmony that unites flutes effects a single sound, so also, seeing that different movements appear in the soul—and in it is the power of reasoning, and eager appetite, and highspirited passion, from the motion of which comes also the activity of the parts of the body—the reason intends man neither to be discordant in himself, nor to be at variance with himself. So the most excellent things derive from reasoning, while the most worthless derive from acting on the basis of desire…In order that some such confusion not occur in us, the reason intends the soul that possesses the mind of Christ, as the Apostle said, to use this as a leader, and by it both to be a master of its passions and to govern the body's members, so as to comply with reason (θέλει τὴν ψυχὴν ὁ λόγος ἔχουσαν Χριστοῦ νοῦν . . . τούτῳ καθηγεμόνι χρήσασθαι καὶ ἐν τούτῳ τῶν μὲν ἐν αὐτῇ παθητικῶν κρατεῖν, τῶν δὲ τοῦ σώματος μελῶν ἄρχειν, εἰς τὸ ὑπακούειν τῷ λόγῳ). Thus, as in music there is a plectrum, so the man becoming himself a stringed instrument and devoting himself completely to the Spirit may obey in all his members and emotions, and serve the will of God.[146]

It is within this overarching context that we can see that Antony's mastery of himself is fully convergent with his allowing himself to be mastered by the Lord. Antony's internalization of the power of the

Incarnate Word means that the ordering, harmonizing, and life-giving power which the Word exercises in the universe becomes immanent to Antony's own constitution.[147] Antony is thus a dramatic model of the relationship of "internality" between humanity and creation through the incarnation, in which the power of the Savior becomes internal to the human being. At the same time, while the model of Antony thus illumines and dramatizes certain elements of Athanasius's understanding of the incarnation of the Word, it also serves to critique that understanding. Indeed, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that, in certain respects, Athanasius's Jesus may gain from borrowing some of the features of Athanasius's Antony. For if the criticism of Athanasius's neglect of Christ's human soul may itself be criticized when proceeding from a framework that is foreign to Athanasius, such criticism may still be allowed when it arises organically precisely from within Athanasius's own framework. The portrait of Antony represents such an occasion. When we consider Athanasius's emphasis on the equanimity of Antony, as representing the perfection of spiritual stability, along with his emphasis on the victory of the incarnation in terms of internalizing the power of the Word into our human condition, we can only conclude that, from Athanasius's own perspective, what is needed is a Jesus who by modeling this equanimity in his own soul makes it internal to our human souls. The fact that Athanasius does not provide such a model means that, while Antony's bodily asceticism can be seen to derive from the victory of the "flesh-bearing Word" that has become internal to our flesh, a similar derivation cannot be traced for Antony's "equilibrium," which is arguably a more fundamental category for characterizing the latter's spiritual perfection. At the same time, this observation merely underscores our earlier remarks about the lack of an analytical perspective in Athanasius's Christology. We noted at the time that by an "analytical perspective" we mean one that focuses on the internal constitution of the Incarnate Word. Athanasius is able to focus on the internal constitution of the Antony who is perfected in Christ, but his spontaneous impulse to conceive Christ himself only in terms of what he effects for us makes him impatient of reflection on his internal constitution. However, his emphasis on the internality of the relation between God and creation logically requires that he makes the redemption of the soul as well as the body derivative of the act whereby the power of the Word became "internal" to the whole human structure, body and soul. In the same way that this power can only be internal to the human body by Christ's appropriating a

human body, it can only be internal to the human soul through Christ's appropriating a human soul. While Athanasius did not himself carry this logic as far as we would wish in the direction of explicitly referring to Christ's human soul, he can be credited with setting up enough of the fundamental structure of this logic to ensure a certain consistency between his thought and later development in this direction.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have been examining the relation between God and creation in the context of grace, with a focus on the human side of this relation. We have centered our analysis on the *Festal Letters*, in which Athanasius, as Bishop of Alexandria, exhorts his flock to respond appropriately to the grace of the Resurrection, and on the *Life of Antony*, which represents the great monk as a prime example of the life of grace. Prior to dealing with the latter work, we found it necessary to make some remarks concerning Gregg and Groh's characterization of Athanasian soteriology as "substantialist," in contradistinction to a supposedly "voluntarist" Arian soteriology. By reference to the *Festal Letters*, we established that the element of volition and human striving was in fact integral to Athanasius's conception of the interaction of divine and human in the context of grace. This interaction is presented in the *Life of Antony* through the motif of the "co-working" of Antony and the Lord. We have sought to reconstruct the native context for the interpretation of this motif by recalling Athanasius's emphasis on the "working" of the Word in the cosmos, the primordial divine activity of the Word of which creacurely activity is derivative. We have shown also that the same active-passive framework is operative in Athanasius's conception of the incarnation as an event through which the "working" of the Word becomes available through and in not only the human body of Jesus but also those of his disciples. Placed in this context, we see Antony as an illustrious example of someone "in whom" the Lord works and manifests his victory over sin and evil. We have seen Antony's appropriation of the secondary and derivative status of his own spiritual success, as indicating a spirituality characterized by both humility and a joyful confidence in the power of God that is available to him despite his own weakness. At the same time, we noted that the motif of striving is not absent from Athanasius's account of Antony. Asking what is the specifically human element in Antony's striving, we answered that it is prayer, the active appeal to be the recipient of divine

activity. In such a way, we can take Antony, the man of insistent prayer, as the model of human active receptivity to the divine. Moreover, as the model of the new and redeemed relation of human to the divine, Antony is characterized as not only someone who looks to Christ for aid but also as someone who achieves holiness by looking within himself and finding virtue "within." We tried to contextualize this observation by analyzing the dynamics of the relation between God and creation, with reference to the categories of internality and externality which are so characteristic of Athanasius's way of thinking. We concluded that, for Athanasius, the relation with God is not considered to be "external" to the human being (although God *in se* is "external" to creation); and, indeed, the incarnation is characterized specifically in terms of internalizing the grace of this relation. As the model of the redeemed relation between God and creation that derives from the incarnation, Antony's looking within and his looking to Christ are intimately related movements. In an analogous dynamic, Antony's allowing himself to be mastered by the Lord leads to a self-mastery, portrayed as a perfect "equanimity." Within the logic of Athanasius, this equanimity must be understood as the power of the Lord becoming "internal" to the soul of Antony, thus allowing him to co-ordinate his bodily passions and emotions into a harmonious order. We concluded by arguing that, in fact, this logic demands that the internalization of divine power in Antony's soul be correlated with an emphasis on Christ's own human soul, which we find lacking in Athanasius. However, the fact that Athanasius's logic demands the filling in of this gap indicates its fundamental soundness, despite the gap itself.

CONCLUSION

The fourth and fifth centuries saw the development and resolution of what are arguably the two most decisive controversies in Eastern and Western Christendom. We have already alluded to the dangers of melding the Pelagian and Arian controversies, but from the point of view of systematic analysis there are undoubtedly important parallels. An examination of these parallels would be a delicate and demanding task in itself, certainly beyond the scope of our present inquiry. Yet we can allow ourselves the suggestion that, most fundamentally, both controversies were resolved in the "orthodox" tradition by the same basic insight: our salvation can only be worked by God. With reference to our theme of the relation between God and the world, we can say that both in the West—with its characteristic emphases on morality, anthropology, and the relation between nature and grace—and in the East, with its more speculative, "metaphysical," and properly "theological" approach, the same conclusion was reached: humanity (and the world) can be related to God only through God. Indeed, the main representatives of the "orthodox" tradition in both controversies (Athanasius and Augustine) rejected a notion of salvation as a transaction—explicitly, in Augustine's case; implicitly, in Athanasius's—and articulated our redemption in terms of a renewed participation in divine life. Again, both insisted that God is the primary and all-encompassing agent of this union, and that this agency is not effected by way of "external aids" but by a union whereby the self-communication of divine life becomes "internal" to us.[1] Ultimately, Augustine's point in the Pelagian controversy reduces to Athanasius's fundamental position: only the Divine Mediator can effect the renewal of the image of God within us[2]—which is to say, only God can unite humanity to God.

This fundamental lesson bequeathed to us, in distinct modes, by both the Western and Eastern Christian traditions, was hard won, both in terms of intra-ecclesial dispute and in terms of interaction with competing non-Christian world views. In our first chapter, we tried to give some sense of the philosophical background against which the emerging Christian tradition developed its own conceptions of the relation between God and the world. We noted especially the tendency, which became pronounced in "Middle Platonism," to conceive the transcendence of God in terms of a self-absorption and lack of involvement in the world, and to posit a realm of subordinate "mediators," whose task was to connect the world with the divine and who were themselves distinguished from both the strictly immanent sphere and from the strictly unqualified transcendence of the primal principle. The Christian gnostics introduced such a (semi-)divine host of intermediaries in their own schema, in which Christ and the Holy Spirit were included, and in which the Creator of this world was distinct from the highest principle. It was in response to these gnostics that we have the first loud and sustained sounding, by Irenaeus, of the motif that only God, who is the Creator and Sustainer of this world, can relate the created sphere to God. This principle was elaborated in reference to our knowledge of God and our union with God, which constitute our salvation: "For the Lord taught us that no one is capable of knowing God, unless that person is taught by God; that is, that God cannot be known without God: but this is the manifest will of the Father, that God should be known";[3] "How can they be saved unless it was God who worked their salvation upon earth? Or how shall we pass into God, unless God has first passed into us?"[4]

As these quotations make clear, Irenaeus's emphasis is not only on the notion that nothing less than God can unite the world to God but, just as strongly, on the fact that God does indeed unite the world to himself in love. We see in Irenaeus a kind of correlation of God and the world, in such a way that God's nature is conceived in terms of divine love for and presence to creation, and divine glory is described as the living human being—alive with the life of God.[5] For Irenaeus, such a correlation is not necessary to the divine nature but is brought about freely by God, through God's love for creation. A notable part of Irenaeus's achievement as a theologian was his ability to conceive divine transcendence and "glory" precisely in terms of God's loving involvement with the world. In his turn, Athanasius gave systematic expression to this central conception of the convergence of divine

transcendence and immanence. In the second chapter, we tried to analyze the systematic elaboration of this principle in Athanasius's early doctrinal work, the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*. There we tried to show that his self-conscious conception of the simultaneity of divine otherness and nearness to the world is a central structural principle in his elaboration of the doctrines of God, cosmology, theological anthropology, soteriology, and Christology.

While the fundamental perspective of the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione* may thus be characterized as "Irenaean," it is not until the *Orationes contra Arianos* that we find some notable instances of parallels between Irenaean and Athanasian texts. While ascertaining the precise historical circumstances of Athanasius's acquaintance with Irenaean texts has not fallen within the scope of our inquiry, our citation of significant parallels at least suggest the hypothesis that, as Athanasius strove to defend Nicaea and its continuity with earlier tradition, he discovered the resources contained in Irenaeus's work and their applicability to the issue of the ontological status of Christ as Mediator. It may also be that this discovery, or increased use, of Irenaeus was connected with his sojourn in the West. In any case, the influence of the Bishop of Lyons is discernible in Athanasius's defense of the divinity of the Son in terms of the kind of mediation and the kind of immediacy that is effected by the Son in the relation between God and the world. In our third chapter, we tried to show how Athanasius's central conception of the convergence of divine transcendence and immanence finds a climactic expression, in the course of the Arian crisis, in a sustained emphasis on God's otherness to the world, coupled with the theme that we have become God's "own" (ἴδιος) through appropriation of the Word, in the Spirit.

It is at least a defensible notion to suggest that this convergence of otherness and nearness, in the relation between God and creation, lies at the heart of the Christian proclamation. In that case, maintaining the tension between divine otherness and nearness in a coherent account of Christian salvation must be considered to be a requirement and a standard of judgement for any Christian theological "system." Despite some shortcomings, such as the lack of emphasis on Christ's human soul, it is certainly a credit to Athanasius's genius that he was able to maintain this tension at the high pitch of a simultaneous emphasis on the utter unlikeness between God and the world, and on our deification to the point of being "Word-ed" in the Word. We have tried to show how this simultaneous emphasis was elaborated into an intelligible

theology by Athanasius. If only by way of signaling the difficulty of such an achievement, we can point very briefly to two modern paradigms of the relation between God and the world in which the tension seems to sag, on one side or another. Both influential in distinct sectors, the one is provided by Friedrich Schleiermacher, and the other by Karl Barth.[6]

Himself a Platonist who, as much as Athanasius, worked comfortably within a framework in which God is the active principle and creation passive, Schleiermacher nevertheless adopted a Kantian mode of thought in which "God" is deduced from the data of human consciousness: God is the "whence," or co-determinant, of the feeling of absolute dependence.[7] Such a paradigm is ultimately monist—God, in the form of "God-consciousness," is swallowed up into human consciousness. This underlying monism is further manifested in a Christology that shies away from a dialectical attribution of both humanity and divinity to the person of Christ, preferring to speak of the perfection of Christ's God-consciousness, i.e., his human consciousness of the "whence" of absolute dependence. Ironically, such a Christology, which occupies a pioneering position among modern "Christologies from below" precisely because of its monism, shows evidence of a certain docetism, in that it holds that Christ's development was "free from any conflict."[8] Finally, Schleiermacher's monism is most evident in his rejection of Trinitarian doctrine in favor of "Sabellianism."[9]

By contrast, we find Athanasius's presentation of the relation between God and creation to be not only dialectical (i.e., conceiving these as, in a certain sense, opposite categories) but also richly dialogical. While God is active and creation passive, humanity encounters God as more than a mere inference of, or datum within, its own passivity: "God contains, but is not contained." Ultimately, the structure of the human being is ecstatic, and this self-transcending structure encounters the God of loving condescension in a relation of conversation (ὁμιλία).[10] Moreover, this dialogue between God and humanity is enfolded within the intra-divine relations: through Son and Spirit, we encounter the Father. The difference between God and the world is not nullified in Christ but becomes an intercourse of the giving and receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In opposition to Schleiermacher, Karl Barth erected a theological edifice based on the irreducible subjectivity of God. Reclaiming the Irenaean principle that God can only be known through God,[11] Barth

rejected the notion of a God deduced from human subjectivity and asserted the absolute and sovereign otherness of God to the world. Because of this emphasis, the name of Barth is not infrequently mentioned in conjunction with that of Athanasius.[12] Indeed, we have tried to show that, in the case of at least one major commentator on Athanasius, J.Roldanus, the interpretation is strongly informed by a Barthian agenda and executed in Barthian terms. The effect is not altogether a happy one, because, despite superficial similarities, Barth's way of conceiving the relation between God and the world is at least different in emphasis from Athanasius's. Athanasius worked comfortably and naturally within the framework of participation; a certain conception of *analogia entis* is intrinsic to his doctrine. His emphasis on divine otherness is strongly bound up with an equal emphasis on divine condescension as conditioning this otherness. Such divine condescension is manifest within the internal structure of the cosmos and of human beings, in such a way that its effects are constitutive of these structures. Of course, it is impossible to sum up Barth's conception of the relation between God and the world in a few lines. Moreover, Barth's "dialectical" style is full of opposing statements and emphases; what he asserts about the otherness between God and the world in his polemic against *analogia entis* is often counterbalanced by his doctrine of *analogia relationis*. In view of these difficulties, we can only point to a typical emphasis in Barth's approach that distinguishes his conception from that of Athanasius. This is his recurrent motif of asserting that whatever is given to humanity and the world by God is not "as such," "in and of itself," "independently and intrinsically," "proper to" humanity.[13] We have seen how Roldanus applies such categories to Athanasius. However, Barth's model seems to suggest that, after all, there is a human structure "as such," "in and of itself," independent of God. In other words, the relation to God seems to be conceived by Barth in such a way as to be "extrinsic" to the human structure "as such."

Of course, for Barth, such a strategy is put at the service of the principle of *sola gratia* and at the defense of divine sovereignty and glory. For Athanasius, however, divine sovereignty and glory are expressed precisely in the fact that all creation derives its being from participation in divine power, and thus, the relation to God is intrinsic and constitutive of the structure of created reality. Ultimately, Athanasius's perspective is that of a relational ontology, whereas Barth is altogether too preoccupied to distinguish between the human

structure "in itself" and the relation to God.[14] This preoccupation is made more problematic in that Barth does not articulate any ontology by which he can clarify just what constitutes the "in itself' of created structures apart from the relation with God.[15] In contrast, Athanasius can rely precisely on his ontology to make the point that whereas our whole being is a participation in God, our nature is still absolutely distinct and "external" to God, not because we have any "structure" which is "of itself' independent of God, but because we participate in God "from nothing."

The difference in tone between Barth's emphasis on the dialectical opposition of God and world, and that of Athanasius, is signaled by the fact that Barth refuses to speak of humanity's co-operating with God *(zusammenwirken)*,[16] whereas Athanasius can draw a theological portrait of Antony as a co-worker **(συνεργός)** with Christ. It is also signaled by Athanasius's dwelling on the "internality" of God's work in us through the incarnation of the Word. Athanasius's emphasis on this new level of "internality" in the relation between God and humanity, in Christ, is again combined with a stress on the irreducibly asymmetrical structure of this relation in a way that maintains the tension between divine otherness and nearness, more than does Barth's. If we can consider Athanasius as a dialogue partner in contemporary theological discussion, we thus gain a theological model that provides a corrective counterpoint to both the Schleiermacherian danger of an anthropocentric monism and the Barthian danger of incipient dualism. Or, more positively, Athanasius's model succeeds in affirming both the ineffable, sovereignly free and transcendent being of God (with Barth) and the nearness of this ineffable presence within the human realm (with Schleiermacher).

But perhaps the most urgent use we can make of Athanasius today is in the realm of Christology. The renewed search for the "historical Jesus" in contemporary Christological discussion, while valuable in itself, underlines the need to recast Christology in a soteriological mode in order to see how the person of Jesus represents definitive salvation for the whole created order. Athanasius reminds us that we need to discover not only who Jesus was in the social-historical context in which he lived but also who Jesus is "for us," in the context of our own struggle for ultimate salvation. However, this "for us" is not something that we can "fill in" for ourselves; nor can it be seen simply in terms of Jesus's outward actions (his "praxis"). To separate the question of ontology from Christology is to separate God's action in

Jesus Christ from God's being. As Athanasius saw very clearly, the result of this strategy is to undermine the good news that, in Jesus Christ, we are truly and definitively "joined" to God in a deifying communion. This good news has its ultimate basis in who God is. For Athanasius, the Word's becoming flesh "for us" is ultimately rooted in the Father's desire to come near to the world, to embrace the world within the Father's own embrace for the Son. Our salvation therefore consists in our being included within the embrace wherein the Father "delights" in the Son. Moreover, the mission of bringing the world near to the Father can only be accomplished by the divine power of the Son: a mere creature, however exalted, cannot overcome the abyss between Creator and creature. Furthermore, Athanasius reminds us, the union between God and the world, represented in Jesus Christ, is not a mere juxtaposition or "equalization" of God and the world, but effects the transformation and exaltation of created reality. Athanasius thus challenges us to move toward a confession of the full divinity of Jesus Christ—as good news "for us"—and toward a conception of Christ's person in which is proclaimed the fullness of human transformation, even unto deification. Ultimately, what is at stake is not some abstract "Hellenistic" doctrine of divine ontology, but the good news of the intimate "nearness" of God to the world in Jesus Christ:

> And we know that while "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God," now that he has become also human for our salvation we worship him, not as though he had come to the body to be equal to it, but as a Master assuming the form of the servant, and as Maker and Creator coming in a creature in order that, in it delivering all things, he might bring the world near to the Father, and make all things to be at peace, things in heaven and things on earth.[17]

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 See Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978, p. 243.
2 This link is explicitly made in *DI* 1.
3 This movement was spearheaded by M.Richard in his "Saint Athanase et la psychologie du Christ selon les ariens", *Mélange de Science Religieuse* 4, 1947, pp. 7–49. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, New York: Sheed & Ward, 1975, pp. 308–29, is more nuanced in his judgement but still approaches Athanasius's Christology with the rather narrow pre-arranged agenda of looking for Christ's human soul. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy*, Edinburgh: T. & T.Clark, 1988, also bases his negative evaluation of Athanasius's Christology on the lack of a credible active human agency in Athanasius's picture of Christ.
4 Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1943.
5 Studies in the History of Christian Thought, vol. 4, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968. As I shall elaborate in the course of my investigations, Roldanus's interpretation is often marred by an agenda governed by a Barthian perspective and easily prone to imposing post-scholastic Roman—Protestant polemical categories onto Athanasius.
6 Partially answering to this need is Pettersen's recent work, *Athanasius*, Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1995. While Pettersen offers a fine lucid summary of Athanasius's doctrine, presented in the traditional manner of proceeding from one tract to another, the present study specifically focuses on the mutual interrelation that obtains between the various Athanasian doctrines, structured around a central theme.
7 What Regis Bernard says about Athanasius's doctrine of the divine image in humanity is applicable to the Alexandrian bishop's theology in general: "Mais précisément c'est la sobriété, la netteté et la fermeté qui nous semblent retenir l'attention sur la doctrine athanasienne de l'image.

Peu de thèses…mais d'une cohèrence, d'une lucidité, d'une constance remarquable" (*L'Image de Dieu d'après saint Athanase*, Paris: Aubeir, 1952, p. 11); "l'oeuvre d'Athanase révèle à qui la scrute une étonnante constance de terminologie, témoignant d'une cohérence synthétique de doctrine" (ibid., p. 14).

8 Cf. *CA* 1:8.

9 One instance of such misunderstanding is that of R.P.C.Hanson in his magisterial work, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy*, Edinburgh: T. & T.Clark, 1988. Hanson takes Athanasius's Christology as indicating an utterly extrinsic relation between the Word and his human body (p. 448), whereas in fact Athanasius's Christology can only be interpreted correctly in view of both the irreducible distinction between God and humanity that is integral to his system and his conception of the incarnation as modifying while not annulling that distinction, in such a way that the relation between the Word and his human body is precisely not external, but one of "appropriation." See below, Chapter 3.

1
THE THEME OF THE RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND CREATION BEFORE ATHANASIUS

1 *Phaedrus* 247c.

2 Cf. *Meno*.

3 *Republic* 509d.

4 *Metaphysics*, *Lambda* 1072b3.

5 "The existence of God, or what comes to the same thing in Stoicism, the divinity of Nature, is a thesis which the Stoics devoted great energy to proving," Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy. Stoics, Epicureans, Skeptics*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974, p. 149. "Fundamentally, Stoic theology is pantheist," ibid., p. 150.

6 Ibid., p. 152.

7 In certain Middle Platonic systems, such as those of Eudorus of Alexandria and Plutarch, the active-passive dichotomy is incorporated into the system of first principles, with the One or Monad conceived as active in relation to the "Indefinite Dyad."

8 Thus Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977, cites as one of the characteristic features of Middle Platonism "a strong commitment (after Antiochus, at least) to a transcendent first principle…" (p. 51). And, in the context of discussing Numenius's distinction between the supreme God and the Demiurge, Dillon comments, "Even those Platonists who do not adopt a distinction between two gods, such as Philo, Plutarch or Atticus, make a strong distinction between God and his Logos, which amounts to very much the same thing."

(p. 367). The possible influence of this tendency on the development of Arius's theology has been investigated by Williams, *Arius. Heresy and Tradition*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1987, esp. pp. 192–6.

9 Quoted in Dillon, op. cit., p. 282.
10 Ibid., pp. 199–202.
11 *Enneads* VI, 9, 3; trans. Stephen MacKenna, London: Penguin, 1991, p. 539.
12 Speusippus (*c.* 407–339 BC) had already insisted that the One cannot be called good or existent. See Dillon, op. cit., pp. 12–18.
13 See *Enneads* VI, 4, 5, where Plotinus argues that the more transcendent the source, the more omnipresent it is.
14 Gurtler, "Providence: Platonic Demiurge, Hellenistic causality," *unpublished*.
15 "The Old Testament bears testimony to God's absolute transcendence…. However, the Bible never wearies from announcing that this awesome otherness is never in isolation from his redemptive mercy," Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments. Theological Reflections on the Christian Bible*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993, p. 372.
16 Cf. Isa. 55:8–9.
17 Ex. 33:20, 23.
18 Cf. Isa. 6:1–7.
19 Ps. 113:5–7 (NRSV).
20 Recent scholarship has tended to de-emphasize Philo the Middle Platonist in favor of Philo the Jewish exegete. Thus Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition From Plato to Denys*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, New York: Oxford University Press, 1981, "Though in many ways his understanding of God is similar to contemporary notions of God as the One, the Ultimate, it breathes a different spirit: God is for him not only a philosophical principle, his is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a God who reveals himself…" (p. 19). The following account is indebted to Louth's presentation of Philo, pp. 18–35.
21 *Spec. Leg.* i, 43ff.
22 *Fug.* 101; Louth, op. cit., p. 28.
23 Dillon, op. cit., p. 159.
24 Bouyer, *Cosmos. The World and the Glory of God*, Petersham: St. Bede's Publications, 1988, p. 84.
25 Rom. 1:3–4.
26 Mt. 10:30; Lk. 12:7.
27 2 Pet. 1:4.
28 Athenagoras, *Supplicatio* 10; trans. Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers*, New York: Collier Books, 1970, p. 308; see also Theophilus, *Ad Autol*. 1: 3.
29 Athenagoras, *Supplicatio* 16:2; Richardson, op. cit., pp. 313–14.

30 Norris, *God and World in Early Christian Theology. A Study in Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen*, New York: Seabury Press, 1965, p. 60.
31 Ibid., p. 67.
32 Barnard, *Justin Martyr. His Life and Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967, pp. 83–4.
33 The problematic nature of this juxtaposition is analyzed by Pannenberg, "The appropriation of the philosophical concept of God as a dogmatic problem of Early Christian theology", in *Basic Questions in Theology*, Collected Essays, vol. 2, trans. George H.Kehm, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971, pp. 119–83.
34 Irenaeus, *Adversus omnes Haereses* (hereafter cited as *AH)* III, 8, 3; Sources Chrétiennes (hereafter SC) 211, 96. In translating the texts of Irenaeus, I have consulted the translation provided in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1.
35 Cf. *AH* II, 5, 4.
36 Cf. *AH* IV, 20,4.
37 For examples of Irenaeus's emphasis on God as "always present" to creation, see ibid. III, 16, 6; IV, 20, 1; IV, 28, 2.
38 "The concept of the absolute transcendence of God with respect to his creation and the consequent immediacy of his presence to it, which Irenaeus elaborates with the aid of this Platonic distinction [i.e., between Being and Becoming] underlies the whole of his theological conception," Minns, *Irenaeus*, Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1994, p. 34.
39 It is beyond the scope of this work to ascertain the exact relationship between Athanasian and Irenaean texts, though I have cited in chapter 3 various notable parallels that strongly raise the possibility of Athanasius having direct access to the writings of Irenaeus. The relationship between these two figures is certainly a subject requiring further study. Torrance has also asserted that Athanasius "stands squarely in the tradition of Irenaeus, and develops the biblical-theological understanding of the Gospel which we see reflected in his works…," without, however, elaborating on precisely where he places this continuity; see his "Athanasius: a study in the foundations of classical theology," in *Divine Meaning. Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics*, Edinburgh: T. & T.Clark, 1995, p. 179.
40 See Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, pp. 1–92, 145–222.
41 *"Et ideo in eo ipso, quo obtinet omnia, gloria sua est" Peri Archon* I, 2, 10 (SC 252, 136).
42 *Com. Jn.* 2:32.
43 See *De Decretis* 25.
44 Cf. Alexander of Alexandria's letter to Alexander of Thessalonica.

45 Cf. *Peri Archon* I, 2, 10; I, 6, 2; see also Crouzel, *Origen,* trans. A.S. Worall, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989, p. 181.
46 E.g. Peri Archon I, 2, 4.
47 Cf. ibid. I, 5, 5; I, 8, 3.
48 See Florovsky, "The concept of creation in St. Athanasius," *Studia Patristica* 6, 1962, pp. 36–52.
49 Cf. *Peri Archon* II, 1, 2.
50 Ibid. II, 4; II, 5.

2
THE RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND CREATION IN THE *CONTRA GENTES–DE INCARNATIONE*

1 Montfaucon, *S.P.N. Athanasii archiepiscopi Alexandrini opera omnia quae extant,* J.P.Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 25.1, Paris, 1857.
2 Nordberg, "A reconsideration of the date of St. Athanasius's *Contra Gentes–Delncarnatione*", *Studia Patristica* 3, 1961, pp. 262–6.
3 "Athanasius von Alexandria", *Realenzyklopädie* II, 1897, p. 199, cited in Camelot, *Athanase d'Alexandrie. Contre les Païens. Texte grec, introduction et notes* (Sources Chrétiennes 18), Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1977, p. 11.
4 Kannengiesser, "La date de l'apologie d'Athanase 'Contre les Païens' et 'sur l'incarnation'", *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 58, 1970, pp. 383–428.
5 Pettersen, "A reconsideration of the date of the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione* of Athanasius of Alexandria", *Studia Patristica* 18, 1982, pp. 1035–6.
6 Meijering, *Athanasius: Contra Gentes. Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Philosophia Patrum. Interpretations of Patristic Texts, vol. 7), Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1984, p. 4.
7 Meijering, op. cit., p. 2; Pettersen, op. cit., p. 1031.
8 van Winden, "On the date of Athanasius's apologetical treatises", *Vigiliae Christianae* 29, 1975, p. 294.
9 Pettersen, op. cit., p. 1038.
10 This is the strategy followed by Pettersen, ibid.
11 Pettersen, op. cit., p. 1030.
12 Cf. *CG* 1, *DI* 1.
13 Laurin, *Orientations maîtresses des Apologistes chrétiens de 270 à 361* (Analecta Gregoriana 61), Rome: Typis Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 1954, p. 406.
14 Camelot, op. cit., p. 13; Roldanus, *Le Christ et l'homme dans la théologie d'Athanase d'Alexandrie. Étude de la conjonction de sa conception de l'homme avec sa christologie,* Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1968, p. 15.
15 Cf. *inter alia DI* 37, 40, 46, 53, 55; one exception is *CG* 10.

16 DI 35, 45.

17 While there are certainly protestations of humility scattered within the work, we should not lose sight of the fact that the author presents himself as a teacher—to be sure, a teacher who has virtually nothing to add to "our blessed teachers," but still a teacher who looks on his real or fictional reader as a student. This stance is hard to attribute to a 20-year-old, whereas the *persona* of a humbly self-deprecating "teacher" is exactly what one would expect from a self-possessed but very young bishop.

18 This dating agrees with Pettersen, op. cit., p. 1039, who arrives at his conclusion by reference to the early *Festal Letters*. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius. Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire*, Cambridge, MA & London, England: Harvard University Press, 1993, p. 13, conjectures that "Athanasius wrote it between 325 and 328 in order to establish his credentials as a worthy successor of Alexander as Bishop of Alexandria—and deliberately avoided polemic against other Christians or any allusion to current controversies within the Church."

19 Kannengiesser, *Athanase d'Alexandrie. Sur l'incarnation du Verbe* (Sources Chrétiennes 199), Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1973, p. 55. Pettersen, op. cit., p. 1037, thinks that the catechetical character of the work partly accounts for its being "a-political, making no references to the government of the empire, or to the attitude of the imperial powers towards the Christians." As we have suggested above, this apparently apolitical stance may yet contain a political statement: i.e. that the victory which seemingly came at the hands of Constantine is actually the victory of Christ. Athanasius may be trying to transfer what Eusebius rendered to Caesar back to God.

20 *Orthodoxy and Platonism in Atbanasius. Synthesis or Antithesis?*, Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1968 (second edn 1974), especially pp. 114–47.

21 von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte. Zweiter Band*, Freiburg & Leipzig: Akademische Verlagsbuchhandlung von J.C.B.Mohr, 1894, p. 206, n. 2.

22 *Contra Gentes* (henceforth cited as *CG*) 2; my translation here is based on the critical edition provided in Thomson, *Athanasius. Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, with the benefit of consultation with Thomson's own translation. Wherever the Greek text is cited, its location in Thomson's edition is noted.

23 Ibid. As is pointed out by Meijering, Athanasius should not be considered as espousing here a Neoplatonic doctrine of God as beyond being. He is not concerned at all here with a metaphysics of divine being, but simply with the radical distinction between divine and created being. Thus "**οὐσία** here must have the meaning of 'created substance'," in line with the formulas of *CG* 35 **(ἐπέκεινα πάσης γενετῆς οὐσίας ὑπάρχων)** and *CG* 40 **(ὑπερεπέκεινα πάσης γενετῆς ἐπίνοια)**. See his *Athanasius: Contra Gentes*, op. cit., p. 16; see also his *Orthodoxy and Platonism*, op.

cit., pp. 6–8, where he points out that "Athanasius nowhere shows any substantial knowledge of Neo-Platonism" (p. 6). The formula derives from Plato (*Republic* VI, 509b) and was used by Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 4, 1, Irenaeus, *Epideixis* 3 and Clement, *Strom.* V, 6, 38 (Camelot, op. cit., p. 53, n. 4). Meijering further notes that, in Justin and Irenaeus, the same qualification was made whereby the Platonic formula referred to the transcendence of God over *created* being: *Orthodoxy and Platonism*, p. 6.

24 *CG* 4.

25 This interpretation is at odds with one that contrasts the "optimism" of *Contra Gentes* with the "pessimism" of *De Incarnatione*, such as it is found, for example, in Roldanus, op. cit., p. 23 and Louth, "The concept of the soul in Athanasius's *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*", *Studia Patristica* 13, 1975, pp. 227–31. I would agree, rather, with Meijering, "Struktur und Zusammenhang des apologetischen Werkes von Athanasius", *Vigiliae Christianae* 45, 1991, p. 316, that the whole work is structured to dramatize the point that humanity failed to repair its breach with God apart from the incarnation: "Als der Mensch über diese drei Wege (i.e. the grace of being created according to God's image; the testimony of the external creation; the testimony of the Old Testament) die Gotteserkenntnis nicht erlangen konnte, erschien das Wort, das ihn im Anfang erschuf, in einem menschlichen Körper, um so das Bild Gottes und damit die Gotteserkenntnis im Menschen zu erneuern…Somit stellt sich der globale Aufbau des Doppelwerkes so dar, als dass von den vier Wegen der Gottesoffenbarung drei in *CG* behandelt werden und der vierte in *DI*. In den Hauptsachen kann sich keine Veränderung in den Ansichten des Athanasius vollzogen haben, etwa in dem Sinne, dass in *CG* den Heiden aufgrund einer 'natürlichen Theologie' weiter entgegen käme als in *DI*, das 'christozentrische Theologie' bietet. Die Feststellung in *DI* 12, dass der Mensch über die ersten drei Wege Gotteserkenntnis hätte erlangen können, er sie aber wegen seiner Sünde eben faktisch nicht erlangte, war auch bereits in *CG* getroffen worden." On the lack of opposition between optimism and pessimism with regard to the two parts of the treatise, see also Pettersen, *Athanasius and the Human Body*, Bristol: Bristol Press, 1990, pp. 13–14.

26 This magnetism of ontology in Athanasius has been noted by Bernard, *L'Image de Dieu d'après saint Athanase*, Paris: Aubeir, 1952, p. 28: "Athanase est un passionné de consistance ontologique solide." Bernard also speaks of "les exigences ontologiques d'Athanase," and gives many examples from throughout the double treatise witnessing to Athanasius's preoccupation with what truly is (ibid., pp. 29–31). But he overlooks the significance of the recurrent usage of the motif of "remaining," by which this magnetism of ontology is inserted into a conception of salvation history.

27 We translate here "natural corruption in the form of death," where Thomson renders it, "natural corruption consequent upon death." The text reads, "γινώσκοιεν ἑαυτοὺς τὴν ἐν θανάτῳ κατὰ φύσιν φθορὰ ὑπομένειν." There seems to be no linguistic exigency for translating ἐν θανάτῳ as "consequent upon death," while conceptually, Athanasius's point is not at all that corruption is consequent upon death—as if derivative from death—but rather that this corruption is "natural," κατὰ φύσιν, insofar as it represents a regression to the non-being from which created nature originates. In contrast, Thomson seems to take φθορά as referring merely to the corruption of the body.

28 Bouyer, *L'Incarnation et l'Église-Corps du Christ dans la théologie de saint Athanase*, Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1943, p. 87, aptly characterizes φθορά as "une rechute spontanée dans le néant d'où nous venons, rechute inévitable à partir du moment où nous nous sommes voulus délibérément en dehors de Dieu."

29 *CG* 2, 30.

30 *CG* 35.

31 *DI* 27ff.

32 *CG* 1.

33 Ibid.; Thomson, p. 5.

34 Athanasius thus defends the appropriateness of the divine Word on the cross by way of defending the appropriateness of the divine Word coming into a human body. The latter is the primary emphasis; the appropriateness of the crucifixion is then explained in terms of the Word taking upon his own body our curse and death (*DI* 25–6).

35 On the early Christian articulation of divine transcendence, see the classic study by Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, London: SPCK, 1952, pp. 1–54. On the overlap in the conception of divine transcendence between early Christian thinkers and Hellenistic philosophy, see Pannenberg, "The appropriation of the philosophical concept of God as a dogmatic problem of early Christian theology", in *Basic Questions in Theology* (Collected Essays, vol. 2, trans. George H. Kehm), Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971, pp. 119–83. Also useful is Grant, *The Early Christian Doctrine of God*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1966, and his later *Gods and the One God* (Library of Early Christianity 1), Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986, esp. pp. 75–94. With specific reference to the doctrines of Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen, see Norris, *God and World in Early Christian Theology*, New York: Seabury Press, 1965.

36 As Meijering, *Orthodoxy and Platonism*, p. 21, puts it, "this is a definition of God with which every Greek intellectual would agree." For parallel descriptions of the divine including Aristides and Athenagoras and, among the philosophers, Diogenes Laertius, Plutarch, and Maximus of Tyre, see Camelot, op. cit., pp. 122–3, n. 1.

37 E.g., *CG* 16: "κατ' ἀλλήλους γὰρ ταῖς οὐσίαις καὶ τὰς πράξεις εἶναι χρή, ἵνα καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἐνεργείας ὁ πράξας μαρτυρηθῇ, καὶ ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας ἡ πρᾶξις γνωσθῆναι δυνηθῇ."

38 Of course, Athanasius in no way intimates an adherence to the Origenian doctrine which seems to suggest a necessary continuity between the almightiness of God and the fact of creation. His point, which is in keeping with his apologetic intent, is to assert the consistency (and thus rational coherence) between the nature of God and the economy proclaimed in the Christian *kerygma*. See my "Theology and economy in Origen and Athanasius", *Origeniana Septima,* Leuven: Peeters, 1998.

39 The notion of God's glory in terms of the relation between God and humanity is reminiscent of Irenaeus (cf. *AH* IV, 20, 7: *gloria enim Dei vivens homo, vita autem hominis visio Dei*…).

40 E.g., *CG* 2: καὶ τὸν Λόγον ἰδών, ὁρᾷ ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ τὸν τοῦ Λόγου Πατέρα; *CG* 9: τὸν ἀληθινὸν καὶ ὄντως ὄντα θεὸν τὸν τοῦ Χριστοῦ Πατέρα *CG* 23: τοῦ παντὸς βασιλεύοντα τὸν Πατέρα τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; *CG* 29: τὴν τῆς ἀληθείας ὁδὸν ὁδεύσωμεν, καὶ θεωρήσωμεν τὸν ἡγεμόνα καὶ δημιουργὸν τοῦ παντὸς τὸν τοῦ Πατρὸς Λόγον, ἵνα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν τούτου Πατέρα Θεὸν κατανοήσωμεν; *CG* 34, 40, 46, 47; *DI* 1, 3, 7, 8, 11, 14, 15, etc.

41 See above, pp. 16–18.

42 As in *DI* 17:ἐν πάσῃ τῇ κτίσει ὤν, ἐκτὸς μέν ἐστι τοῦ παντὸς κατ' οὐσίαν, ἐν πᾶσι δέ ἐστι ταῖς ἑαυτοῦ δυνάμεσι.. Cf. Irenaeus, *AH* IV, 20, 5. The distinction goes back at least to Philo.

43 Florovsky's reading of the Palamite essence-energy distinction into Athanasius seems to stretch things a bit, but it can at least be granted that the basis for Palamite doctrine is present here; see Florovsky, "The concept of creation in St. Athanasius", *Studia Patristica* 6, 1962, pp. 36–52. It is interesting to note that modern Orthodox theologians tend to articulate the significance of this Palamite doctrine in terms of an attempt to speak of the simultaneity of divine transcendence and immanence; see, for example, Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality,* Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974, pp. 122–5.

44 *CG* 35; *DI* 32.

45 *CG* 30.

46 See, especially, *DI* 41–2.

47 *CG* 35–9. Beginning with *CG* 40 ("Who might this creator be?"), Athanasius moves from an account of how the universe is a manifestation of God to the assertion that this God is the Christian God.

48 "τὸν συνάψαντα"(*CG*36); "τοῦ συναγαγόντος καὶ συσφίγξαντος"(*CG* 38)

49 Meijering cites the parallel of Aristides, *Apol. 2 (Athanasius: Contra Gentes*, pp. 121–2). On the whole, this line of argument is typically Stoic; cf. Diog. Laert. VII, 70, 137; Sext. Emp. *Adv. Math.* 9, 75; Marc. Aur. 9, 1; 12, 5; Cicero, *Nat. deor.* II, 5, 15. (Camelot, op. cit., pp. 170–1, n. 1.)

50 For a very explicit later statement of such an analogy, see *Ad Episcopos Aegypti* 15.

51 *CG* 35–9.

52 *CG* 41–6.

53 Bouyer, *L'Incarnation et l'Église-Corps du Christ*, p. 36.

54 Thus, Bouyer, op. cit., p. 83: "La conclusion du discours *Contre les Païens* montrait justement le Verbe à l'oeuvre pour faire le monde comme une expression du Dieu unique, par l'ordre (κόσμος) qu'il y fait règner. Tous ces développements de la première oeuvre de saint Athanase, sur le monde unifié a l'image divine, comme une choeur ou une cité, par le Verbe divin qui donne à toutes choses le mouvement et accorde tous ces mouvements, étaient matériellement peu originaux; on pouvait y retrouver l'influence des conceptions philosophiques assez mélangées de l'époque, le stoïcisme surnageant plus ou moins. Mais nous sommes à même, après les autre développe-ments du 3e *discours contre les ariens*, de saisir quel sentiment poussait Athanase, si peu porté au syncrétimse par ailleurs, à les adopter: c'était cette idée que le monde est une surabondance gratuite de la vie éternellement suffisante à elle-même de Dieu, cette vie qui, selon le mot de saint Jean qu'il ne cessera de commenter, 'est en son Fils'. De là naît son attachement, dès que se forme sa pensée, à ces idées foncièrement scripturaires que l'homme est à l'image divine, comme le monde lui-même, et ce n'est qu'à leur bénéfice qu'il reprend les thèses stoïciennes en en modifiant dès lors radicalement l'intention." On the other hand, I would certainly disagree with Roldanus's statement (*Le Christ et l'homme* pp. 30–1) that "Par comparison avec Origène, la conception du Logos-Sagesse, comme modèle de la creation, ne joue dans les écrits d'Athanase qu'une rôle très minime." Roldanus does not perceive the kind of integration between Platonic (and Origenian) exemplarism and Stoic vitalism in Athanasius. In fact, he actively de-constructs this integration by de-emphasizing the exemplarism ("il ne convient pas de [le] surestimer"), and then asserting that Stoic formulations take the place of Origen's exemplarism, ibid., p. 31, n. 1.

55 The statement that God is uncontained but rather contains all things is commonplace in early Christian doctrine of God. Prestige takes it as intended to convey "a very necessary warning against Stoic pantheism" (op. cit., p. 5).

56 *Peri Archon* I, 2, 8.

57 "Having such a good Son and creator as his offspring, the Father did not hide him away from created beings, but reveals him to all every day through the subsistence and life of the universe, which he effects. In him and through him, the Father reveals himself, as the Saviour says: 'I am in the Father, and the Father is in me.'" *CG* 47.

58 We may note in passing that, notwithstanding the occasional conventional remark, Athanasius is not really much interested in angels. The kind of hierarchical "chain of being" world-view that is found in Origen, for example, gives way to the strict polarity in Athanasius of God and world. We shall remark further on this point in the context of his anti-Arian polemic.

59 "L'opposition entre **χάρις** et **φύσις** correspond, non à notre couple surnaturel et naturel, mais plutôt à la transcendance de l'Incréé divin sur le créé périssable," Bernard, op. cit., p. 61.

60 Gross, *La Divinisation du chrétien d'après les Pères Grecs*, Paris: Livraire Lecoffre, 1938, p. 204, quoted in Bernard, ibid. See also the similar analysis in Roldanus, op. cit., pp. 35–8.

61 I agree entirely with Bernard's remarks that Athanasius "prend l'anthropologie par le biais de la participation" (op. cit., p. 29), and that the text indicates "l'équivalence entre **κατ' εἰκόνα** et participation" (p. 37). Referring to *DI* 6, 11, and 13, he concludes rightly that "ainsi nous trouvons intentionnellement rapprochés le **κατ' εἰκόνα**, la participation du Verbe, le **λογικός** et le **χάρις**" (ibid.); and "il semble donc que l'idée est bien ferme: le **κατ' εἰκόνα** n'est pas une simple ressemblance ou reproduction de forme, mais une participation ontologique" (p. 38). See also Roldanus, op. cit., pp. 64–5. Here, also, Athanasius's perspective is close to that of Irenaeus, who characterizes the human creature as a "receptacle" of the divine (cf. *AH* III, 20, 2).

62 *CG* 41–7.

63 E.g., "**καρπὸς παντέλειος τοῦ Πατρὸς ὑπάρχει, καὶ μόνος ἐστὶν Υἱός, εἰκὼν ἀπαράλλακτος τοῦ Πατρός**," *CG* 46.

64 Wiles contests the force of this logic in his "In defence of Arius", *Journal of Theological Studies* 13, 1962, pp. 339–47. Wiles's lack of appreciation for the persuasiveness of Athanasius's argument seems linked to a lack of perception of Athanasius's own rationale. In this article, he simply makes the point that Athanasius's argument is not convincing without probing into why it was convincing for Athanasius himself. We will have occasion to return to the logic of Athanasius on this point further on (see pp. 125–32).

65 On the break that Athanasius makes with this tradition, see Bernard, op. cit., pp. 25–9; Roldanus, op. cit., pp. 28–9.

66 Bernard, op. cit., p. 27, gives as further reasons: (1) the fact that Athanasius does not speak of humanity as image, but as "according to the Image," **κατ' εἰκόνα**, the Image being properly the Word. Thus image

and resemblance are simply non-commensurate in the Athanasian scheme ("ne peuvent être comparées sur le même plan"); (2) that, since Athanasius follows the Alexandrian tradition of not admitting a corporeal element in the κατ᾽ εἰκόνα, he has no room for the Irenaean differentiation along the lines of πλάσμα–πνεῦμα; and (3) the idea of a progressive march from an initial κατ᾽ εἰκόνα to an eschatological resemblance is absent from the perspective of *CG-DI*.

67 Ibid., p. 45.

68 ὁμιλέω can refer to political, social, or sexual association—all interpersonal contexts. See Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

69 *CG* 41, 42.

70 Roldanus, op. cit., p. 45, n. 3, hints at an appreciation of this point when he remarks in a footnote that "pour la comparaison de *DI* III, 3 avec *CG* 41–42 il est important de noter que le cosmos se comporte passivement à l'égard de l'action du Logos, tandis qu' Athanase precise que l'homme peut aussi bien garder la participation que la perdre, grâce à sa capacité active de choix. Aussi sa participation estelle caractérisée par sa possibilité d'y réagir." Our analysis here will corroborate Roldanus's conclusion with specific attention to the terminology which indicates an attenuation of passivity in the case of humanity's relation to God.

71 *CG* 41, 42.

72 This accounts for the fact, observed by Roldanus, op. cit., p. 55, that "il semble qu' Athanase, apparement, ne se soucie pas de distinctions exactes dans sa terminologie psychologique." Roldanus makes the further characterization that in Athanasius's anthropology, "l'existentiel et le relationnel semblent avoir le dessus sur l'essentiel et l'ontologique" (ibid., p. 57), although one could just as well say that his ontology is in fact relational. Of course, the most basic reference within this existential and relational perspective is the relation to God. On Athanasius's lack of interest in anthropology "as an independent motif" and his focus on the human being as related to God, see also Pettersen, op. cit., p. 21.

73 Schoemann, "Εἰκών in den Schriften des heiligen Athanasius", *Scholastik* 16, 1941, p. 359: "λογικός aber ist er im eigentlichen Sinne bezogen auf den Logos, an dessen Erkennen und Leben er teilhat," quoted in Roldanus, op. cit., p. 49, n. 4. See also Bernard, op. cit., p. 22.

74 Camelot, op. cit., pp. 134–5, n. 2, following Roldanus, op. cit., pp. 53–5, believes that Athanasius is not referring to the philosophical doctrine of the tripartition of the soul when he speaks of both νοῦς and ψυχή. (For this doctrine, see the classic texts of Plato, *Republic* IV 440E-441C, IX 580D.) Meijering, however, considers it "likely that the doctrine of the tripartition of the soul is presupposed here" (*Contra Gentes*, p. 100) but adds that "these are to Athanasius not as to Plato separate parts of the soul, but different functions of the soul" (ibid., p. 101).

75 *CG* 2; Kannengiesser, *Athanase d'Alexandrie*. *Sur l'incarnation du Verbe* (Sources Chrétiennes 199), Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1973, p. 74 sums it up thus: "Les deux termes de la relation originelle de l'homme à son créateur, sont, au sens strict, le Logos-Image-du-Père du côté de Dieu et le νοῦς du côté de l'homme."

76 Thus Kannengiesser sees the activity of the νοῦς as differentiating the human relation to God from that of sheer passivity: "Selon Athanase, l'activité propre du νοῦς s'identifie au κατ' εἰκόνα en acte. Tous les êtres reçoivent passivement la marque de leur créateur. Mais chez les hommes, l'activité du νοῦς fait de cette empreinte le principe d'un agir unique en son genre, conforme a celui du Logos" (ibid., p. 75). But, once again, the attenuation of passivity on the human side does not correspond to the attenuation of activity and initiative on the divine side. The activity of νοῦς continues to be a participation in the prior activity of the δύναμις of the Word: "En somme, le νοῦς n'est rien d'autre qu'une participation de grace a la propre puissance du Verbe paternel…la δύναμις issue du Logos—Image devient l'acte du νοῦς humain; car cette δύναμις conserve dans le νοῦς ses propriétés essentielles, tout comme la présence du Verbe créateur dans l'ensemble des êtres reste bien celle du Logos lui-même" (ibid., p. 76).

77 "It transcends (διαβάς) the senses and all human things and it rises high above the world, and seeing the Word sees in him also the Father of the Word. It rejoices in contemplating him and is renewed by its desire for him, just as the holy scriptures say that the first created man, who was called Adam in Hebrew, had his mind (τὸν νοῦν) fixed on God in unabashed frankness, and lived with the saints in the contemplation of intelligible reality, which he enjoyed in that place which the holy Moses figuratively called Paradise" (*CG* 1). Kannengiesser captures the spirit of Athanasius's exposition when he speaks of "cette extase native du νοῦς" (*De Incarnatione*, p. 77).

78 Ibid.

79 "L'âme contient le νοῦς; il est le νοῦς *de* l'âme", ibid., p. 78. Thus we find the phrase, τῆς ἑαυτῶν ψυχῆς τὸν νοῦν, in *CG* 26.

80 Athanasius uses the Platonic metaphor of the soul as charioteer, ἡνίοχος in *CG* 5. Cf. Plato, Phaedro 246–7.

81 Cf. *CG* 32, 33, where Athanasius describes how the soul governs the body, ἡγεμονεύουσαν τοῦ σώματος (*CG* 32).

82 *CG* 3–4.

83 On the ontological goodness of the body in Athanasius, see Pettersen, op. cit., pp. 5–20.

84 We can contrast this emphasis on the body as what is "closer to ourselves" with the quite different perspective of Augustine, which emphasizes the spiritual element as "inmost."

85 See below, pp. 70–8.

86 This insight is missed by Pettersen (op. cit.) in his analysis of the significance of the body in Athanasius.

87 Fitting in with this illustration is Athanasius's tendency to speak of the relation between God and humanity as a movement that can be executed, from the human side, in "opposite directions": toward God, in one direction; toward the body, in the other direction (cf. *CG* 4).

88 Thus, I would agree with Pettersen (op. cit., p. 22) that passages that seem to speak pejoratively of the body "must be interpreted in the light of both mankind's failure to live *theocentrically* and the unhappy realisation of living *anthropocentrically*."

89 Roldanus, in a terminology and style of argumentation that bear an unmistakable resemblance to Barth's polemics against natural theology, *analogia entis*, etc., typically presents his interpretations of Athanasius's anthropology in terms of such exclusive dichotomies, e.g., "L'homme est-il *logikos* du fait qu'il se trouve placé dans un certain relation avec le Logos et pour autant qu'il en vit, ou l'est-il aussi par la possession de certains attributs qui *par nature* [my emphasis] seraient particulièrement aptes à cette relation?…Sont elles déjà, par leur nature et leur structure en quelque manière une image ou une ressemblance des propriétés du Logos?" (op. cit., p. 50). Roldanus finds a certain tension in Athanasius between "la pensée strictement relationnelle et la propension à rendre la structure anthropologique indépendante" (ibid., p. 65). But the latter tendency is found not so much in the text of Athanasius, as in Roldanus's own determination to interpret his references to whatever properly belongs to the human structure as *per se* autonomous and independent of God. It is this last inference which makes of Roldanus's exegesis of Athanasius's anthropology a Barthian "eisegesis," in which the image of God in humanity becomes the object of a turf-battle between the warring alternatives of its belonging to God or being "une qualité inaliénable de l'âme," ibid., p. 95.

90 This is recognized by Roldanus himself (op. cit., p. 65): "la conception de l'homme est fortement dominée, chez Athanase, par l'idee de relation."

91 This question dominates Roldanus's treatment (op. cit., pp. 65–98) of "l'homme pécheur" in Athanasius. See also Bernard, op. cit., pp. 47–51.

92 Cf. *CG* 8, 34; *DI* 11, 14.

93 This "yes and no" is an "imprécision" for Bernard and an "ambivalence" for Roldanus. Bernard, op. cit., p. 51, tries to tidy things up with a nature—grace framework: "Considéré comme don de la grâce, le κατ᾽ εἰκόνα est perdu; envisagé comme inhérent à l'âme, il n'est qu'obscuri, recouvert d'éléments étrangers." Roldanus, op. cit., p. 95, again sees an ambivalence between a tendency to designate the elements belonging to the image as "plus ou moins possessions permanentes de l'homme" and an opposing tendency to see these elements as gifts of grace that become entirely forfeited.

94 Thus, Louth, "The concept of the soul in Athanasius's *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*", *Studia Patristica* 13, 1975, p. 227; also Roldanus, op. cit., pp. 82–4.
95 *CG* 47.
96 *DI* 1, 30.
97 *CG* 1, *DI* 1, 33.
98 On Athanasius's concern for the "fittingness" of the incarnation, see *inter alia DI* 10, 21, 26, 43, 45.
99 See *inter alia DI* 29, 30, 31, 40.
100 Grillmeier's use of this passage in his interpretation of Athanasius's Christology is altogether in the wrong "key," precisely because he approaches it as an analytical statement—a procedure that characterizes the general incommensurability of viewpoints between Athanasius's Christology and Grillmeier's interpretation of it. In this case, Grillmeier takes Athanasius's concession to the Stoic notion of the universe as a body to be sufficient grounds for forcing all of Athanasius's presentation into the Stoic pattern. Referring specifically to this passage, he offers the following interpretation (*Christ in Christian Tradition*, New York: Sheed and Ward, 1975, p. 311): "For all his transcendence and divinity, the Logos acts as a life-giving principle towards the world. Because of the manifest transcendence, this principle should not be identified with the Stoic world-soul. Athanasius has, however, taken over the Stoic concept of the world as a body, as σῶμα, and has admitted the Logos, which unlike the Stoa he understands as personal, as it were in the place of the soul." The ambivalence in Grillmeier's interpretation is evidenced by the fact that, having just cautioned that Athanasius's Logos "should not be identified with the Stoic world-soul," he then immediately goes on to locate this Logos "in the place of the soul." To be sure, in doing so he does not actually identify Athanasius's Logos with the world-soul, but he does identify him with "the place of the soul." In other words, he is simply forcing the Stoic schema—which is indeed an attempt to analyze the structure of the cosmos—upon Athanasius, who is not making any such attempt, either in the case of the cosmos or of the incarnation. See also the criticism of Grillmeier's interpretation in Bienert, "Zur Logos-Christologie des Athanasius von Alexandrien in *Contra Gentes* und *De Incarnatione*", *Studia Patristica* 21, 1989, pp. 404–7.
101 Grillmeier, op. cit., p. 317.
102 Ibid., p. 318.
103 "Das Fleisch wird zum unmittelbar physisch bewegten Organ des Logos," *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, Band I, Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 1979, p. 472. Here the English translation (op. cit., p. 318) renders "Organ" as "agent," which confuses the whole issue of the distinction between the active agency of the Logos and the instrumental passivity of the body.

104 This alerts us to the fact that Grillmeier is really judging Athanasius in light of the standard of a scholastic nature-grace distinction. Not surprisingly, Athanasius does not measure up to this standard, which is simply foreign to his perspective. Grillmeier concludes: "Athanasius so often speaks of the life-giving functions of the Logos toward the flesh that he completely forgets the human soul of Christ. Indeed he seems to leave no place for it. There can be no doubt that the Logos is not merely the personal subject of Christ's bodily life, but also the real, physical source of all the actions of his life. There is not always a clear distinction between *the mediation of natural and supernatural life*—as little as, say, in Origen, in the relationship between *the natural and supernatural view of the Logos*," ibid., p. 312 (my emphasis).

105 We may cite, for example, *DI* 17: "He was known by his body through his works" **(ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος δὲ διὰ τῶν ἔργων γνωριζόμενος)** ; *DI* 41: "If the part (i.e. the body) is not suitable to be his instrument by which to make known his divinity **(ὄργανον αὐτοῦ . . . πρὸς τὴν τῆς θεότητος γνῶσιν)**, it would be most unfitting that he should be known through the whole universe." Here it is implied that the universe is also an instrument in the same sense as the body. Also, *DI* 42: "The Word used as instrument for his revelation **(πρὸς φανέρωσιν ὡς ὀργάνῳ)** the body in which he was"; *DI* 45: "So then it was suitable that the Word of God took a body and used a human instrument, in order to give life to the body and in order that, just as he is known in creation through his works, so also he might act in a man and reveal himself everywhere, without leaving anything deprived of his divinity and knowledge"; *DI* 54: "So just as the person who wishes to see God, who is invisible by nature and not seen at all, may understand and know him from his works, so let the one who does not see Christ with his mind, learn from the works of his body"; *DI* 55: "The Word of God was revealed in the body **(ἐπεφάνη . . . ἐν σώματι)** and made known to us his Father." These examples prove conclusively that the trajectory of meaning contained in the notion of Christ's body as instrument has to do with its being a medium for the revelation of the invisible God, *ad extra*.

106 As such, Grillmeier would have benefited from applying more consistently to Athanasius his own characterization of the theology of Irenaeus as one of "antithesis." He notes: "Irenaeus, however, sees the incarnation as a unity of Logos and flesh held together in a tension similar to that which will appear later, in intensified form, in Athanasius. There is surely some dependence here." Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, p. 103.

107 This is the legacy which Athanasius bequeathed to Cyril and which becomes characteristic of Alexandrian Christology henceforth, with its proclivity for such dialectical statements as "theotokos" and "the crucified God."

108 We should point out, however, that notwithstanding this emphasis, Athanasius does speak of the incarnation of the Word not only in terms of the Word's taking of a body (σῶμα) but also in terms of the Word becoming a human being, ἄνθρωπος. Thus *DI* 14: ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐπιδημεῖ, λαμβάνων ἑαυτῷ σῶμα; *DI* 15: λαμβάνει ἑαυτῷ σῶμα, καὶ ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἀναστρέφεται; *DI* 16: ὑπέβαλεν ἑαυτὸν διὰ σώματος φανῆναι ὁ Λόγος, ἵνα μετενέγκῃ εἰς ἑαυτὸν ὡς ἄνθρωπον τοὺς ἀνθρώπους; *DI* 17: ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγος ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ; *DI* 41: ἐν ἀνθρώπω ἐπιβεβηκέναι; *DI* 43: ἄνθρωπος ἐπεφάνη; *DI* 44: γέγονε δὲ ἄνθρωπος διὰ τοῦτο, καὶ ἀνθρωπείῳ ὀργάνῳ κέχρηται τῷ σώματι; *DI* 54:αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐνηνθρώπησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποι- ηθῶμεν

109 For further examples on the bodiliness of the incarnate Word as signifying the extremity of his condescension, see *DI* 14, 15, 43, 54.

110 Hanson, op. cit., p. 450: "One of the curious results of this theology of the Incarnation is that it almost does away with a doctrine of the Atonement."

111 *DI* 10; Similarly, in *DI* 19, the death of Christ is called "the chief point of our faith," μάλιστα ὅτι τὸ κεφάλαιον τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν.

112 *DI* 6.

113 *DI* 44.

114 *CG* 40; see above, pp. 39, 49–52.

115 This is not to say that Christ's human soul is impossible to fit into Athanasius's general schema. In chapter 4, I will try to show that Athanasius's account of redemption actually necessitates that Christ have a human soul, if it is to be coherent. Meanwhile, I can agree with Grillmeier that Christ's human soul was not a factor in Athanasius's theology. But this admitted defect in fact arises precisely out of Athanasius's lack of concern for an analytical Christology (and also out of certain emphases which I shall try to point out) and so cannot be explained by setting up an artificial analytical Christology (the Logos-sarx model, understood as an analysis of the "structure" of Christ). On the other hand, it may fairly be said that Athanasius's language is open to misinterpretation along the lines of an analytical perspective—what, in fact, Apollinarius does is simply read Athanasius from such a perspective. In doing so, he anticipates the misinterpretation of Grillmeier!

116 Bernard, op. cit., p. 35.

117 Hanson, op. cit., p. 448.

118 "καὶ ὡς αὐτὸς ὑπὲρ πάντων πάσχων," *DI* 20.

119 See *DI* 44.

120 *DI* 21.

121 In describing Athanasius's Christology in terms of a "model of predication," I am following Norris in his interpretation of Cyril of Alexandria's Christology, "Christological models in Cyril of

Alexandria", *Studia Patristica* 13, 1975, pp. 265–8). Norris also comments on the inadequacy of Grillmeier's typology to capture the sense of the other Alexandrian's Christology, ibid., pp. 256, 268. I would further add that Cyril's model of predication is actually derivative of his predecessor.

122 E.g., *DI* 18.

123 This is the sense of "it was right for these things to be said of him as a man," which cannot be interpreted, in its context, to mean that it is *not* right for these things to be said of the Word but only of the manhood, but rather that it is right for these things to be said *of the Word*—yet only in reference to his having appropriated the human.

124 *DI* 44.

3
THE RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND CREATION IN THE ANTI-ARIAN WRITINGS

1 Pettersen, "A reconsideration of the date of the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione* of Athanasius of Alexandria", *Studia Patristica* 18, 1982, p. 1037.

2 The dating for the events leading up to Nicaea is tentative: "The only absolutely firm date in this whole series of events is that of the Council of Nicaea…," (Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988, p. 131). The traditional date for the eruption of the controversy, 318, is accepted by both Hanson (pp. 3, 130–4) and Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1987, p. 50. The following reconstruction is based on the analyses of Hanson, Williams, and Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*. *Theology and Politics in the Constantian Empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993. The dating of events is based especially on the work of Barnes, which offers a detailed chronology. For a good succinct treatment of the historical background of Athanasius, see Pettersen, *Athanasius*, Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1995, pp. 1–18.

3 It is not certain whether this gathering (*c.* 327 or 328) took place in Nicomedia or Nicaea; see Hanson, op. cit., pp. 177–8; Barnes, op. cit., pp. 17–18.

4 Barnes, op. cit., p. 18.

5 On the issue of the Melitians' participation in and reaction to Athanasius's election, see Arnold, *The Early Episcopal Career of Athanasius of Alexandria*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991, pp. 48–62. Arnold conjectures that the Melitian clergy were, at a certain point, excluded from the proceedings, "either owing to their failed (or short-lived) attempt to elect their own candidate, or because of the

strict interpretation of the decisions contained within the synodal letter [i.e., of Nicaea]" (360).

6 Barnes, op. cit., pp. 20–1; Arnold, op. cit., pp. 62–5.

7 For an analysis of these charges, see Arnold, op. cit., pp. 103–42.

8 "While matters were proceeding thus we withdrew from them, as from an assembly of treacherous men, for whatsoever they pleased they did, whereas there is no man in the world but knows that *ex parte* proceedings cannot stand good" (*Apologia contra Arianos* 82); for a summary of Athanasius's arguments against the council of Tyre, see Barnes, op. cit., pp. 28–30.

9 Barnes, op. cit., p. 24, points out that Constantine "did not, however, depose him from his see or formally try him he merely suspended him from his duties pending further investigation." Even in Trier, Athanasius was "still technically bishop of Alexandria" (ibid.).

10 To say that Athanasius must have realized that his own survival was bound up with the reception of Nicaea merely underscores the fact that Athanasius identified himself with the doctrine of Nicaea. Barnes's interpretation of this identification, which presumes that Athanasius himself was doctrinally unconcerned and merely used doctrine to justify his own political self-interest ("He saw that political activity alone would probably never suffice to restore him to his see. He needed to elevate his struggle to the ideological plane" (p. 53)), is, to use a term which Barnes often applies to Athanasius, tendentious.

11 The work shows signs of being written at intervals (cf. 2:1), with the third oration evidencing certain differences in style from the earlier two. While it has been suggested by Charles Kannengiesser that the third oration was not written by Athanasius (*Athanase d'Alexandrie. Évêque et Écrivain. Une lecture des traités "Contre les Ariens"*, Paris: Beauchesne, 1983, pp. 405–16), this suggestion has not won over any notable adherents. Rather, Kannengiesser's analysis seems to reinforce the hypothesis that "some admitted differences in style and approach result from the fact that Athanasius was writing some years later and under different circumstances" (Stead, "Review of Kannengiesser's *Athanase d'Alexandrie*", *Journal of Theological Studies* 36, 1985, p. 227).

12 *Orationes contra Arianos* (hereafter *CA*) 1:1.

13 Cf. *CA* 2:19; *De Decr.* 7, 9.

14 On the plan of the *Orationes contra Arianos*, see the analysis of Kannengiesser, op. cit., pp. 19–111.

15 Marcellus had been deposed by a synod at Constantinople in 336, and was to be condemned again by synods in Antioch (341), Sardica (343), Antioch (345), and the council of Constantinople in 381. Athanasius eventually moved to distance himself from Marcellus, whose self-identification with the doctrine of Nicaea served to camouflage, or even perhaps excuse, his modalist doctrine. On the acceptance of Marcellus in

the West, Hanson writes: "The Western bishops made no serious attempt to analyse the complexity of the situation which faced them; they had hitherto remained on the periphery of the controversy; their traditional Monarchism could square well enough with the little they knew of the Council of Nicaea; by an oversimplification they were able to see Marcellus as orthodox" (op. cit., p. 272).

16 For full text and analysis, see Hanson, op. cit., pp. 286–91. He concludes: "The Dedication Creed is significantly silent about Nicaea, and is scarcely compatible with it. It can hardly be regarded as either a supplement to Nicaea or an interpretation of it. It is put forward as a substitute. It represents the nearest approach we can make to discovering the views of the ordinary educated Eastern bishop who was no admirer of the extreme views of Arius but who had been shocked and disturbed by the apparent Sabellianism of Nicaea, and the insensitiveness of the Western Church to the threat to orthodoxy which this tendency represented" (pp. 290–1).

17 The doctrine that the Father did not beget the Son by choice or will is in fact strongly upheld in the *Orationes contra Arianos*. Perhaps in opposition to the doctrine propounded by the Eastern bishops at Sardica, Athanasius argues that the notion of the Father begetting the Son by a decision of the will is in fact tantamount to saying that "there was once when he was not"; cf. *CA* 3:59.

18 For text, see Hanson, op. cit., pp. 301–2.

19 Hanson, op. cit., p. 329.

20 Barnes, op. cit., p. 116.

21 For a full treatment, see Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 2 vols., Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979.

22 Quoted in Hanson, op. cit., p. 354.

23 For full text in translation, see Hanson, op. cit., pp. 363–4.

24 Barnes, op. cit., p. 163.

25 *Ad Adelph.* 2.

26 For an account of the history of Arian studies, see Williams, op. cit., pp. 1–25. Also see Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism Through the Centuries*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

27 Williams, op. cit., p. 3 refers to William Cave's *Ecclesiastici: or, the History of the Lives, Acts, Death and Writings of the Most Eminent Fathers of the Church*, London, 1683, as a classic example of this view.

28 See especially pp. 1–24.

29 Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, vol. 2, 3rd edn, Freiburg & Leipzig: Akademische Verlagsbuchhandlung von J.C.B.Mohr, 1894, p. 217.

30 "Allein den Eindruck hat man schlechterdings nirgends, dass es Arius und seinen Freunden auf Gemeinschaft mit Gott in ihrer Theologie angekommen ist. Ihre *doctrina de Christo* hat es mit dieser Frage

über-haupt nicht zu tun. Das Göttliche, das auf Erden erschienen ist, ist nicht die Gottheit, sondern eines ihrer Geschöpfe. Gott selbst bleibt unbekannt. Wer diese Sätze mit unverkennbarer Freudigkeit ausspricht, für die Einzigkeit Gottes eintritt, aber nur um die Einheitlichkeit des Weltgrundes nicht zu gefährden, sonst aber bereit ist neben diesem Gott auch andere 'Götter,' nämlich Creaturen, anzubeten, wer die Religion aufgehen lässt in eine kosmologische Doctrin und in die Verehrung eines heroischen Lehrers—mag er ihn auch **κτίσμα τέλειον** nennen und in ihm das Wesen verehren, durch welches diese Welt geworden ist, was sie ist—der ist seiner religiösen Gesinnung nach Hellenist und hat allen Anspruch darauf, von Hellenisten geschätzt zu werden" (ibid.). In fairness to Arius, we must note that nowhere in his writings is his emphasis on the singleness of God conceived in terms of the unity of the *"Weltgrund"*

31 Gwatkin, *Studies of Arianism. Chiefly Referring to the Character and Chronology of the Reaction which followed the Council of Nicaea*, Cambridge: Deighton Bell & Co., London: George Bell & Sons, 1900 p. 20.
32 Ibid., p. 21.
33 Ibid., p. 27.
34 Ibid.
35 Stead, "Arius in Modern Research", *Journal of Theological Studies* 45, April 1994, p. 36.
36 Cf. Hanson, op. cit., pp. 97–8.
37 Williams, op. cit., p. 2.
38 Ibid., p. 11.
39 Indeed, Gwatkin precedes Williams even in the assertion that "Arianism started from conservative positions" (op. cit., p. 21).
40 Williams, op. cit., p. 177.
41 Ibid., p. 244.
42 "What is noteworthy, though, is the fact that absolute transcendence for Arius is to be conceived as the freedom of self-determination rather than as the mere fact of unrelatedness" (p. 198). While I essentially agree with what Williams wants to say, I would object to the rather modern notion of divine "self-determination" that is being ascribed to Arius. It would be more accurate to say that Arius conceives divine transcendence in terms of God's sovereign capacity to determine the world, rather than in terms of "self-determination."
43 Ibid., pp. 230–1; this voluntarism is also noted by Gwatkin, who styles Arius's notion of divine liberty as "nothing but caprice" (p. 25).
44 Williams, op. cit., p. 230.
45 For two modern examples, see the interpretation of Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition from Plato to Denys*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, New York: Oxford University Press, 1981, p. xiv, and Florovsky,

"The concept of creation in St. Athanasius", *Studia Patristica* 6, 1962, pp. 36–52.

46 Barnes, op. cit., p. 15.

47 Zizioulas, "The teaching of the 2nd ecumenical council in historical and ecumenical perspective", in *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum: Atti del Congresso Teologico Internazionale di Pneumatologia,* Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983, p. 32.

48 A classic exponent of this rejection of classical doctrine by way of a general rejection of metaphysics as "meaningless" is the nineteenth-century theologian Albrecht Ritschl. See the description and critique of his Christology in Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought,* London: SCM Press, Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990, pp. 252–8.

49 *First Letter to Monks 2* (*NPNF* 4, 563—Robertson, *St. Athanasius. Select Works and Letters (A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,* second series, ed. H.Wace and P.Schaff, vol. 4), Edinburgh: T. & T.Clark, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, hereafter cited as *NPNF*).

50 A very typical statement is that of *CA* 2:22, where he says that it is "impossible for things originate either to see or know [God], for the sight and knowledge of him surpasses all" (*NPNF* 4, 360).

51 *Ad Serap.* 1:17; tr. Shapland, *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit,* London: Epworth Press, 1951, p. 106. The "especially" here seems to imply a comparative reference to angels; the "Tropici" against whom Athanasius is writing in these letters apparently believed that the Holy Spirit was an angel.

52 Ibid. 1:18; Shapland, op. cit., p. 107.

53 Ibid. 1:17; Shapland, op. cit., pp. 104–5.

54 For example, responding to the Arian conundrum that if the Son is not brought into being through God's will, then he must be said to have come into being "by necessity," Athanasius counters that this Arian reasoning is faulty insofar as "they dare to apply human contarities to God" (*CA* 3: 6).

55 Cf. *De Decr.* 18; *Ad Episc. Aeg.* 4.

56 For Athanasius, the "scope" (σκοπός) of scripture is to be found precisely in the distinction and relation between the accounts of the Son as God, and as human creature (*CA* 3:29).

57 *Ad Serap.* 1:18, 19; Shapland, op. cit., pp. 107, 108.

58 Thus Athanasius can make use of these scriptural "illustrations" to distinguish and relate the three persons of the Trinity and to give some kind of intelligible analogical account of their relations: "But the Son, in contrast with the fountain, is called river: 'The river of God is full of water' [Ps. 65:9]. In contrast with the light, he is called radiance—as Paul says: 'Who, being the radiance of his glory and the image of his essence' [Heb. 1:3]. As then the Father is light and the Son is his

radiance—we must not shrink from saying the same things about them many times—we may see in the Son the Spirit also by whom we are enlightened. 'That he may give you,' it says, 'the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your heart enlightened' [Eph. 1:17–18]. But when we are enlightened by the Spirit, it is Christ who in him enlightens us. For it says: 'There was the true light which lighteth every man coming into the world' [Jn. 1:9]. Again, as the Father is fountain and the Son is called river, we are said to drink of the Spirit. For it is written: 'We are all made to drink of one Spirit' [1 Cor. 12:13]. But when we are made to drink of the Spirit, we drink of Christ. For 'they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ' [1 Cor. 10:4]." *Ad Serap.* 1:19; Shapland, op. cit., pp. 111–12.

59 *De Syn.* 45; *NPNF* 4, 474.

60 *Ad Serap.* 1:17; Shapland, op. cit., pp. 103–4. See also *Ad Serap.* 1:21, "But finally let us look, one by one, at the references to the Holy Spirit in the divine scriptures, and, like good bankers, let us judge whether he has anything in common with the creatures, or whether he pertains to God; that we may call him either a creature or else other than the creatures, pertaining to and one with the Godhead which is in the unoriginated Triad" (Shapland, op. cit., p. 120).

61 *Ad Serap.* 1:26.

62 *CA* 1:19. The translation provided here is a reworking of that found in *NPNF* vol. 4; hereafter, citations will be included in the text. The Greek text is found in Bright, *The Orations of St. Athanasius against the Arians. According to the Benedictine Text. With an Account of his Life*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884. Whenever the Greek text is quoted, its location in Bright will be cited.

63 It is superfluous to give references to the continual reiteration of this principle. But see *inter alia CA* 1:58, 2:21 ("for by the Word the things which were not have come to be. And if through him [the Father] creates and makes, He is not himself of things created and made; but rather He is the Word of the Creator God"), and 2:71.

64 *Ad Episc. Aeg.* 14.

65 *Ad Serap.* 1:9; Shapland, op. cit., p. 82.

66 See, for example, *CA* 2:48, 49. Consistent with this emphasis is Athanasius's insistence that all creation came to be simultaneously (*CA* 60).

67 For some characteristic examples of this pervasive motif, see *CA* 2:42, "For what fellowship is there between creature and Creator?"; *Ad Serap.* 1:9, "For what community or what likeness is there between creature and Creator?"; ibid. 1:30, "For what communion can there be between that which is originate and that which creates?"

68 Of the term, ἴδιος, Kannengiesser says: "le terme 'propre' deviendra un élément technique privilégié de la formulation athanasienne concernant le Fils" (op. cit., p. 259). See also Louth, "The use of the term ἴδιος in Alexandrian theology from Alexander to Cyril", *Studia Patristica* 19, 198–202: "ἴδιος–ἔξωθεν expresses the fundamental contrast between God and creature, between what belongs to the divine substance and what is created out of nothing" (p. 198). See also Pettersen, op. cit., pp. 145–6 and Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, pp. 193–204. On Arius's understanding of the term, see Williams, "The logic of Arius", *Journal of Theological Studies* 34, 1983, pp. 56–81.

69 See, for example, *De Decr.* 10, 11, 13, 17.

70 The accusation of teaching two ἀγέννητα was a weapon on the "Arian" side from the beginning of the controversy, when it was levelled against Alexander. See Williams, op. cit., p. 57.

71 See *De Decr.* 28.

72 *De Decr.* 7; *DI* 17.

73 See *De Decr.* 15, 19, 29, among many other examples.

74 *CG* 46; *DI* 17.

75 Thus the Son is distinguished as being not "external" and not by participation but "proper" (ἴδιος) to the Father. Cf. *CA* 2:57, 3:1.

76 *Ad Episc. Aeg.* 12.

77 See also *De Syn.* 15, where the meaning of *homoousios* is elaborated in terms of participation.

78 "It is true that Athanasius speaks also—in a perhaps less fortunate way—of the generation of the Son as participation; but this 'participation' is a special one, namely a total communication of the essence of the Father", Balás, *ΜΕΤΟΥΣΙΑ ΘΕΟΥ. Man's Participation in God's Perfections According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa*, Studi Anselmiana LV, Rome: Libreria Herder, 1966, p. 12.

79 As is pointed out by Bernard, *L'Image de Dieu d'après saint Athanase*, Paris: Aubeir, p. 120, Athanasius's argument against "an intervening principle" hearkens back to the classic philosophical "third man" argument, which argues from the absurdity of an infinite regress.

80 As evidence of Arius's ambivalence with regard to the model of participation, we may note that there are also passages where he is quoted by Athanasius as saying that the members of the Trinity do not participate in each other (e.g. *CA* 1:6). It seems to me that we do not have to conclude that Arius is being misrepresented here as holding mutually contradictory positions. It seems more likely that Arius did not subscribe to an "essentialist" notion of participation which entails a communication of essence—and with respect to that notion, the Trinity did not participate each other. But he was willing to accommodate himself to a more attenuated notion in which to participate meant simply to derive one's

being from another. Thus the ambivalence. On Arius's rejection of the Platonic model of participation, see Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, pp. 224f. On the other hand, Widdicombe, op. cit, pp. 189–93, reads this ambivalence into Athanasius himself, whom he sees as operating with both a "strong" and a "weak" sense of participation.

81 The second half of this passage has a decidedly Irenaean ring to it; cf. *Adv. Haer*. IV, 6, 3 and IV, 6, 7.

82 *CA* 1:37.

83 Here again we encounter the Irenaean (Johannine) motif of the vision of the Son as a manifestation of the Father. See also *De Syn*. 51.

84 Most notably, Gregg and Groh's account of Arian soteriology, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981, is based on this simplistic reading, which does not take account of Arian attempts to differentiate the Son from the rest of creation.

85 Thus he (they) is quoted by Athanasius as stating in a letter to Alexander that the Son "is a creature, but not as one of the creatures; a work, but not as one of the works; an offspring, but not as one of the offsprings" (*CA* 2: 19; *De Syn.* 16). Williams comments, op. cit., p. 104: "The Arius who wrote to Alexander that the Son was a 'perfect creature, yet not as one among the creatures…a begotten being…yet not as one among things begotten' is eager to avoid any suggestion that the Son is simply 'like all others'—though some of his supporters were less careful."

86 We can certainly be confident that Athanasius would not exaggerate Arius's distinction of the Word from the rest of creation, since his own polemic is geared to reducing the Arian position as signifying the Son to be merely a creature. In contrast, we see Arius here depicting the Son's being "one among others" in terms of the preeminence of the Son, as "the sun is among visible phenomena," i.e. as having a causal relation, for the sun is not merely another visible phenomenon but makes visible the other phenomena. The likeness of the Son to the sun seems to be a conscious echo of Plato's description of the Form of the Good in the *Republic* 508c.

87 Thus the Arians seem to have posited a pre-temporal origin of the Son. On this point, see Meijering, "ΗΝ ΠΟΤΕ ΟΤΕ ΟΥΚ ΗΝ Ο ΥΙΟΣ. A discussion of time and eternity", *Vigiliae Christianae* 28, 1974, pp. 161–8.

88 Athanasius does not represent this as a direct quote, but as something the Arians "will say" to defend against the charge of having reduced the Son to the level of creatures. He adds that this particular argument is one "which indeed I formerly heard Eusebius and his fellows use" (ibid.). Given that Athanasius's polemic tries to reduce the Arian position to one in which the Son is no different from creatures, it is not likely that he would "help them out" with any purely invented accounts of the Son's prerogatives. In this context, Athanasius's reports are to be trusted precisely as coming from a "hostile witness."

89 Asterius was a sophist ("i.e. he combined the roles which today would be occupied by the theologian, the scientist, the journalist, and the advertising agency," Hanson, op. cit., p. 32) who had studied under Lucian of Antioch and wrote a *Syntagmation*, supporting the doctrine of Arius prior to the Nicene council. Fragments of this work can only be found in the refutations of Athanasius and Marcellus of Ancyra. For a thorough presentation of these fragments, see Vinzent, *Asterius von Kappadokien. Die theologischen Fragmenta. Einleitung, Kritischer, Übersetzung & Kommentar*, Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1993

90 Cf. *CA* 2:24: "However, they say concerning Him, that 'God willing to create originate nature, when He saw that it could not endure the untempered hand of the Father, and to be created by him, makes and creates first and alone one only, and calls him Son and Word, that, through him as a medium (τούτου μέσου γενομένου), all things might thereupon be brought to be.' This they not only have said, but they have dared to put it into writing, namely, Ensebius, Arius, and Asterius who sacrificed." The reference to "Asterius who sacrificed" is Athanasius's jibe at Asterius's temporary apostasy during the Diocletianic persecution.

91 The same argument is used against the gnostic schema of a series of mediations by Irenaeus: "And thus, their doctrine flowing out into immensity, there will always be a necessity to conceive of other Pleromata, and other Bythi, so as never at any time to stop, but always to continue seeking for others besides those already mentioned" (*Adv. Haer.* II, 1, 3; Ante-Nicene Fathers 1, 360).

92 The same point, in the same context of an argument against created mediators, is made by Irenaeus: "This manner of speech may perhaps be plausible to those who know not God, and who liken him to needy human beings, and to those who cannot immediately and without assistance form anything, but require many instrumentalities to produce what they intend. But it will not be regarded as at all probable by those who know that God stands in need of nothing, and that He created and made all things by his Word, while He neither required angels to assist him in the production of those things which are made, nor of any power greatly inferior to himself, and ignorant of the Father…For this is a peculiarity of the pre-eminence of God, not to stand in need of other instruments for the creation of those things which are summoned into existence. His own Word is both suitable and sufficient" (*Adv. Haer.* II, 1, 4; II, I, 5; Ante-Nicene Fathers 1, 361).

93 Again, we can point to a similar argument in Irenaeus, in which the doctrine of divine providence is considered as mitigating against the notion of God's lack of direct involvement in the act of creation. Irenaeus argues that "those, moreover, who say that the world was formed by angels, or by any other maker of it" imply that God "was either careless, or inferior, or paid no regard to those things which took place among his

own possessions, whether they turned out ill or well. But if one would not ascribe such conduct even to a man of any ability, how much less to God!" (*Adv. Haer.* II, 2, 1; Ante-Nicene Fathers 1, 361).

94 See also *In illud omnia; De Decr.* 30; *CA* 3:6, 11, 13. Williams, "Baptism and the Arian controversy", in M.R.Barnes and D.H. Williams (eds) *Arianism After Arius. Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts,* Edinburgh: T. & T.Clark, 1993, p. 152, rightly emphasizes this aspect of Athanasius's soteriology, which he characterizes in terms of "the unity and direct accessibility of God's action"; "that salvation is union with the divine life, directly and without intermediary" (ibid.).

95 *Ad Serap.* 1:25; Shapland, op. cit., p. 129.

96 This is the Arian position as stated in *De Decr.* 9.

97 *De Syn.* 48: "**"Τὰ μὲν γὰρ γενητὰ κἂν συμφωνίαν ἔχῃ πρὸς τὸν πεποιηκότα, ἀλλ' ἐν κινήσει καὶ μετουσίᾳ καὶ νῷ ταύτην ἔχει, ἥνπερ ὁ μὴ φυλάξας ἐκβέβληται τῶν οὐρανῶν. Ὁ δὲ Υἱὸς ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας ὢν γέννημα, οὐσίᾳ ἔν ἐστιν αὐτὸς καὶ ὁ γεννήσας αὐτὸν Πατήρ"**" (*Patrologia Graeca* 26, 780 A-B).

98 See *CA* 2:39. On the use and disuse of "analogy" in Arius's theology, as well as his general conception of the relation between God's being and the world, see the judicious analysis of Williams, *Arius. Heresy and Tradition,* London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1987, pp. 215–29, 233–45.

99 On the rôle of anti-Manichaean concerns in the formation of fourth-century debates, see the very interesting article of Lyman, "Arians and Manichees on Christ", *Journal of Theological Studies* 40, 1989, pp. 493–503.

100 *Ad Episc. Aeg.* 16; *NPNF* 4, 231; PG 25, 573B. Again, the same argument is made by Irenaeus, that the notion of a God "above" the Creator-God makes for a disjunction between God and the world, which renders the true God "without testimony" in the world. Like Athanasius, Irenaeus pits the true God, "the Creator of the world," of whom it can be said that "creation reveals him who formed it, and the very work made suggests him who made it, and the world manifests him who ordered it," and who thus "receives testimony from all," against "that Father whom they conjure into existence [who] is beyond doubt untenable, and has no witnesses." See *Adv. Haer.* II, 9, 1; II, 9, 2; II, 10, 1 (Ante-Nicene Fathers 1, 369).

101 Cf. *Peri Archon* I, 2, 10; see Florovsky, "The concept of creation in Saint Athanasius", *Studia Patristica* 6, 1962, 36–52.

102 On Methodius as a figure in the background of the Arian crisis, see Williams, *Arius,* pp. 167–71. See also Patterson, "*De libero arbitrio* and Methodius' attack on Origen", *Studia Patristica* 14, 1976, pp. 160–6; also, "Methodius, Origen, and the Arian dispute", *Studia Patristica* 17,

part 2, 1982, pp. 912–23. Patterson concludes that the analysis of Methodius's texts "locates the fundamental contention of the early Arians, that 'before [the Word] was created…he was not, because he was not uncreated' as a reaction to Origen's treatment of the creation issue…" (p. 920). Also see his *Methodius of Olympus. Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom, and Life in Christ*, Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1997, pp. 217–18.

103 This style of argument represents a typical rhetorical strategy for Athanasius. See Christopher Stead, "Rhetorical method in Athanasius", *Vigiliae Christianae* 30, 1976, pp. 121–37.

104 See Gregg and Groh, op. cit., pp. 161–83.

105 We find a very similar argument in Irenaeus: "Inasmuch as God is indeed always the same and unbegotten as respects himself, all things are possible to him. But created things must be inferior to him who created them, from the very fact of their later origin; for it was not possible for things recently created to have been uncreated" *Adv. Haer*. IV, 38, 1; Ante-Nicene Fathers 1, p. 521 (hereafter *ANF*).

106 "Thus for Athanasius the concept of God as Creator is wholly governed by the coinherent relation between the Father and the Son," Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith. The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988, p. 77. For a placement of this perspective within the larger Alexandrian tradition, see the whole of Widdicombe, op. cit.

107 Here, also, we may note a parallel with Irenaeus, for whom the notion of creation's being "in" God means that the Creator must be God himself, and not anything extrinsic to divine being: "But it is inconsistent to make this statement, that while he contains all things within himself, the creation was formed by another" *Adv. Haer.* II, 3, 1; ANF 1, p. 362.

108 Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* IV, 14, 1: "In the beginning, therefore, did God form Adam, not as if he stood in need of man, but that He might have [some one] upon whom to confer his benefits. For not alone antecedently to Adam, but also before all creation, the Word glorified his Father, remaining in him; and was himself glorified by the Father" (*NPNF* 4, 478).

109 See also *CA* 2:51, where essence (**τὴν οὐσίαν**) is distinguished from economy (**τὴν οἰκονομίαν**); the latter is "**δεύτερόν ἐστι τοῦ εἶναι**."

110 See also *CA* 2:31.

111 This whole section may be taken as a response to Wiles's objections to Athanasius's argument that only God can grant salvation. Wiles asserts: "In the first place the argument depends upon the general principle that one can only communicate to others that which is in the fullest sense one's own; it is not clear that this principle is self-evidently true and it is difficult to see how it could be established. In the second place it is to be noted that the argument is developed in terms of an understanding of

salvation as deification and that it loses something of its force if once that understanding be abandoned. But finally even within the terms of an understanding of salvation as deification, the argument remains open to question. The deification which is man's goal is not to become **ὁ θεός** but **θεοὶ κατὰ χάριν**. The Son, on the Arian understanding of his person, is the prototype of **θεοὶ κατὰ χάριν**. It is not clear, therefore, why he should not be able to bring men to be what he is" ("In defence of Arius", *Journal of Theological Studies* 13, 1962, p. 346). Our object here is not so much to claim that Athanasius's position is "self-evidently true" nor to "establish" it by logical argument, but simply to clarify why Athanasius himself considered it to be true.

112 *DI* 13.

113 *Ad Adelph.* 8; *NPNF* 4, 577. Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* IV, 33, 4: "How can they be saved unless it was God who wrought their salvation upon earth? Or how shall man pass into God, unless God has [first] passed into man?" (*ANF* 1, p. 507).

114 *CG* 35–40.

115 *Ad Serap.* 1:11.

116 The same must certainly be said of Irenaeus, who also emphasizes that this communion which constitutes our salvation must be initiated from the divine side: "For by no other means could we have attained to incorruptibility and immortality, unless we had been united to incorruptibility and immortality. But how could we be joined to incorruptibility and immortality unless, first, incorruptibility and immortality had become that which we also are, so that the corruptible might be swallowed up by incorruptibility, and the mortal by immortality, that we might receive the adoption of sons?" *Adv. Haer.* III, 19, 1; *ANF* 1, pp. 448–9. In contrast, Gregg and Groh describe the Arian soteriology as "transactional", op. cit., p. 144.

117 *De Syn.* 51; *NPNF* 4, 477; PG 26, 784B. Thus, in answer to Wiles, "In defence of Arius", *Journal of Theological Studies* 13, 1962, p. 346 ("It is not clear, therefore, why [the Arian Christ] should not be able to bring men to be *what he is*" my emphasis), Athanasius says that, with respect to divinity, that is precisely not something that the Arian Christ is, but only something he *has*, which is not radically his own, and therefore is not ultimately his to give.

118 Cf. 1 Cor. 11:23.

119 Cf. *CG* 35–40.

120 *De Syn.* 51.

121 *Ad Serap.* 1:24; Shapland, op. cit., pp. 125–6; PG 26, 585B-C.

122 *Pace* Bernard, op. cit., p. 28: "La rédemption ne sera envisagée que comme restauration du **κατ᾽ εἰκόνα** primitif."

123 *NPNF* 4, 385, n. 4.

124 Cf. *CA* III:31, 32.

125 *CA* II:51–9, 61.
126 *CA* II:58–9.
127 *CA* II:58, 61.
128 For some examples, see *CA* 2:58, 60, 61, 62, 63.
129 E.g. *CG* 41, *DI* 11.
130 The need for being conscious of our "natural" unlikeness to God and our "graced" likeness, and the notion that obscuring this difference is an act of demonic pride, are conceptions that also find a parallel in Irenaeus, who warns that "man should never adopt an opposite opinion with regard to God, supposing that the incorruptibility which belongs to him is his own naturally, and by thus not holding the truth, should boast with empty superciliousness, as if he were naturally like God. For [Satan] thus rendered [man] more ungrateful towards his Creator, obscured the love which God had towards man, and blinded his mind not to perceive what is worthy of God, comparing himself with, and judging himself equal to God" (*Adv. Haer.* III, 20, 1: *ANF* 1, p. 450).
131 See also *CA* 2:50, 59, 74; 3:10, 17, 19–21.
132 *De Decr.* 24; *NPNF* 4, 166.
133 *CA* 3:29. Such a double account plays an exactly parallel rôle in Augustine's *De Trinitate*.
134 Thus, Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition:* "There can be no doubt that the Logos is not merely the personal subject of Christ's bodily life, but also the real, physical source of all the actions of his life" (p. 312); "If the Logos is really to be considered as the sole motivating principle in Christ, then the decisive spiritual and moral acts must be assigned to him above all, and in a way which appears to imply more than an appropriation after the manner of the *communicatio idiomatum*", ibid., p. 313; see also Hanson, pp. 447–8; Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon. A Guide to the Literature and its Background*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983, p. 78.
135 Indeed, one of the indications that this interpretive model is incoherent is that Grillmeier will insist nevertheless that Athanasius uses the "organon" concept to describe the "conjunction of the divine Word with the flesh" (p. 317)—a conjunction, we are given to understand, which in no way penetrates into the realm of Christ's subjectivity. More coherent, and also demonstrably wrong and in variance with the actual texts, is Hanson's assertion that, in Athanasius's account, the Word's "relation to this body is no closer than that of an astronaut to his space-suit". (op. cit., p. 448).
136 *Pace* Richard, who takes Athanasius's allowance of such predications in a reductively nominalist sense. See his "Saint Athanase et la psychologie du Christ selon les ariens", *Mélange de Science Religieuse* 4, 1947, pp. 7–49.
137 Grillmeier, op. cit., pp. 313–14.

138 Such usage has to be understood in the context of the ancient notion that predication is rooted in reality; ἴδια (characteristics) represent the essential defining characteristics of a being. In discussing the usage of ἴδιος in reference to the relation of Father-Son in the Arian debates, Williams, "The Logic of Arius", p. 60 points out that, in contemporary philosophical discourse, it would have meant, "the 'essential condition'… of a particular concrete reality."
139 Hanson, op. cit., p. 448.
140 *CA* 3:33; Ad Epict. 6.
141 Thus, Grillmeier, op. cit., p. 314: "If all ἀνθρώπινα are to be kept away from the Logos, a created subject of the suffering must be found…It was Athanasius's task to show that these 'human characteristics' of the redeemer did not prejudice his transcendence and immutability. He therefore had to find the subject of all suffering in the manhood of Christ." Cf. Young, op. cit., pp. 74–5; Hanson, op. cit., p. 448.
142 *Ad Epict.* 6; PG 26, 1060 C.
143 Grillmeier, op. cit., p. 314; Hanson, op. cit., p. 448.
144 Cf. *CA* 2:55: "For as by receiving our infirmities, he is said to be infirm himself, though not himself infirm (λέγεται αὐτὸς ἀσθενεῖν, καίτοι μὴ ἀσθενῶν αὐτὸς), for he is the power of God and he became sin for us and a curse…" *NPNF* 4, 378; Bright, p. 125.
145 *CA* 3:24; cf. *De Decr.* 14.
146 *CA* 3:34; Bright, p. 189.
147 *CA* 3:35; *NPNF* 4, 413; such a statement makes clear how much Athanasius's Christological reasoning anticipated Cyril's. See also *De Sent. Diony.* 9.
148 Ibid.; cf. *CA* 3:48: "For whatever He does, that he does wholly for our sakes, since also for us 'the Word became flesh'."
149 *Ad Epict.* 9; *NPNF* 4, 573.
150 *Ad Adelph.* 5; *NPNF* 4, 576.
151 *CA* 3:32.
152 It is most likely that the Alexandrian rejection of Leo's *Tome*, and Chalcedonian Christology generally, was based on the perception that it provided just such an "egalitarian," non-teleological, and thus non-transformative model.
153 *Ad Adelph.* 8; PG 26, 1084A-B.
154 Hanson, op. cit., p. 448.
155 Thus Hanson, op. cit., p. 451: "We must conclude that whatever else the *Logos* incarnate is in Athanasius' account of him, he is not a human being." Cf. Young, op. cit., pp. 74–5.
156 Grillmeier, op. cit., pp. 314–15; Hanson, op. cit., pp. 448–9. On the other hand, see the nuanced treatment in Pettersen, *Atbanasius*, Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1995, pp. 113–129.

157 Thus Pettersen, op. cit., p. 126: "Hence a potentially static view gives way to a dynamic view. Ignorance, fear, suffering and death are admitted, but only to be alleviated. In his dispelling ignorance, lightening suffering and conquering death, there is the divinizing of everyone in Christ. What superficially may appear to be inchoate docetism is in fact pervasive soteriology."

158 *CG* 46ff.

159 "**τὴν τοῦ δεδωκότος χάριν**"(*CG* 2).

160 See Gregg and Groh, op. cit., especially pp. 102–14. They point out that the Arians used for scriptural proof-texts passages "whose verbs and meanings were in the **δίδωμι** and **παραδίδωμι** family" (p. 6).

161 Again, we find anticipated in Irenaeus this understanding of the Word's incarnation as effecting our *secure* reception of grace, through Christ's reception of and "anointing" by the Spirit: "The Word of God…became the Son of Man, that He might accustom man to receive God…" (*Adv. Haer.* III, 20, 2; *ANF* 1, p. 450); "And, again, unless it had been God who had freely given salvation, we could never have possessed it securely… For in what way could we be partakers of the adoption of son, unless we had received from him through the Son that fellowship which refers to himself, unless his Word, having been made flesh, had entered into communion with us?" (ibid., III, 18, 7; *ANF* 1, p. 448); "Therefore did the Spirit of God descend upon him, [the Spirit] of him who had promised by the prophets that He would anoint him, so that we, receiving from the abundance of his unction, might be saved" (ibid., III, 9, 3; *ANF* 1, p. 423).

162 We have already referred to Irenaeus's similar conception of Christ "securing" our receptivity through the incarnation. We may also note that, for Irenaeus too, the human vocation can be summed up in terms of "remaining" in communion with the divine: "For, as much as God is in want of nothing, so much does humanity stand in need of fellowship with God. For this is the glory of humanity, to continue and remain permanently in God's service" (*Adv. Haer.* IV, 14, 1; *ANF* 1, p. 478).

163 Cf. Roldanus, "Die *Vita Antonii* als Spiegel der Theologie des Athanasius", *Theologie und Philosophie* 58, 1983, p. 207.

4
THE RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND CREATION IN THE CONTEXT OF GRACE

1 "**ὅσον κατὰ τοὺς ἰδίους αὐτῆς λόγους,**" *CG* 41; Thomson, p. 114.

2 *CG* 41.

3 *DI* 3; Thomson, p. 140; also, *DI* 5: "**χάριτι δὲ τῆς τοῦ Λόγου μετουσίας τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν ἐκφυγόντες, εἰ μεμενήκεισαν καλοί**"; Thomson, p. 144.

4 Ibid.
5 *DI* 11.
6 *DI* 5. On the divine overcoming of the Creator—creature difference, see also Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* IV, 20, 1; IV, 20, 4.
7 "κατολιγωρήσαντες καὶ οὕτως τῆς δοθείσης αὐτοῖς χάριτος, "*DI* 11; Thomson, p. 160.
8 "ἡ κατὰ φύσιν φθορά," *DI* 5; Thomson, p. 144.
9 Athanasius pointedly makes the parallel between the natural Son and adopted "sons," and our rendering of this parallelism is meant to reflect his terminology. However, he certainly intended the category of "sons" to include females.
10 *Festal Letter* XI:13; *NPNF* 4, 537.
11 Ibid.
12 XI:14; *NPNF* 4, 537–8.
13 III:3; VII:9.
14 VI:3.
15 III:4; *NPNF* 4, 514.
16 V:3.
17 Ibid.
18 V:5.
19 VII:3; *NPNF* 4, 524.
20 VI:1.
21 V:5; VII:3.
22 VII:1.
23 VI:4.
24 VI:5; referring to Mt. 25:14–30.
25 *Life of Antony*, Introduction, trans. Gregg, *Athanasius. The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, New York: Paulist Press, 1980, p. 29.
26 Barnes, "Angel of light or mystic initiate? The problem of the *Life of Antony*", *Journal of Theological Studies* 37, 1986, pp. 353–68. For convincing refutations of Barnes, see Louth, "St. Athanasius and the Greek *Life of Antony*", *Journal of Theological Studies* 39, 1988, pp. 504–9, as well as Brakke, "The Greek and Syriac versions of the *Life of Antony*", *Le Museon* 107, 1994, pp. 29–53 and his "The authenticity of the ascetic Athanasiana", *Orientalia* 63, 1994, pp. 17–56.
27 For parallels between the *Life of Antony* and the *Contra Gentes–De Incarnatione*, see Bartelink, *Vie d'Antoine. Athanase d'Alexandrie*, Introduction, texte critique, traduction, notes et index (Sources Chrétiennes 400), Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1994, pp. 36–7. On the consistency between the *Life of Antony* and Athanasius's theology, see Tetz, "Athanasius und die *Vita Antonii*. Literarische und theologische Relationen", *Zeitschrift für Neutestamentalische Wissenschaft* 73, 1982, pp. 1–30; also, Roldanus, "Die Vita Antonii als Spiegel der Theologie des Athanasius und ihr Weiterwirken bis ins 5. Jahrhundert", *Theologie*

und Philosophie 58, 1983, pp. 194–216. In comparing the *Life of Antony* with the letters of Antony himself, Samuel Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony. Origenist Theology, Monastic Tradition and the Making of a Saint* (Bibliotheca Historico-Ecclesiastica Lundensis 24), Lund: Lund University Press, 1990, p. 140, notes the transformation of the theology of Antony's letters into a typically Athanasian vein: "the most obvious sign of this difference in perspective is the emphasis in the *Vita* on Christ and his victorious cross as the active force of the Christian. This emphasis is firmly rooted in Athanasius's theology and part of the Nicene tradition that developed during the Arian controversy."

28 Bartelink, op. cit., p. 27.

29 Gregg and Groh, *Early Arianism. A View of Salvation*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981.

30 Ibid., p. 144.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., p. 151.

34 Ibid., p. 147.

35 Ibid., p. 150.

36 Ibid., p. 147.

37 Ibid., p. 148.

38 Ibid., p. 139.

39 Ibid., p. 142.

40 Ibid.

41 Gwatkin, *Studies of Arianism. Chiefly Referring to the Character and Chronology of the Reaction which Followed the Council of Nicaea*, Cambridge: Deighton Bell & Co., London: George Bell & Sons, 1900, p. 25.

42 Gregg and Groh, op. cit. p. 147.

43 This is not to say that Athanasius was not working with "Antony traditions" of some sort; he certainly did not altogether invent the *Life of Antony*. But while it is beyond the scope of our present inquiry to pursue a redactional criticism of the text (for this see Tetz, op. cit., who suggests an original text by Serapion of Thumis), we only wish to assert that, as a whole, the text presents a distinctly Athanasian theology.

44 In a critique of Gregg and Groh's position, Stead, "Arius in modern research", *Journal of Theological Studies* 45:1, April 1994, p. 36, concludes that Arius's "main concern was to uphold the unique dignity of God the Father in the face of attempts to glorify the Logos, as he thought, unduly. This interest is abundantly attested in the surviving fragments. It is allowable, if rather strained, to say that his main interest was Christology. But the idea that he was mainly concerned to propound an exemplarist theory of salvation finds little or no support in his surviving fragments."

45 Indeed, even if we were to accept Gregg and Groh's thesis that the Arians emphasized the equality between redeemed human beings and Christ, that in itself would indicate that humans participate in God, insofar as the Arians insisted that Christ was himself God by participation. Thus Athanasius reports that "they say, that Christ is not truly God, but that He is called God on account of his participation in God's nature, as are all other creatures," *Ad Episc. Aeg.* 12; *NPNF* 4, 229.

46 Gregg and Groh, op. cit., p. 147.

47 Cf. *CA* 2:59: "But this is God's kindness to humanity, that he become Father according to grace of those of whom he was Maker. He becomes so when humanity, his creatures, receive into their hearts, as the Apostle says, 'the Spirit of His Son, crying, Abba, Father.' And these are the ones who, having received the Word, *gained power from him to become sons, for they could not become sons, being by nature creatures, in any other way than by receiving the Spirit of the natural and true Son*" (my emphasis). We see here that the inequality between the natural Son and adopted "sons" is conceived within the framework of the act whereby the natural Son empowers creatures to become "sons." This inequality is thus intrinsic to the structure of unity between God and humanity. It is misrepresented when conceived apart from that structure. It is precisely Athanasius's point that a mere creature, who is equal to us, could not bring us into unity with God and thus could not qualify the inequality between God and humanity in the way that the Son does, insofar as his natural Sonship results in our adoption into sonship, which is our deification (cf. *CA* 2:69, 70).

48 Gregg and Groh, op. cit., p. 144.

49 Ibid., p. 147.

50 Cf. Augustine, *The Spirit and the Letter* 59.

51 E.g., *De Decr.* 22.

52 Ibid. 20.

53 Ibid. 22.

54 *Festal Letter* III:3; *NPNF* 4, 513.

55 Ibid.

56 IV:4; *NPNF* 4, 518.

57 VI:1; see also V:3.

58 III:3; VI:4; VII:9.

59 *Pace* Clebsch, who seems to derive this interpretation from Gregg's account of the *Life of Antony*. In his preface to Gregg's translation, Clebsch offers a crass misreading of Athanasius: "There may be modern readers of these works by Athanasius who want more, who yearn to acquire the Christian salvation or apotheosis or *theopoesis* that was theirs. Such readers, if any, would do well to heed the main line of Athanasius's theology, to the effect that one can do absolutely nothing to

avail such salvation, but only wait to see, if it might perchance befall," Gregg, *Athanasius. The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, New York: Paulist Press, 1980, p. xxi (hereafter cited as "Gregg").

60 XIX:7; *NPNF* 4, 547.

61 X:4; *NPNF* 4, 529; also, XIII:2; *NPNF* 4, 539: "He distributes to each a due reward according to His actions, so that every man may exclaim, 'Righteous is the judgement of God'."

62 *CG* 40; Thomson, p. 110.

63 *CG* 44; Thomson, p. 122.

64 *DI* 1; Thomson, p. 134.

65 *DI* 14; Thomson, p. 168.

66 Ibid.

67 *DI* 15; Thomson, p. 170.

68 Ibid.

69 *DI* 17; Thomson, p. 172.

70 "That death has been dissolved and that the cross was a victory over it and that it is no longer powerful but truly dead, is demonstrated in no uncertain manner and is clearly credible (γνώρισμα οὐκ ὀλίγον καὶ πίστις ἐναργής) by the fact that it is despised by all Christ's disciples and everyone treads it underfoot and no longer fears it, but with the sign of the cross and in the Christian faith they trample on it as a dead thing," *DI* 27; Thomson, pp. 198–9

71 *DI* 29.

72 *DI* 30–1; Thomson, pp. 208–11.

73 *VA* 7: "This was Antony's first contest against the devil—or, rather, this was in Antony the success of the Savior (μᾶλλον δὲ Σωτῆρος καὶ τοῦτο γέγονεν ἐν Ἀντωνίῳ τὸ κατόρθωμα), who 'condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but to the Spirit'" (Gregg, op. cit., p. 35; Bartelink, op. cit., p. 150).

74 Cf. *DI* 48–54.

75 *VA* 24; Gregg, pp. 49–50.

76 *VA* 28; Gregg, p. 52.

77 *VA* 42; Gregg, pp. 62–3.

78 *VA* 5; Gregg, p. 34.

79 Ibid.

80 On the incarnation as the occasion for the defeat of demonic powers, see *VA* 28, 33, 41, 42, *inter alia*.

81 *VA* 40; Gregg, p. 61.

82 *VA* 58; Gregg, p. 74. For other instances of Antony's self-disclaimers, see *VA* 38, 49, 56, 60.

83 For a significant example, see *VA* 48, discussed pp. 186–7.

84 *VA* 62; Gregg, p. 77.

85 *DI* 15.

86 *VA* 7; Gregg, p. 35.
87 *VA* 7; Gregg, p. 35; Bartelink, op. cit., p. 150.
88 Ibid.
89 *VA* 7; Gregg, p. 36; Bartelink, op. cit., p. 154.
90 *VA* 9; Gregg, p. 38.
91 Ibid.
92 *VA* 10; Gregg, p. 39; Bartelink, op. cit., pp. 162–4.
93 *VA* 11.
94 *VA* 12.
95 *VA* 19; Gregg, p. 45.
96 *VA* 38; Gregg, p. 60.
97 *VA* 56; Gregg, p. 73.
98 *VA* 58; Gregg, p. 74.
99 *VA* 24, 28, 33, 42.
100 *VA* 39; Gregg, p. 61.
101 *VA* 48; Gregg, p. 67
102 *VA* 84; Gregg, 92; Bartelink, op. cit., p. 352.
103 *VA* 34.
104 *CG* 2; Thomson, p. 6.
105 *CG* 33; Thomson, p. 92.
106 *CG* 34; Thomson, p. 92.
107 *VA* 2.
108 *VA* 3.
109 *VA* 5; Gregg, p. 34; Bartelink, op. cit., p. 144.
110 *VA* 34; Gregg, p. 57.
111 For a similar understanding of the soul as naturally oriented toward God, and of the turning away from God as "contrary to nature," see Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* V, 1, 1; Gregory Nazianzus, *Theological Oration* II.
112 *CG* 30; Thomson, p. 82.
113 *VA* 20; Gregg, pp. 46–7; Bartelink, op. cit., pp. 188–92.
114 See above chapter 2.
115 Thus the way to knowledge of God through the soul "in itself" is treated separately by Athanasius from the way through the visible creation—the first in *CG* 31–4, the second in *CG* 35f. For the desires of the body as "external" to the dynamism of the soul, see for example, *CG* 2: **τῶν ἀνθρώπων, οὐδέ τι τῆς ἐκ τούτων ἐπιθυμίας μεμιγμένον ἔξωθεν ἔχει, ἀλλ' ὅλος ἐστὶν ἄνω ἑαυτῷ συνὼν ὡς γέγονεν ἐξ ἀρχῆς. τότε δή, τὰ αἰσθητὰ καὶ πάντα τὰ ἀνθρώπινα διαβάς, ἄνω μετάρσιος γίνεται, καὶ τὸν Λόγον ἰδών, ὁρᾷ ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ τὸν τοῦ Λόγου Πατέρα,**" Thomson, p. 6.
116 *DI* 57.
117 *VA* 67.
118 E.g., Louth, "The concept of the soul in Athanasius", op. cit.
119 It is hard to reconcile the texts with the judgement of Louth: "It seems that after his flirtation with neoplatonism in the *Contra Gentes*

Athanasius rejected it outright: the *Vita Antonii* has not a word on contemplation, though one might have expected it" (p. 231). While the actual word may not be found in the *Vita Antonii*, Athanasius's focus on the restoration of Antony's νοῦς amounts to the same thing.

120 Cf. *CA* 2:68.

121 *VA* 94.

122 By the "aligning of human and divine subjectivity," is meant the situation in which the same thing is predicated of a human subject and the divine subject; in this case, a human being and the Incarnate Word.

123 *Ep. Marcell.* 9.

124 PG 27; 20C.

125 PG 27; 20D.

126 *Ep. Marcell.* 10; Gregg, p. 108.

127 Cf. *CA* 2:68.

128 Of course, it would not be helpful to dogmatize Athanasius's statements here, to the effect that only the Psalms provide the "how" of appropriation while all other books provide "objective" knowledge. He is merely emphasizing, in a pastoral and devotional way, the particular significance of the Psalms.

129 *Ep. Marcell.* 10; Gregg, p. 109; PG 27; 21B.

130 This distinction between the Psalms and other scriptures is emphasized by Athanasius again in terms of the Psalms providing not only the "what" but the "how": "Now there certainly are in the other books preventive words that forbid wickedness, but in this book is also prescribed how one must abstain. Of such a sort is the commandment to repent—for to repent is to cease from sin. Herein is prescribed also how to repent and what one must say in the circumstances of repentance. Furthermore, the Apostle said, 'Suffering produces endurance,' in the soul, 'and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us.' In the Psalms it is written and inscribed how one must bear sufferings, what one must say to one suffering afflictions, what to say after afflictions, how each person is tested, and what the words of those who hope in God are…" ibid. 10; Gregg, pp. 108–9.

131 We may recall here that, in the *Contra Arianos*, the framework of internality-externality is intertwined with that of identity-otherness: to be "internal and not external" is to be "proper to and not other than."

132 PG 27; 21B.

133 PG 27; 21C

134 Ibid.

135 Ibid.

136 24A-B.

137 24B; *Ep. Marcell.* 11; Gregg, p. 110 (slightly altered).

138 *Ep. Marcell.* 13; Gregg, pp. 111–12; PG 27; 24D–25B.

139 *Ep. Marcell.*12.

140 *VA* 5.
141 Cf. *CG* 35–44.
142 *Ep. Marcell.* 10, 15.
143 *VA* 14.
144 Ibid. 51.
145 Ibid. 67.
146 *Ep. Marcell.* 27–8; Gregg, p. 124; PG 27; 40B.
147 Athanasius's presentation of Antony as the fully ordered human being achieves classic expression in *VA* 14.

CONCLUSION

1 Cf. Augustine, *The Spirit and the Letter* 29, 30, 32, 36, 42.
2 Ibid., 48.
3 *Adv. Haer*. IV, 6, 4; cf. IV, 20, 5: "For human beings do not see God by their own powers; but when it pleases him, he is seen by them: by whom he wills, and when he wills, and as he wills."
4 Ibid., IV, 33, 4.
5 *Adv. Haer*. IV, 20, 7.
6 On the other hand, we find Athanasius's emphasis on the convergence of transcendence and immanence present in the theology of Karl Rahner. Thus in articulating the meaning of the incarnation, Rahner, "On the theology of the incarnation", *Theological Investigations* IV, tr. Kevin Smith, Baltimore and London: Hellicon Press and Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966, p. 117, says: "Hence, we can verify here, in the most radical and specifically unique way the axiom of all relationship between God and creature, namely that the closeness and the distance, the submissiveness and the independence of the creature do not grow in inverse but in like proportion."
7 Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith,* ed. Mackintosh and Stewart, Edinburgh: T.& T.Clark, 1989, # 4, #5, pp. 12–26.
8 Ibid., #93; pp. 382–3.
9 Ibid. #172.
10 *CG* 3.
11 *Church Dogmatics*, tr. G.W.Bromiley, Edinburgh: T. & T.Clark, 1964, II, 1, #26, esp. pp. 75–6.
12 Williams, *Arius. Heresy and Tradition,* London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1987, p. 238, speaks of "a certain irresistible parallel between Athanasius and Barth."
13 This approach is pervasive in Barth. As an example, which should make clear why we consider Roldanus's style of investigation thoroughly "Barthian," we can take Barth's exposition of the "Word of God and Man" (op. cit., I, 1, #6). His point of departure is to ask: "Is there a general truth about man which can be made generally perceptible and

which includes within it man's ability to know the Word of God?" (tr. G.W.Bromiley, Edinburgh: T. & T.Clark, 1975, p. 191). He again reformulates the question: "The question is whether this event ranks with the other events that might enter man's reality in such a way that to be able to enter it actually requires on humanity's part a potentiality which is brought by *humanity as such*, which consists in a disposition *native to him as man*, in an organ, in a positive or even a negative property…?" (p. 193). His answer is: "God's Word is no longer grace, and grace itself no longer grace, if we ascribe to man a predisposition towards this Word, a possibility of knowledge regarding it that is *intrinsically and independently native to him*" (p. 194, my emphasis).

14 "We can and must say that to be a man does not mean to be with God" (I, 2, #16; op. cit., p. 258).

15 Indeed, the kind of "competition" in Barth between what "intrinsically" belongs to the human and what belongs to and is given by God, may have its root precisely in the fact that his opposition to the doctrine of *analogia entis* deprives him of the opportunity to articulate an ontology in which created being is seen as derived (not only "chronologically" but structurally) from God (as in Athanasius's model of participation). Thus he is led to characterize human being not in terms of derived, or participated, being but in terms of self-determination: "To summarise, human existence means human self-determination" (I, 1, #6; op. cit., p. 204).

16 IV, 17, #58: "Daß er [i.e., humanity] Gottes Urteil unterworfen ist und in dessen Erkenntnis glauben…daß schließt ja wahrhaftig *in keinem Sinn ein Zusammenwirken des Menschen mit Gott in sich*, sondern im Glauben und in der Liebe antwortet der Mensch, entspricht er dem, *was allein Gottes Werk* für ihn und an ihm, Gottes zu ihm und über ihn gesprochenes Wort ist," *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik*, Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1953, p. 123, my emphasis.

17 *Ad Adelph.* 8.

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